

**Claiming Livorno: Commercial Networks, Foreign Status, and Culture in the Italian Jewish
Diaspora, 1815-1914**

by

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Lists of Abbreviations

ACEL - Archivio della comunità ebraica di Livorno

AIU - Alliance Israélite Universelle

ASF - Archivio di Stato di Firenze

ASL - Archivio di Stato di Livorno

ASDA - Archivio Storico della Società Dante Alighieri

ASMAE - Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri

CAHJP - Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People

CJH - Center for Jewish History

TNA - The National Archives of the United Kingdom

Abstract

This dissertation examines the dense web of real and imagined relationships that linked Jews in Livorno in Italy and Jews in Alexandria in Egypt during the nineteenth century. The dissertation traces overlapping and intersecting Jewish families and communities, and explores their commercial practices, national and religious identities, and cultural allegiances. For Jews in Egypt, Livorno served as a touchstone of economic resources, information, legal status, and solidarity. Weaving together micro-stories from the Tuscan, Italian, and British consular courts, the dissertation demonstrates the intersectional and situational nature of nationality in Egypt. Individuals and communities understood the power of various forms of documentation and status, and used them to navigate their legal, economic, and social possibilities. In integrating the history of Livorno with the history of Alexandria, the dissertation views Jewish history through a Mediterranean lens and contributes to our understanding of Jewish experiences of modernity.

Chapter One examines the early modern history of Livorno, and emphasizes the local framework of the Jewish community as well as its Mediterranean connections. The second chapter explores the economic endeavors of Jews from Livorno during the nineteenth century, looking closely at the family firm and the interconnected dynamics of trust and vulnerability amidst the progressive economic decline of the port city. Chapter Three argues that Jewish trading diasporas, spreading goods and information, continued to play a consequential role during the modern era. The chapter also examines how Jewish merchants in Alexandria were able to use the consular court as a forum for negotiating commercial relationships and exchanges. Chapter Four focuses on the claims of nationality and citizenship that Jews mobilized

in Egypt, and argues that citizenship in the Mediterranean was porous, instrumental, and flexible. While nationality could often be ignored or disregarded in Alexandria, the final chapter explores the associational spaces and activities Italian Jews used to give their status social, emotional, and cultural meanings. Italian officials and nationalists often perceived Jews as an important audience in their efforts to expand Italian imperial influence in Egypt. Italian Jews navigated these perceptions, and created layered cultural allegiances that were rooted in the local context of Egypt and reinforced by transnational ties to Italy and Jewish communities worldwide.

Introduction

In 1859, Rahamin Cesana appeared before the Tuscan consular court in Alexandria in desperate financial straits. As a merchant involved in exporting agricultural products from Egypt, he had the occasion to find himself in the consular courts numerous times over the course of his lifetime.¹ However, as he faced bankruptcy in 1859, a fundamental question emerged as to whether Cesana legitimately fell under the jurisdiction of the Tuscan consular court – was Cesana truly Tuscan or was he a local subject? This simple question belied the rather complicated matter of labeling someone as “foreign” or “local” in nineteenth century Egypt, and sparked a flurry of documents and debate. After launching an investigation, the Tuscan consul finally concluded that Rahamin Cesana was indeed a Tuscan subject, even though he “seemed like a local subject.”² With this caveat, the consul implied his assumption of discernable differences between the appearance and behavior of local and foreign subjects, while also suggesting that foreign status could be superimposed on an individual despite first impressions to the contrary. Although Rahamin Cesana’s exact origins in Tuscany were suspect, or at best uncertain, since it was “unclear which one of his family members had originated in Tuscany,” the consul recalled as proof the fact that Abram Cesana, Rahamin’s father, had often used the consular court as a Tuscan subject; therefore, it seemed reasonable that his son had inherited the right to be considered Tuscan in his commercial and legal affairs. The struggle to classify Cesana as a Tuscan subject reveal the multilayered intersections of commerce, extended trading

¹Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 60 (1859), Rome, Italy.

² ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 60 (1859).

networks, and foreign status in the consular courts, and hints at the complicated ways individuals tried to navigate these forces in their daily lives.

The case of Rahamin Cesana was part of a large constellation of cases involving Jewish historical actors in the consular court system of Egypt. For many Jewish individuals and families who made their way through the consular court systems of Egypt, their story began in Livorno, a Tuscan port city on the Mediterranean, a hub of international trade in the early modern period with a well-known and well-established Jewish community. In the consular records, Livorno appears as a concrete resource of documents or economic ties for Jews in Egypt. Yet, it also emerges as an amorphous and almost mythical idea, a shorthand of an origin story that could be flexibly shaped and interpreted by Jews and consular officials alike. While some Jews moved directly from Livorno to Egypt with their families, many others traced winding paths in the Mediterranean through several cities and generations before arriving in Egypt. In both cases, the Jews in Livorno and Jews in Alexandria were linked by connections of trade and culture to a network of Jewish diaspora communities throughout the Mediterranean. In weaving together individual micro-stories from the archive, this dissertation examines the unique aspirations, perceptions, and actions of Jewish individuals and families in “claiming Livorno” in nineteenth century Egypt, while also exploring how they formed part of a larger modern Mediterranean story of commerce, foreign status, and culture.³

The development of Livorno as a port city and the growth of its Jewish community during the early modern period has been the focus of extensive historical study. The fortunes of the port city and its Jewish community were inextricably linked, and by the eighteenth century,

³ In *Out of Egypt*, Andre Aciman recalls his colorful Uncle Villi, whose origins in Livorno were suspect, but who styled himself as an Italian patriot just the same. Andre Aciman, *Out of Egypt: A Memoir* (New York: Picador, 1994), 3-39.

the Jewish community of Livorno was the largest Jewish community on the Italian peninsula and the second largest in Europe after Amsterdam. One body of scholarship has emphasized the privileges granted to the Jewish community of Livorno by Tuscan authorities based on understandings of Jewish economic utility.⁴ For the Jews of Livorno, trade functioned as a vehicle of acculturation and some measure of social integration, but not political integration or equality. In particular, Francesca Bregoli has convincingly argued that the understanding of Livornese Jews as economically “useful” led to a protracted understanding of the Jewish community as an autonomous corporate body in the Tuscan state and impeded a shift towards more individually based understandings of citizenship in the Livornese context.⁵ Other scholars, most notably Jean-Pierre Filippini and Francesca Trivellato, have focused on the commercial activities and movements of Livornese Jewish merchants during the early modern period. In *The Familiarity of Strangers*, Francesca Trivellato traces how Sephardi Jews built cross-cultural trading networks beyond the family with both Jews and non-Jews, and demonstrates that the universe of Jewish commercial ventures in Livorno was expansive and global.⁶ However, Trivellato’s story ends at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and therefore leaves room for

⁴ Through the *livornina*, Tuscan authorities granted significant religious freedoms with the hope of attracting Sephardi migration to the city and encouraging international trade. The full text of the *livornina* can be found in Renzo Toaff, *La Nazione Ebraica a Livorno e a Pisa (1591-1700)* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1990), 419-435; Francesca Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment: Livornese Jews, Tuscan Culture, and Eighteenth Century Reform* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014); Lucia Frattarelli Fischer, “Le case degli ebrei a Livorno: interni domestici del Seicento e del Settecento,” in *La nazione ebraica di Livorno: itinerari di vita* (Livorno: Edizioni Graphis Arte, 1991), 3-39; Lucia Frattarelli Fischer, “L’insediamento ebraico a Livorno dalle origini all’emancipazione,” in *Le tre sinagoghe: Edifici di culto e vita ebraica a Livorno dal Seicento al Novecento*, ed. Michele Luzzati (Livorno: Umberto Allemandi, 1995), 33-46.

⁵ Francesca Bregoli, “The Port of Livorno and its *Nazione Ebraica* in the Eighteenth Century: Economic Utility and Political Reforms,” *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History, Journal of Fondazione CDEC* 2 (2011): 46.

⁶ Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: the Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Jean-Pierre Filippini, “Il posto dei negozianti ebrei nel commercio di Livorno nel Settecento,” *Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 50 (1984): 634-649; Jean-Pierre Filippini, “Gli ebrei e le attività economiche nell’area nord Africana (XVII-XVIII secolo),” *Nuovi Studi Livornesi* 7 (1999): 131-149; Attilio Milano, “Uno sguardo sulle relazioni tra Livorno ebraica e i paesi della Barberia,” in *Miscellanea di studi in memoria di Dario Disegni*, ed. E.M. Artom, L. Caro, S.J. Sierra (Torino: Istituto di studi ebraici, 1969), 139-151.

further historical study into how the global trading horizons of Jewish merchants and firms in Livorno both shifted and continued in the modern era.

Indeed, there remains a historiographical gap in studying both Livorno and its Jewish community during the nineteenth century.⁷ The nineteenth century marked a period of progressive economic decline in Livorno. Advancements in transportation and the evolution of trade routes that favored direct exchanges between producers and markets made Livorno's position as a port of deposit more precarious. In 1868, after being incorporated into the unified Italian state, Livorno lost its free port status and privileged commercial standing. It is my contention that it is just as important to study Livorno during this period of economic contraction as it is to study Livorno during periods of growth and prosperity. In this endeavor, the dissertation relies on David Lo Romer's detailed account of the port activities of Livorno during the early to mid-nineteenth century in *Merchants and Reform in Livorno, 1814-1868*. Lo Romer explores how merchants in Livorno, as a community, turned their attentions to political and economic reforms in response to the economic problems of the port city, and argues that their limited success helps explain the fragmentary and regional nature of the Italian unification movement.⁸ This dissertation extends Lo Romer's study beyond the framework of the Risorgimento and self-aware reform efforts and ideologies, and rather examines the economic behavior and trading networks of Jews in Livorno during this period of uncertainty.

⁷ While Carlotta Ferrara degli Uberti has studied in detail how the communal structure of the Jewish community changed during the nineteenth century in relation to political changes and emancipation, she has left the commercial pursuits and positions of Livornese Jews unexplored. Carlotta Ferrara degli Uberti, *La 'Nazione Ebraica' di Livorno dai Privilegi all'Emancipazione (1814-1860)* (Florence: Fondazione spadolini – Nuova antologia, 2007); Liana Elda Funaro has begun the project of studying Livornese Jews during the nineteenth century with several case studies, for example: Liana Elda Funaro, "Il ruolo degli ebrei livornesi: due percorsi individuali su uno sfondo mediterraneo" in *I Laboratori Toscani della Democrazia e del Risorgimento: La 'repubblica' di Livorno, l' "altro" Granducato, il sogno italiano di rinnovamento*, ed. Laura Dinelli and Luciano Bernardini (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2004), 79-98; Liana Elda Funaro, "Lumi e consigli: i Bonaventura ed altri "negozianti di droghe" a Livorno nel primo Ottocento," *Nuovi Studi Livornesi* 15 (2008): 171-209.

⁸ David LoRomer, *Merchants and Reform in Livorno 1814-1868* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

The evidence from the nineteenth century suggests that despite Livorno's economic fluctuations, Jews acted with a large measure of continuity in their commercial practices, importing and exporting goods through the port, relying on family firms, and creating extended trading networks throughout the Mediterranean. The dissertation highlights how Livorno remained significant in the commercial practices of Jewish merchants operating throughout the Mediterranean as a source of capital, credit, and business partners despite its declining position in international trade. These continuities do not imply that the economic pursuits of Jews in Livorno were stagnant or unchanging, and this dissertation looks carefully at networks as dynamic and unstable, constructed or dissolved by choices and actions, particularly in times of economic uncertainty. The dissertation also posits that migration and mobility emerged as a key economic strategy for merchants from Livorno during this period. While mobility had long been an integral part of pursuing commerce for Livornese Jewish merchants, and many continued to periodically move to and from Livorno as they had in earlier periods, the overall density of Jewish merchants and families who chose to permanently establish their lives away from Livorno distinguished the migrations of the nineteenth century from those of earlier eras. Whether Jews left Livorno as individuals or as a family, every act of migration was shaped by a larger system of cultural and commercial networks, which in turn, either reinforced or forged anew these networks. By 1901, the Jewish population of Livorno had contracted to 2,636 individuals as opposed to 5,000 in the previous century.⁹

Port cities "are a window on a wider world" and sites of dense exchanges of people, goods, and ideas.¹⁰ However, the historiography of Mediterranean port cities tends to consider

⁹ Bregoli, "The Port of Livorno and its *Nazione Ebraica* in the Eighteenth Century," 50.

¹⁰ Brian Hoyle, "Fields of Tension: Development Dynamics at the Port-City Interface," in *Port Jews: Jewish Communities in Cosmopolitan Maritime Trading Centres, 1550-1950*, ed. David Cesarani (Portland: Frank Cass, 2002), 14.

each city in isolation. Recently, historian Julia Clancy-Smith has asserted that it is crucial to explore how “circuits of movement and varieties of networks [among port cities] converged, thickened with increased exchange densities, or gradually became uncoupled.”¹¹ In taking up this charge, this dissertation integrates the history of the port cities of Livorno and Alexandria in Egypt. The migration of Livornese Jews to Alexandria was part of a larger story of dense networks of trade and migration that connected Livorno with many port cities in the Mediterranean, such as Tunis or Salonica; however, the dissertation focuses on Alexandria in conjunction with Livorno for several reasons. For one, in contrast to the economic trajectory of Livorno during the nineteenth century, this period marked dramatic growth for Alexandria and the port city’s increasing role in global commerce. Alexandria’s economic development during the nineteenth century was spurred by new global trade routes, growing agricultural exports to Europe, including cotton, and new infrastructural developments, such as the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. The population of Alexandria grew from 6,000 in 1798 to 231,000 in 1882, attracting large numbers of migrants from Europe and other parts of the Ottoman Empire.¹² Secondly, while distinct communities of Livornese Jews had formed in various cities throughout North Africa and the Middle East during the early modern era, the permanent migration of Jews from Livorno to Alexandria accelerated in a significant way only during the nineteenth century. Lastly, the political and legal landscape was particularly complicated in Egypt during the nineteenth century, with multiple and competing legal authorities and regimes. Under the system of capitulations in place, those with foreign nationality or protection were exempt from most local taxation, protected from prosecution before the local government, and granted access to the

¹¹ Julia Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans: North Africa and Europe in an Age of Migration c. 1800-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 10.

¹² Michael Reimer, *Colonial Bridgehead: Government and Society in Alexandria, 1807-1882* (New York: Westview Press, 1997), 5.

consular court system.¹³ While the French abrogated the capitulations after seizing control over Tunisia in 1881, the British left the capitulations in place even after occupying Egypt in 1882, and “extraterritoriality” remained a defining element of the Egyptian social, economic, and political environment.¹⁴

Alexandria’s landscape of legal pluralism emerges as a central feature of the dissertation. While foreign protection or nationality was not always a pressing concern in daily life in Alexandria, it was relevant in some local enterprises, interactions, and contexts. In particular, it opened up the consular courts as a venue for doing business, managing risks, and negotiating relationships.¹⁵ The ways Jewish actors made use of the consular courts reveal the flexibility of law in Egypt; consular courts often used local custom or Jewish law in their judgements. For the purpose of this study I focus on Jews who claimed foreign nationality in Egypt, however, it is also important to remember that these endeavors happened alongside Jews who were “local” subjects, as well as diverse numbers of Muslims and Christians also seeking or making use of foreign nationality or protection.

¹³ The Capitulations began in the sixteenth century as mutually beneficial agreements between European states and the Ottoman Empire, granting legal, religious, commercial rights to foreign merchants, including the freedom of worship, exemption from local taxes, and recourse of the consular court. These arrangements became less mutual as European states grew more powerful in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Feroz Ahmad, “Ottoman Perceptions of the Capitulations 1800-1914,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 11, 1 (2000): 1-20; Ziad Fahmy, “Jurisdictional Borderlands: Extraterritoriality and ‘Legal Chameleons’ in Precolonial Alexandria, 1840-1870,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 55, 2 (2013): 305-329; Alexander de Groot, “*The Historical Development of the Capitulatory Regime in the Ottoman Middle East from the Fifteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries*,” *Oriente Moderno* 22, 3 (2003): 575-604.

¹⁴ Extraterritoriality was a larger international legal framework that applied to areas from Latin America to East Asia. Richard Horowitz, “International Law and State Transformation in China, Siam, and the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century,” *Journal of World History* 15, 4 (2004): 445-486. Marglin defines extraterritoriality as “reflecting a premodern notion of sovereignty, in which rulers exercised control over individual subjects rather than over discrete territories.” Jessica Marglin, *Across Legal Lines: Jews and Muslims in Modern Morocco* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 210, n.38; Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans*, 201.

¹⁵ As Jessica Marglin points out in the case of nineteenth century Morocco, Jews were able to use various court systems, including sharia courts, rabbinic courts, and consular courts, and “law acted as a vector connecting Jews to the broader society in which they lived.” In Egypt, consular courts and religious courts, as well as the Mixed Courts after 1875 and Native Courts after 1885, played a prominent role well into the twentieth century. Marglin, *Across Legal Lines*, 10.

My research examines the ways in which Jews from Livorno created a space for themselves in the economic landscape of Egypt as builders of commercial networks in and around the Mediterranean. Egypt became a place where Jews could “make it,” and by the early twentieth century the Jewish community as a whole was distinguished by a large middle class and upward mobility. The intersections of commerce, nationality, and culture have not yet been studied for the Jews of Egypt, and this dissertation explores how legal and economic practices could converge with socio-economic status, family, and culture in forming the multilayered social practices and social identities of Jews in Egypt.¹⁶

In moving through oceans, cities, and empires, the Jews of Livorno crossed geographical, political, linguistic, and cultural boundaries, and navigated their Italian, Livornese, European, Sephardic, and Jewish identities. Jews were invested in their lives in Egypt and built a future there, even as they often remained connected to Italy by legal, economic, and cultural bonds. The dissertation explores the language, forms of evidence, and spaces through which Livornese Jews articulated their claims to Italian nationality, as well as the ways they imbued this status with meaning through their local relationships and cultural allegiances. Indeed, studying how Jews framed their claims of citizenship and when how they carried, ignored, or flaunted this status in the Egyptian context highlights a specific experience of negotiating the ideas of citizenship, community, and belonging outside the nation state. At its heart, the dissertation project asks: What did it mean to be an Italian Jew from Livorno in Egypt, at great distances from the city of Livorno and the borders of Italy?

¹⁶ In the standard account of Egyptian Jewry during the nineteenth century, Jacob Landau offers a useful, but broad socio-economic summary of the Jewish community. In *The Jews in Modern Egypt, 1914-1952*, Krämer conducts a broad overview of the Jewish community during the twentieth century, while Michael Laskier orients his work around the development of Zionism and growth of antisemitism during the twentieth century. Jacob Landau, *Jews in nineteenth-century Egypt* (New York: New York University Press, 1969); Gudrun Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt, 1914-1952* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1989); Michael Laskier, *The Jews of Egypt, 1920-1970: In the Midst of Zionism, Anti-Semitism, and the Middle East Conflict* (New York: New York University, 1992).

Historiography

This dissertation contributes to our understanding of modern Italian Jewish history, modern Mediterranean history, and citizenship studies. As a study of the Jews of Livorno, the dissertation engages with the extensive historiography of “port Jews” or “port Jewry” and the Jewish experience of modernity it suggests. Lois Dubin first proposed the concept of “port Jews” to refer to acculturated Jews, both Ashkenazi and Sephardi, in port cities who were distinctive in their path to integration in early modern Europe. In *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste*, Dubin argued that in early modern Trieste, the perceived economic utility of the Jewish merchants led to “civil inclusion” and privileges under the *ancien régime*, although certainly not equality.¹⁷ This model emerged as an alternative to previous Germano-centric historical explanations of Jewish modernity that emphasized intellectual and self-conscious changes through the *haskallah*, or Jewish enlightenment, and the prolonged struggle for emancipation.¹⁸ In his work, David Sorkin narrowed the definition of port Jews to signify a specific “social type” of Sephardim who settled in the port cities of the Atlantic seaboard between the sixteenth and eighteenth century. However, other scholarship, this dissertation included, have built upon more expansive notions of “port Jews” or “port Jewries.” In examining the figure of David Attias, Matthias Lehmann argues that “rather than referring to the entirety of Jewish communities in the

¹⁷ For more information on port Jews, see: Lois Dubin, *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste: Absolutist Politics and Enlightenment Culture* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1999); David Cesarani, ed., *Port Jews: Jewish Communities in Cosmopolitan Maritime Trading Centres, 1550-1950* (Portland: Frank Cass, 2002); David Cesarani and Gemma Romain, eds., *Jews and Port Cities 1590-1990: Commerce, Community and Cosmopolitanism* (Portland: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006).

¹⁸ Traditional historiography of Jewish modernity often focused on exploring the figures of the early modern court-Jew, wealthy and integrated on an individual basis, or the *maskil*, a proponent of Jewish enlightenment. In *The Jews of Georgian England*, Todd Endelman offers a counter argument against this historiographical trend to view Jewish history in terms of self-conscious, intellectual westernization as represented by these two largely atypical figures. Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England: Tradition and Change in A Liberal Society, 1714-1830*, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999).

early modern Mediterranean and Atlantic port cities, or to *any* Jewish community living in a port city, "port Jews" should be seen as a distinct social group *within* a Jewish community," and suggests that this framework can also be applied to certain Jews within communities in the Ottoman Empire.¹⁹ Recently, scholars such as Evelyne Oliel-Grausz, have also argued that the scholarship of "port Jewries" must shift to consider in more depth the dimension of "communication, of relations, connections, conflicts, and more generally circulation between the various poles and port Jewries, whether of persons, material or immaterial goods."²⁰

In its examination of Livorno during the nineteenth century, my dissertation considers the Jewish community as a whole to be a community of "port Jews." This dissertation also shifts and extends this framework to suggest that the Jews of Livorno during the nineteenth century can be described as "commercial subject-citizens," a term which reflects how the Jewish community of Livorno was still a "*suddita nazione*," or a part of the corporate body of the Tuscan state, but also moved through Livorno and the wider world as individuals.²¹ In both of these positions, as a community and as individual subject-citizens, the Jews of Livorno perceived themselves and were perceived by others through the lens of commerce. Even if Jews were not involved directly in long-distance trade, they were still commercial citizen-subjects in their position in Livornese society, although this position was in turn limited by certain disparities in power, such as gender or poverty. The dissertation connects the idea of a "commercial subject-citizen" to the historic

¹⁹ Matthias Lehmann, "A Livornese "Port Jew" and the Sephardim of the Ottoman Empire," *Jewish Social Studies* 11, 2 (2005): 70.

²⁰ In her definition of port Jewries, Lois Dubin includes "a network with other Jewish merchants living elsewhere" as well as a "sense of interaction and comparison to other non-Jewish merchants in the given port city." Cesarani and Romain, *Jews and Port Cities*, 17; Evelyne Oliel-Grausz, "Networks and Communication in the Sephardi Diaspora: An Added Dimension to the Concept of Port Jews and Port Jewries," *Jewish Culture and History* 7 (2004): 62.

²¹ "Port Jews" is generally used as a framework for the early modern period, and therefore, the term "commercial subject-citizens" in its formulation takes into account the political shifts of the nineteenth century. Dubin has remarked on the conflation of the terms subject and citizen in the Tuscan context, and notes that Jews in Livorno were both part of a corporate body and individual subjects. Lois Dubin, "Subjects into Citizens: Jewish Autonomy and Inclusion in Early Modern Livorno and Trieste," *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Institut* 5 (2006): 51-81.

privilege of *ballottazione*, which allowed the Jewish community in Livorno as a corporate body to grant Jewish individuals Tuscan subjecthood. The privilege of *ballottazione* was especially important for Jewish merchants who could then leave Livorno as Tuscan subjects. After Italian unification and emancipation created individual Italian Jewish citizens in Italy, Jews abroad could rely on the history of *ballottazione*, a privilege rooted in the local history of Livorno, to support their claims of belonging to the Italian nation state. After unification, Jews in Egypt were the passive recipients of a new status as Italian subjects abroad, yet they were often active agents in negotiating the meaning and use of this nationality in their local context.

The dominant narratives of modern Italian Jewish history tend to focus on the emancipation, acculturation, and integration of Jews within Italian society. Italian Jews were largely successful at integrating themselves within the social, intellectual, and economic spheres of Italian life during the nineteenth century, and historians such as Dan Segre have traced the intersections in the movements for Italian unification and Jewish emancipation, describing how Italian Jews wholeheartedly felt themselves to be the “co-founders, together with the other Italian patriots of something totally new” during the Risorgimento.²² The parameters of emancipation, acculturation, and integration have often relegated the Italian Jewish experience to the margins of modern European Jewish history as an “exceptional” case; historian Paolo Bernardini explains that Italian Jewish history “has been traditionally regarded as far less dramatic in terms of the tensions between tradition and assimilation, community and state, personal identity as a Jew versus social political identity as a citizen, than in other national states and regimes.”²³ Even as

²² Dan Segre, “The Emancipation of Jews in Italy,” in *Paths of Emancipation: Jews, States, and Citizenship*, ed. Pierre Birnbaum and Ira Katznelson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 229.

²³ The Italian Jewish press chronicled with pride the achievements of individual Italian Jews; there were Jewish senators, a Jewish prime minister, and even a Jewish minister of war at the same time the Dreyfus Affair raged in France. Giuseppe Ottolenghi was appointed minister of war from 1902-1903, and Luigi Luzzato, a Venetian Jew, was elected prime minister in 1910. By 1902 six Jewish senators had been appointed by the king out of a total of

the historical scholarship of modern Italy has increasingly incorporated the study of migration and Italian diaspora communities, studies of modern Italian Jewish history have remained constrained by the borders of the Italian peninsula and bound by the national context.²⁴ There is a significant historiographical gap in examining the Mediterranean movements and experiences of Italian Jews during the modern period. If the nineteenth century was the century of national boundaries, Jews from Livorno moved between and among them.

Studying the Jews of Italy beyond the national context opens up the possibility of interweaving local, national, and transnational frameworks in order to complicate traditional understandings of Jewish transformation in the modern period.²⁵ Even as my research brings issues of nationality and citizenship into the foreground, it decenters emancipation and unification as the defining events of the modern Italian Jewish experience. This dissertation demonstrates how both before and after unification, Italian Jews were entangled in a wide circulation of economic, intellectual, and social currents around the Mediterranean basin. While traditional historical accounts argue that early modern Jewish commercial networks declined with the rise of nation states and empires, new research, such as Sarah Abrevaya Stein's work on Jewish involvement in the global ostrich feather market, has suggested that some trading

350, and by 1920, the number had risen to 19. Some histories of Italian Jewry that follow this strain of thought are: Cecil Roth, *The History of the Jews of Italy* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1946); Tomaso DiNapoli, *The Italian Jewish Experience* (Stony Brook: Forum Italicum Publishing, 2000). Historians such as Paolo Bernardini and Elizabeth Schachter have argued for a revision of the traditional assessments of nineteenth and early twentieth century Jewry. Paolo Bernardini, "The Jews in Nineteenth Century Italy: towards a Reappraisal," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 1 (1996): 293; Elizabeth Mahler Schachter, "Perspectives of Nineteenth-Century Italian Jewry," *Journal of European Studies*, no. 31 (2001): 35.

²⁴ Well-known examples include: Mark Choate, *Emigrant Nation: The Making of Italy Abroad* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008); Donna Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas* (London: UCL Press, 2000).

²⁵ The European Jewish experience has often been privileged in the historiography, yet, as Daniel Schroeter has pointed out, the "Jews of the Arab world traveled along a different road to modernity than the Jews of Europe." European Jewish history has stressed the importance of *haskalah*, emancipation, antisemitism, and Zionism, however these moments and movements had different meanings in Middle Eastern communities. Shroeter argues that historians have to take into account the context of the Arab world and colonialism. Daniel Schroeter, "A Different Road to Modernity: Jewish Identity in the Arab World," in *Diaspora and Exiles: Varieties of Jewish Identity*, ed. Howard Wettstein (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 159.

networks survived and even expanded in the nineteenth century.²⁶ My research shows that Livorno survived as a central node of Jewish trading networks despite the city's declining financial position, and adds to our understanding that trading diasporas could be an effective pattern of economic behavior in the modern period.

This dissertation also explores how the Jews who migrated from Italy to North Africa and the Middle East consistently linked Europe and the Mediterranean in both new and old ways. Identifiable communities of Livornese Jews could be found throughout North Africa and the Middle East, known as *francos* in the Ottoman Empire and *grana* in Tunisia, and often cultivating social and cultural differences of language, dress, marriage patterns, and education that marked them as distinct from the broader Jewish community.²⁷ During the nineteenth century, Jews migrating from Livorno joined diverse and often divided Jewish communities, and as before, often considered themselves distinct from "local" Jews. In their commercial and cultural practices, Italian Jews in the Mediterranean often maintained multiple allegiances and loyalties.

In extending the framework of the Mediterranean to include Italy, this dissertation also adds to historical understandings of the modern Mediterranean. In his historiographical essay, "Mediterranean Excuses: Historical Writing on the Mediterranean since Braudel," Peregrine

²⁶ Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Plumes: Ostrich Feathers, Jews, and a Lost World of Global Commerce* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010). Historical scholarship has often constructed Sephardi, Levantine, Mediterranean Jews as "cultural and commercial intermediaries" who benefited from this position during the colonial period, however recently historians have complicated this view point. A good example is Joshua Schreier's case study of Jacob Lasry in Algeria: Joshua Schreier, "From Mediterranean Merchant to French Civilizer: Jacob Lasry and the Economy of Conquest in Early Colonial Algeria," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 44 (2012): 632.

²⁷ For more information on communities of Livornese Jews in the early modern Mediterranean, see: Minna Rozen, "Contest and Rivalry in Mediterranean Maritime Commerce in the first half of the eighteenth century: the Jews of Salonika and the European Presence," *Revue des Etudes Juives* 147, 3-4 (1988): 309-352; Minna Rozen, "The Leghorn Merchants in Tunis and their Trade with Marseilles at the end of the 17th century," in *Les relations intercommunautaires juives en Méditerranée occidentale: Actes du colloque international de l'Institut d'histoire XIII-XX siècles* (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1984), 51-59. Schroeter notes that Sephardi Jews in particular were made up of multiple identities; they cultivated a specific cultural identity even without the ability or desire to return to the Iberian Peninsula. Schroeter, "A Different Road to Modernity," 152.

Horden asserts that historians need to “put ‘the Mediterranean’ *within* our frame rather than assume it as *the frame itself*,” pointing out that the “idea of the Mediterranean as a *region*” emerged in the nineteenth century with both explicit and implicit implications for European imperial ambitions.²⁸ As a theoretical framework, “the Mediterranean,” can often be ambiguous and tinged by romanticism.²⁹ In her recent study of Tunisia, Julia Clancy-Smith has proposed understanding the Mediterranean as a borderland, or as “layered zones of contact” characterized by “fluctuating degrees of internal social coherence forged by high exchange densities, while remaining subject to ‘pushes and pulls’ from larger, external forces.”³⁰ This dissertation builds on the idea of the Mediterranean as a contact zone or “a sea of connectivity,” as Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell have put it aptly.³¹ Although a number of scholars have suggested that “Mediterranean” and modernity are irreconcilable, Naor Ben-Yehoyada has argued convincingly that the political, economic, and cultural conditions of life in growing port cities such as Istanbul, Salonica, Tunis, Beirut, and Alexandria could be considered both modern and Mediterranean.³² Recently, Dario Miccoli has argued that Alexandria and its inhabitants did not experience a single understanding of modernity but rather “a plurality of dynamic modernities” connected to many factors, such as gender, ethno-religious identity, and social status.³³

²⁸ Peregrine Horden, “Mediterranean Excuses: Historical Writing on the Mediterranean since Braudel,” *History and Anthropology* 16, 1 (2005): 1.

²⁹ One example of a romantic approach to the Mediterranean is: Predrag Matvejevic, *Mediterranean: A Cultural Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

³⁰ Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans*, 11.

³¹ Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000); Manuel Borutta and Sakis Gekas, “A Colonial Sea: the Mediterranean, 1798-1856,” *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d’Histoire* 19, 1 (2012): 1-13.

³² Ben-Yehoyada cites a focus on traits such as patronage, honor, and shame. Naor Ben-Yehoyada, “Mediterranean Modernity?” in *A Companion to Mediterranean History*, ed. Peregrine Horden and Sharon Kinoshita (West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 117.

³³ Dario Miccoli, “Moving Histories: The Jews and Modernity in Alexandria, 1881-1919,” *Quest: Issues in Contemporary Jewish History* (2011): 2; Dario Miccoli, *Histories of the Jews of Egypt: An Imagined Bourgeoisie, 1880s-1950s* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

Using a Mediterranean frame is particularly helpful for this dissertation as a means of bringing European imperial expansion during the nineteenth century into view, but not relying on it as the dominant explanatory framework for the movements and activities of Jews in Egypt.³⁴ Much of the scholarship of the modern Mediterranean tends to orient itself around two poles, either emphasizing conflict and strife based on nationalism and imperialism or emphasizing peaceful coexistence and interethnic exchange.³⁵ In the case of Alexandria, Michael Reimer argues in *Colonial Bridgehead* that Alexandria “was a colonial city” even before British occupation, and suggests the existence of two separate Alexandrias – one for Europeans and one for Egyptians.³⁶ Reimer’s study reveals important changes to the spaces and structures of Alexandria during the nineteenth century, however everyday life in the city was not as clearly divided between Europeans and Egyptians as he suggests. As Jessica Marglin has pointed out in her study of the “transimperial” Abraham Ankara, the modern Mediterranean was defined by the “interaction between new political structures (the colonial state) and older forms of transregional connectivity and authority.”³⁷ Neither nationalism nor imperialism accurately or fully characterizes Alexandria during the nineteenth century. By shifting the focus away from strictly defining Alexandria as a colonial space, the dissertation is also able to take into account the various imperial rivalries in the region, incorporating Italy’s ambitions and thus including an imperial position often forgotten in the historiography.

³⁴ The nineteenth century was the age of European expansion in the Mediterranean. Britain occupied Sicily between 1806-1815, the Ionian Islands in 1809, Corfu from 1815 to 1864, Cyprus in 1878, and Egypt in 1882. France invaded Egypt in 1798-1801, the Ionian Islands from 1809-1814, occupied Algeria in 1830, and Tunisia in 1881. For more discussion of the development of Mediterranean port cities, see: Leila Tarazi Fawaz and C.A. Bayly, eds., *Modernity and Culture: From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

³⁵ Malte Fuhmann, “Cosmopolitan Imperialists and the Ottoman Port Cities: Conflicting Logics in the Urban Social Fabric,” *Du cosmopolitisme en Méditerranée* 67 (2003): 3.

³⁶ Reimer, *Colonial Bridgehead*, 193.

³⁷ Jessica Marglin, “Mediterranean Modernity through Jewish Eyes: The Transimperial Life of Abraham Ankawa,” *Jewish Social Studies* 20, 2 (2014): 38.

“Cosmopolitanism” has often served as a guiding conceptual frame for engaging with the social, political, and cultural history of the Mediterranean. In particular, Alexandria is often portrayed in memoirs, art, and literature as the paradigm of a cosmopolitan city; these works tend to emphasize the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century as a period of peaceful interethnic coexistence and interactions before rising nationalism tore this world asunder.³⁸ As both a category of analysis and descriptive tool, “cosmopolitanism” is often colored by ambiguity, nostalgia, and romanticism.³⁹ Historians such as Khaled Fahmy and Will Hanley have recently issued important critiques of using “cosmopolitan” as a framework for nineteenth century Alexandria, arguing that it obscures the colonial power underpinning the concept, privileges the elite over the lower classes, and excludes the Muslim and Arabic speaking majority from history.⁴⁰ This dissertation largely eschews the term cosmopolitanism, weighed down as it is by its history and qualifications. However, several recent and interrelated arguments using this term offer perspectives that are useful for this study. In his work on the Hadrami migrant community in the Indian Ocean, Enseng Ho has proposed the term “local cosmopolitans” to understand “persons who, while embedded in local relations, also maintained

³⁸ For a romanticized view of the eighteenth century, see Maya Jasanoff, “Cosmopolitan: A Tale of Identity from Ottoman Alexandria,” *Common Knowledge* 11, 3 (2005): 393-409; Michael Haag, *Alexandria: City of Memory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004). Jewish memoirs of life in Egypt include: Aciman, *Out of Egypt*; Lucette Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit: A Jewish Family's Exodus from Old Cairo to the New World* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2007); Gini Alhadeff, *The Sun at Midday: Tales of a Mediterranean Family* (New York: Anchor, 2004).

³⁹ Anthropologist Henk Driessen asks, “Does the evoked image of cosmopolitanism bear any relationship to a lived social practice? And, if so, can cosmopolitanism serve as a concept with which to describe and analyze phases in the history of port cities, a specific way of life and a collective identity?” Henk Driessen, “Mediterranean Port Cities: Cosmopolitanism Reconsidered,” *History and Anthropology* 16, 1 (2005): 135.

⁴⁰ Khaled Fahmy, “Towards a Social History of Modern Alexandria,” In *Alexandria, Real and Imagined*, ed. Anthony Hirst and Michael Silk (London: Ashgate, 2004), 281-306; Khaled Fahmy, “The Police and the People in Nineteenth-Century Egypt,” *Die Welt des Islams* 39, 3 (1999): 340-377; Will Hanley, “Foreignness and Localness in Alexandria, 1880-1914” (Ph.D. thesis, Princeton University, 2007); Will Hanley, “Grieving Cosmopolitanism in Middle East Studies,” *History Compass* 6, 5 (2008): 1346-1367.

connections with distant places.”⁴¹ For Italian Jews in Egypt, crossing the Mediterranean opened up the possibilities of multiple frames of belonging. The individuals in this study were both “local” and “foreign,” embracing an instrumental foreign nationality in some spaces of the city, establishing present and future lives for themselves in Egypt, yet also cultivating attachments with both Italy and other Mediterranean Jewish communities.

With the term “vulgar cosmopolitanism,” Will Hanley has argued that “ordinary people employed a broad range of social categories and boundaries in their cosmopolitan interactions,” and sect, class, language, and nationality were “neither constant nor universal” in movements around the city.⁴² This is a key point, and this dissertation engages with this understanding of situational and contextual categories even as it focuses on Italian Jews as a case study in Alexandria. I understand the “cosmopolitanism” of modern Mediterranean port cities as characterized by linguistic, religious, and ethnic diversity, and the ability of individuals to move between different cultures and spheres in everyday sites around the city with both ease and conflict.⁴³ Yet by not using “cosmopolitanism” as a category of analysis, this dissertation is able to carefully consider the moments and spaces in which historical actors in Alexandria relied on categories of nationality, religion, or language to sort themselves and others, and those in which they ignored them.

⁴¹ Enseng Ho, “Empire through Diasporic Eyes: A View from the Other Boat,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 46, 2 (2004): 210.

⁴² Will Hanley, *Identifying with Nationality: Europeans, Ottomans, and Egyptians in Alexandria* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 32-33. Colonial states were preoccupied with the coercive process of ordering, enumerating and classifying the heterogeneity of colonial societies through the census, taxation, military conscription, public health campaigns, educational missions, and so on. Nancy Reynolds, *A City Consumed: Urban Commerce, The Cairo Fire, and the Politics of Decolonization in Egypt* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 10.

⁴³ In Driessen’s estimation, “the “cosmopolitanism” label mainly applies to certain categories of people, particularly merchants, brokers and seamen who played a key role in pan-Mediterranean and supra-Mediterranean networks. They mastered at least three or four languages, had a profound sense of the wider world and the skills to build enduring relations of trust across ethno-religious boundaries.” Driessen, “Mediterranean Port Cities,” 135.

My dissertation also complements a growing field in history on citizenship and legal pluralism in the Mediterranean.⁴⁴ As historians Sarah Abrevaya Stein and Laura Tabili have pointed out, the ways states defined nationality and citizenship and the ways they took shape in daily life often diverged, and it is important to explore these terms from the perspective of the “subtle degrees of belonging an individual could occupy.”⁴⁵ Nationality and citizenship both describe relations among individuals and states, yet there are differences between them. Nationality is a legal term or designation that attaches an individual to a state, acquiring particular significance in an international frame of reference, while citizenship implies the rights and duties of an individual towards the nation state.⁴⁶ In the case of nineteenth century Egypt, citizenship did not imply political rights or obligations, but it did define elements of the relationship between the individual and the state and among individuals in society. Italian Jews in Egypt did not have the “rights” usually associated with the term citizen, but they were self-styled citizens, often embracing the term in the consular court and using it to frame their relationship to the Italian nation and to Italian authorities and associations in Alexandria. In Egypt, it becomes evident that specific boundaries of meaning between legal categories such as protégé, citizen, subject, and foreign national were often unclear or unstable. Although nationality and citizenship have specific purviews and applications by definition, in reality, they

⁴⁴ The historiography of citizenship in general often focuses on political rights, which does not necessarily apply to Mediterranean contexts. Recent work on European and American citizenship has taken into account the importance of exclusion in legal regimes based on race, gender, and religion. See, for example, Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Gérard Noiriel, *The French Melting Pot: Immigration, Citizenship, and National Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

⁴⁵ Sarah Stein, *Extraterritorial Dreams: European Citizenship, Sephardi Jews, and the Ottoman Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 9; Laura Tabili, “Outsiders in the Land of their Birth: Exogamy, Citizenship and Identity in War and Peace,” *Journal of British Studies* 44, 4 (2005): 796-815.

⁴⁶ Hanley, *Identifying with Nationality*, 5; Elaine Lynn-Ee Ho, “Citizenship, Migration and Transnationalism: A Review and Critical Interventions,” *Geography Compass* 2, 5 (2008): 1287.

played out in a great variety of sites, administered “by ordinary people in the course of everyday life, using tacit understandings of who belongs and who does not, of us and them.”⁴⁷

In their studies of European citizenship, historians such as John Torpey and Gérard Noriel have traced the codification of identities through documents, such as the passport, in the years surrounding World War I.⁴⁸ This dissertation shows that nationality emerged during the nineteenth century as a powerful force; individuals in the Mediterranean understood the power and flexibility of various forms of documentation and status, using them to navigate and negotiate their legal, economic, and social possibilities. In this way, the Mediterranean is central to our understanding of citizenship and nationality. Although it is difficult to establish with clarity national origins or identities in nineteenth century Egypt, individuals were able to deploy assertions of a coherent nationality to gain access to legal rights and to build up economic solidarities or break them apart.

French scholar Robert Ilbert claims that in Alexandria “nationality was never a sufficient definition,” and posits that there was “a certain fluidity of identity in a city that saw itself as neither totally of Egypt nor determined by a European sense of nationality.”⁴⁹ In making this important qualification, however, Ilbert tends to romanticize Alexandria during the late nineteenth century, and he does not develop how historical actors defined or experienced nationality, religion, or social class in their everyday lives. In his recent body of work on Alexandria, Will Hanley has contributed much to our understanding of how nationality

⁴⁷ Rogers Brubaker, “Migration, Membership, and the Modern Nation-State: Internal and External Dimensions of the Politics of Belonging,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 41, 1 (2010): 65.

⁴⁸ John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship and the State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 13.

⁴⁹ In Ilbert’s larger work he includes more of a socioeconomic analysis of Alexandria. Robert Ilbert, “A Certain Sense of Citizenship,” *Alexandria 1860-1960: the brief life of a Cosmopolitan community*, ed. Robert Ilbert and Ilios Yannakakis (Alexandria: Hapocrates Publishing, 1997), 25. See also Robert Mabro for the twentieth century, “Alexandria, 1860-1960: the cosmopolitan identity,” *Alexandria: Real and Imagined*, ed. Anthony Hist and M.S. Silk (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2004), 247-261.

functioned in in Alexandria, particularly among various classes and groups of people.⁵⁰ However, he leaves largely unexplored the ways various religious communities navigated the different definitions of nationality and belonging in the city. Also, by beginning his work in 1880, Will Hanley orients his discussion around the British occupation in 1882 and the institution of the Mixed Tribunals in 1876. In taking a longer view of the development of nationality over the course of the nineteenth century, I have found that while British occupation shifted the context of nationality in Egypt, it was certainly not a rupture. Taking into account the early to mid-nineteenth century also allows the dissertation to examine the consular courts during the highpoint of their operations between the 1840s and 1870s.

Sources and Terms

In order to follow the commercial and cultural pathways forged between Livorno and Alexandria, this dissertation relies on a breadth of archival material, including Tuscan, Italian, and British consular court records, Jewish communal sources, business accounts and correspondence, personal letters, and organization reports, as well as newspapers and other published sources. The dissertation uses Jewish communal sources from Livorno in order to explore the individual and communal responses to the social, economic, and political changes of the nineteenth century in the port city, as well to examine how the Jewish community interacted with non-Jewish communities in the city, political authorities, and other Jewish communities throughout Italy, western Europe, and the Mediterranean. Business letters submitted to the Chamber of Commerce of Livorno often deployed formulaic and standardized language, but I read their established discourse carefully as evidence of a shared commercial culture between

⁵⁰ Hanley, *Identifying with Nationality*.

merchants in the city that allows glimpses at how merchants were positioning themselves in a changing Livorno.

In particular, documents from the Tuscan and Italian consular courts in Alexandria form the backbone of this dissertation. The consulate was an important mechanism of extending or restricting foreign status, and the dissertation explores the archive to reveal how official understandings of nationality, status, and commerce both converged and diverged with the practices and experiences of individual historical actors. By their nature, consular court records are fragmentary and tend to emphasize moments of conflict or tension in an individual's life. But in capturing the conflicts that developed between neighbors, families, business partners, or strangers, the consular courts offer a wealth of information about daily life in Alexandria. For example, bankruptcy cases in the consular court system contained detailed records of the loans, assets, and business dealings of an individual, revealing at least in part the ways an individual conducted business and constructed his economic networks, while a robbery of an upper-class home by a carriage driver involved lengthy interrogations, revealing household dynamics, consumption patterns, and class divisions in a rapidly developing city. The dissertation brings together smaller case studies from the consular records, and examines each case in its particularities. The close reading of each case gives the historian a window on the specific meanings and experiences of larger themes such as commerce, citizenship, and culture and how they operated on local, national, and transnational scales.

It is also important to clarify a few terms I use throughout the dissertation, namely "foreign status" and "Italian Jewish diaspora." In tracing the economic, legal, and cultural lives of Jews both in Livorno and Alexandria, status emerges as a complicated and protean underlying theme throughout the dissertation. Status means a relative social or economic position, or

“standing,” as well as an official classification given to a person implying their rights, roles, or responsibilities.⁵¹ For the purpose of this dissertation, I draw on both definitions of the term status and explore how it functioned on these two interconnected levels. Historical actors attributed status to themselves and others, while also interacting with official legal classifications.⁵² Status was flexible, and could be experienced differently as an individual and as a community; it could be used to bond a community together or mark a community as different from others.

During the nineteenth century, increasing European political and economic interventions in Egypt and the growing role of Egyptian goods and trade in global markets meant that designations of “foreign status” became even more important. In her work, Shana Minkin has clearly demonstrated the flexibility and instability of meanings of foreignness, and conversely localness, in Alexandria.⁵³ While a foreigner typically described a person who held a nationality other than Ottoman (or Egyptian), these definitions were not always so clear in real life.⁵⁴ An indigenous Muslim could be a protégé of a European state, while some with foreign nationality might have lived in Egypt for generations. Minkin points out that the terms local and foreign in the Egyptian context also often had a religious undertone. Religious minorities, such as Jews, were perceived as foreigners, while the majority of Muslims were perceived as local, even though this did not necessarily map onto the truth.⁵⁵ With these caveats in mind, I use “foreign”

⁵¹ *Oxford English Dictionary*, www.oed.com.

⁵² Lauren Benton has argued that “social actors often logically viewed legal status itself as a form of *property*, that could rise or fall in value” or be attacked. Lauren Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures: Legal Regimes in World History, 1400-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 23.

⁵³ Shana Minkin, “In Life as in Death: The Port, Foreign Charities, Hospitals and Cemeteries in Alexandria, Egypt, 1865-1915” (Ph.D. thesis, New York University, 2009), 5-7.

⁵⁴ “Egyptian” was not a separate, legal classification until the 1920s. On the endurance of Ottoman nationality in Egypt, see: Will Hanley, “When did Egyptians Stop Being Ottomans? An Imperial Citizenship Case Study,” in *Multilevel Citizenship*, ed. Willem Maas (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 89-109.

⁵⁵ Copts and some Jews were “local” subjects. Minkin notes that Jews, Armenians, and Syrian Christians were sometimes considered local and other times foreign. Minkin, “In Life as in Death,” 7.

to describe a non-Muslim who held nationality other than Ottoman or Egyptian. Under its umbrella, foreign status in Egypt involved the interrelated classifications of protection, nationality, and citizenship.

The dissertation is also defined as a study of “an Italian Jewish diaspora.” In using the term “Italian Jewish diaspora,” I do not mean to imply a singular community of Italian Jews in Egypt, but rather as a description for individuals with a range of experiences who were able to claim protection or citizenship from Italy. This category includes those who had personally emigrated from Italy, as well as those whose parents or grandparents had been the ones to emigrate and had never actually lived in Italy themselves. It could also include those whose families spent generations living in various parts of the Ottoman Empire. It is impossible to distill being an Italian Jew in Egypt to a particular set of characteristics or to a single collective identity. However, the dissertation captures a certain range of social, economic, and cultural behavior, in particular, an instrumental and situational understanding of nationality, as well as certain shared experiences with the rise of the nation state, growing imperial rivalries in Egypt, and new religious, social, and ethnic movements.

In the introduction to her transnational study of the Jews of Bialystok, Rebecca Kobrin asserts that while Jews have long been associated with the idea of diaspora, few scholarly works “understand how diaspora, or dispersal, actually informed twentieth century Jews’ affiliation and self-conceptions.”⁵⁶ Rather than understand a diaspora community as unified or singular, I use the term to suggest a multilayered framework for belonging and behavior. Using the term

⁵⁶ Jewish “Diaspora” refers to the exile or dispersal of the Jews from an ancient homeland. Rebecca Kobrin, *Jewish Bialystok and Its Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 4. Greeks and Armenians also formed notable diaspora communities in the early modern and modern Mediterranean. Minna Rozen, *Homelands and Diasporas: Greeks, Jews and their Migrations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

diaspora brings into focus the relationship of the Italian Jewish community in Egypt to a Livornese or Italian homeland, the role of the Italian state, and the dynamics of local community life.⁵⁷ The Italian Jewish diaspora was not static, and often individuals redefined themselves both in terms of their local surroundings and ideas of solidarity with other Italian or Jewish communities beyond Egypt.

In addition, using the term “diaspora” connects this study to recent work on the history of Italian migrations throughout the world during the nineteenth and twentieth century. In her study of Italian anarchists in Egypt in 1898, Lucia Carminati finds that nation states “were circumvented but not torn down by turn of the century mobility,” remaining a central reference point even for individuals living transnational lives.⁵⁸ Scholars have also argued that Italy was a nation constructed in diaspora, suggesting that individuals “became Italians” in their own eyes and in the eyes of others only after they moved elsewhere.⁵⁹ In her work, Donna Gabaccia has emphasized the continued relevance of local and regional attachments in the lives of Italians living abroad; suggesting that there were “many” Italian diasporas, rather than one.⁶⁰ Although relatively small numbers of Jews left Italy, they were a distinctive element within the wider flow of Italian migration and became notable parts of Italian communities in North Africa and the Middle East. Jewish migration and mobility from Italy has remained largely invisible in the historiography of Italian emigration, and bringing this experience to light reveals how migration

⁵⁷ Anthony Gorman has also suggested the usefulness of this term in: Anthony Gorman, “The Italians of Egypt: Return to Diaspora,” in *Diasporas of Modern Middle East: Contextualising Community*, ed. Anthony Gorman and Sossie Kasbarian (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 140.

⁵⁸ Lucia Carminati, “Alexandria, 1898: Nodes, Networks, and Scales in Nineteenth Century Egypt and the Mediterranean,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 59, 1 (2017): 149.

⁵⁹ Scholars have also suggested this for other cases as well. Ho notes that “If we think of the [British] empire as a diaspora, then Scots, Irish, and Englishmen came to think of themselves as commonly British as they became mobile. They moved, and only then became homogenous.” Ho, “Empire through Diasporic Eyes,” 214.

⁶⁰ Mark Choate describes Italy as an “emigrant nation” noting that term diaspora was not itself embraced by the Italian government since it seemed to imply decline. Choate, *Emigrant Nation*, 2; Gabaccia, *Italy’s Many Diasporas*; Donna Gabaccia, “Is Everywhere Nowhere? Italy’s Transnational Migrations and the Immigrant Paradigm of American History” *Journal of American History* 86, 3 (December 1999): 1124.

to Egypt did not displace Jews from identification with Livorno, but rather had the potential to reinforce both local roots and transnational belonging.

Chapter Overview

The dissertation is organized both thematically and chronologically. The chapters are each organized around a thematical framework – commercial networks, foreign status, and culture – while also moving forward through the long nineteenth century. After a discussion of the historical background of Livorno during the early modern period, the dissertation begins in 1815 in order to examine the progressive decline of Livorno and the acceleration of mass global migrations during the nineteenth century, and ends in Egypt in 1914, when World War I and national movements across the Middle East fundamentally changed the legal framework and conceptions of nationality in Egypt.

The first chapter synthesizes the vast secondary literature on early modern Livorno in order to provide crucial context for the dissertation as a whole. Examining the economic and political development of Livorno and the growth of its Jewish community, the chapter explores how the Jews of Livorno were rooted in their local environments and connected to expansive global commercial networks. The chapter suggests that the Jewish community of Livorno cannot be understood as a monolithic entity, and therefore highlights the diverse sub-groups, economic activities, levels of acculturation, and divides between poor and wealthy in the community. This detailed understanding of the Livornese Jewish community helps lay the groundwork for subsequent chapters that follow individual Jews in their commercial practices and migrations away from the city. In addition, a close reading of Jewish communal documents from the early nineteenth century sets the stage for understanding how economic fluctuations and political

changes during the nineteenth century challenged the foundations of the Jewish community of Livorno.

The second chapter turns its attention firmly on the commercial pursuits of Jews in the early to mid-nineteenth century. Using records from the Jewish community and Chamber of Commerce in Livorno, this chapter focuses on the organization of Jewish commercial firms and the creation of a Jewish commercial culture in Livorno. Despite changes in the economic fortunes of Livorno, Jews represented themselves in relation to the city and Tuscan authorities as “commercial subject-citizens.” Jewish firms continued to be organized around familial relationships, but in turning to limited partnership agreements more frequently and registering firms with the Chamber of Commerce, Jews sought to account for the vulnerabilities, as well as the trust, that were part of these relationships. Through communal documents and emigration registers, the chapter examines the migrations of Jews to and from Livorno in the nineteenth century, and identifies a key shift in demographic patterns. While moving to pursue economic opportunities had long been a part of Jewish life in Livorno, there was a sharpening trend of movement away from the city during the nineteenth century.

Chapter Three moves from Livorno to Alexandria, and demonstrates how Jews in Egypt looked to Livorno for trading partners, capital, and credit during the nineteenth century, even as Livorno’s fortune as a port city was waning. My research demonstrates that even for those who left Livorno generations earlier, claiming Livornese origins was expedient in commercial practices in Egypt, particularly for gaining access to legal institutions such as the consular courts. The chapter argues that commercial networks based on ethnic networks can neither be taken for granted nor can they be discounted. In considering consular courts as institutions for regulating

markets, the chapter reveals how individuals negotiated, created, or dissolved their commercial networks through their actions in the court.

The fourth chapter moves chronologically from the mid nineteenth century to the late nineteenth century and is oriented around exploring themes of nationality and citizenship. My research looks carefully at how and when Jews in Egypt mobilized claims of foreign nationality and examines the significance and consequences of making these claims. My research finds that the nineteenth century was a period when the categories of foreign national, protégé, and citizen were still very much in flux, but when having access to this status had increasing impact. The chapter takes into account the political changes of the unification of Italy and the British occupation of Egypt, but it does not place these two events at the center of its argument. Instead, the chapter explores the individual experience of foreign status, and the ways Jews and consular officials interpreted and negotiated it.

Chapter Five examines the cultural pursuits of “Italian Jews” in Egypt during the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. The chapter posits that nationality did not go hand in hand with national identity and could be disregarded or ignored in daily life. However, it also takes seriously the affective dimension of claiming nationality, and its power to be influential in certain spaces and situations. Italian outreach efforts directed at the Jewish community revealed an image of the Jewish community as a separate entity, and yet one that was particularly open and receptive to Italian concerns and issues. With a particular focus on schooling initiatives and cultural associations, the chapter shows that Italian Jews were invested in their lives in Egypt, but also imagined themselves as part of broader Italian and Jewish communities based on a framework of solidarity. In examining the situational experience of nationality in Egypt, the

chapter argues that Italian Jews serve as an important case study of multiple and fragmented identities in the modern Mediterranean.

Chapter One

Livorno and Its Jewish Community: Between Local Roots and Mediterranean Networks

In a cycle of poems published in 1886, poet Raffaello Ascoli described “The Jews who Came to Livorno” from distant lands:

Jews left their homelands, crying
but here they were saved from the terrible power
of the Inquisition or governments
that coupled ill-will with cruelty;

In the heat of the summer or in the middle of winter
they came of every sex and every age
wanting to pray to God as they desired
and in Tuscany they found peace and quiet!¹

Surveying the origins of the Jewish community of Livorno from the vantage point of the late nineteenth century, Ascoli vividly described battered and persecuted Jews from all corners of the world finding a place of refuge in Livorno. Even as the nineteenth century brought increasing economic uncertainty to Livorno and its Jewish community, the image of Livorno as an “oasis” of religious toleration and economic opportunity for Jews who settled there continued to loom large. The fate of the port city of Livorno and its Jewish community were intrinsically connected. Jews were not only shaped by the milieu of Livorno, but they were also active in shaping the economy and culture of the city. This chapter will rely on the extensive secondary literature on early modern Livorno as well as Jewish communal sources in order to explore the city’s development as a central node in Mediterranean trade and to trace the economic and social foundations of the Jewish community of Livorno within its local context and Mediterranean

¹ Raffaello Ascoli, *Gli ebrei venuti a Livorno: Versi di R. A. computista livornese* (Livorno: 1886), 59-60.

connections. This chapter will examine the ways Jews were both embedded in the fabric of Livornese society and entangled in a wide circulation of economic, cultural, and social currents around the Mediterranean basin, laying important groundwork for the following chapters that analyze the ruptures and continuities of Livornese Jewish life in the nineteenth century.

The Origins and Foundations of the “Jewish Nation” of Livorno

In 1591 and 1593, Ferdinand I, Grand Duke of Tuscany, issued a set of charters to attract settlers to the port city of Livorno. Known as the *livornina*, these charters addressed “all you merchants of any nation, Levantine, Ponentine, Spanish, Portuguese, Greek, German and Italian, Jewish, Turkish, Moorish, Persian and others” and invited them to “come, settle, trade, pass through, and dwell” in Pisa and Livorno.² The privileges guaranteed by the *livornina* were explicitly and primarily formulated to bring the families and capital of the Sephardi diaspora to Livorno.³ The *livornina* permitted settlers to return to Judaism in Livorno without fear of the Inquisition, even if they had lived or traded as Christians elsewhere. The charter provided certain guarantees to the Jewish community, including the freedom to practice their religion, and extensive amounts of administrative and judicial autonomy in internal matters. In addition, the *livornina* prohibited the forced baptism of any Jewish child under the age of thirteen and allowed parents and relatives to confer with any family member over the age of thirteen before a baptism

² Lucia Frattarelli Fischer, “Le case degli ebrei a Livorno: interni domestici del Seicento e del Settecento,” in *La nazione ebrea di Livorno: itinerari di vita* (Livorno: Edizioni Graphis Arte, 1991), 31. The full text of the *livornina* can be found in Renzo Toaff, *La Nazione Ebraica a Livorno e a Pisa (1591-1700)* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1990), 419-435.

³ When Jews were expelled from the Spain and Portugal, many fled to cities in the Ottoman Empire. In the sixteenth and seventeenth century, communities of Sephardi Jews and New Christians formed communities in Amsterdam, Bordeaux, London, and Hamburg. Yosef Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity: The Sephardi Diaspora in Western Europe* (Boston: Brill, 2000). A good source for background on the ethnic identity of the “Portuguese nation” is Miriam Bodian’s *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in early modern Amsterdam* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).

was carried out. Jews in Livorno were not required to wear any distinguishing items of clothing or to live in an enclosed ghetto and were permitted to own property in the city and freely exercise any trade except for that of dealing in second-hand clothes.⁴ The charter also allowed Jews to earn degrees from the University of Pisa, Jewish doctors to serve both Christian and Jewish patients, and Jewish households to employ Christian servants and wet nurses.⁵ Except for a brief interlude during the Napoleonic period, the *livornina* remained continuously in effect until the mid-nineteenth century, thus serving as the foundation of the Jewish community in Livorno for over two centuries.

Between 1530 and 1650, state authorities throughout Western Europe sought to harness the supposed commercial potential of Sephardi Jews by granting them generous privileges and promoting their “return.”⁶ In Livorno, the *livornina* was predicated on the fundamental idea that attracting Jewish merchants went hand in hand with promoting international trade in the city; Tuscan authorities believed that bringing Sephardi Jews to Livorno would be crucial for its development as a port. Other port cities on the Italian peninsula such as Ancona and Venice also competed to attract Sephardi merchants during the sixteenth century; however, Livorno’s charter offered the most favorable terms to potential Sephardi migrants.⁷ In Livorno, the charter lasted

⁴ This was one of the only places on the Italian peninsula where a ghetto was not instituted during the sixteenth century. In many of the small towns of early modern Italy, Jews were prohibited from exercising any trade besides that of dealing in second-hand clothes or pawn broking.

⁵ Although the *livornina* was never revoked, in the eighteenth century the provisions regarding Jewish doctors treating Christian patients and earning university degrees were not always upheld. In particular, the last two Medici rulers, Cosimo III (1670-1723) and Giangastone (1723-37), were less benevolent toward the Jewish community than the Medici rulers before and the Lorenese rulers after.

⁶ Francesca Bregoli, “The Port of Livorno and its *Nazione Ebraica* in the Eighteenth Century: Economic Utility and Political Reforms,” *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of Fondazione CDEC* 2 (2011): 47. Menasseh ben Israel of Amsterdam referenced the economic impact of the Jews of Livorno when he addressed Oliver Cromwell to plea for the reentry of Jews to England. Historian Jonathan Israel has argued that economic considerations, along with broader intellectual and political changes in Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries led to policies of “philosemitic mercantilism.” Jonathan Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550-1750* (Portland: Littman Library for Jewish Civilization, 1998), 93.

⁷ Benjamin Ravid, “A Tale of Three Cities and their Raison d’Etat: Ancona, Venice, Livorno, and the Competition for Jewish Merchants in the Sixteenth Century,” *Mediterranean Historical Review* 6, 2 (1991): 138-162.

for a twenty-five-year period, and was renewed quasi-automatically, while in Venice, the charter was only in effect for a five-year period and its renewal was often cause for debate. The *livornina* was also unique in granting Jews and New Christians immunity from the Inquisition and allowing them to pursue various branches of commerce without any restrictions. In his 1838 *Dizionario Geografico fisico storico della Toscana*, Emanuele Repetti declared with a flourish that the charters of Livorno had “benefited more than any other the Jewish nation, which almost came to see in Ferdinand I the desired Messiah and to find in Livorno another Jerusalem.”⁸ Attracted by the possibility of practicing their religion and pursuing commerce in a tolerant environment, Jewish individuals and families began to make their way to Livorno. The Jewish community, or *nazione ebrea*, of Livorno expanded rapidly, growing from 134 individuals in 1601, to 700 in 1632, to 1,250 in 1645.⁹

The *nazione ebrea* was one among many foreign nations in the social, political, and economic landscape of early modern Livorno. The *livornina* was designed to attract both Jewish and non-Jewish merchants to the new port of Livorno, and its provisions offered foreign merchants immunity from prosecution for debts contracted outside Tuscany and certain tax exemptions. Even after the tax exemptions for foreign merchants were revoked in the 1640s, Livorno’s atmosphere continued to be tolerant of and favorable towards immigrants of various origins and backgrounds. Religious minorities, foreign traders, debtors, outlaws, and enterprising youth all made their way to Livorno looking for economic opportunities during this period. The city grew steadily; in 1590 it was a small village of 500, by 1642 it had a population of about 12,000, in 1689, this number was 20,600, and by 1793, there were more than 40,000 people

⁸ Emanuele Repetti, *Dizionario Geografico fisico storico della Toscana*, vol. 2 (Florence: Presso l’autore e editore, 1838), 738.

⁹ After this census, there is a lack of precise data on the Jewish population until 1738. For calculations extrapolated from community birth and death registers, see: Toaff, *La Nazione Ebraica*, 120-129.

living in Livorno. The Jewish community consistently made up nine to twelve percent of the total population, perhaps unequaled in any other city in western Europe during the early modern era.¹⁰

Under the *ancien régime*, the term “nation” was used to designate and recognize various corporate bodies of foreign or minority communities. Foreign communities each had their own consular representation, and they could elect deputies and collect taxes for charitable support of their community. And yet, the *nazione ebrea* of Livorno held a unique position among the other nations living in Livorno. The French, British, or Dutch merchants who settled in the city, even for extended periods of time, remained French, British, or Dutch subjects, and their countries of origin continued to serve as important cultural and economic reference points. The authorities in Florence explained the difference in a letter to the governor of Livorno in 1774: “It is indeed noteworthy that the Jewish Nation, unlike the other [foreign nations], represents in Livorno a body politic, governed with its own laws and virtually separate jurisdiction. The reason for the aforementioned difference lies in the fact that *the Jewish Nation is regarded in Livorno as a subject nation* [that is, the Jews are regarded as Tuscan nationals], which is not the case with the others.”¹¹ As a subject-nation or “*suddita nazione*,” the Jewish community was considered “a non-foreign political body possessing a set of rights, a step upward from merely tolerated individuals or community.”¹² Critically, the Jewish community, despite its recognized autonomy and status, was not a “foreign nation” in Tuscany. The Jewish “subject-nation” was at once a distinct and integral part of the political and social structure of the Tuscan state.

¹⁰ Francesca Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment: Livornese Jews, Tuscan Culture, and Eighteenth Century Reform* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 30.

¹¹ Carlotta Ferrara degli Uberti, “The ‘Jewish Nation’ of Livorno: A Port Jewry on the Road to Emancipation,” in *Jews and Port Cities 1590-1990: Commerce, Community and Cosmopolitanism.*, eds. David Cesarani and Gemma Romain (Portland: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006), 158.

¹² Lois Dubin, “Subjects into Citizens: Jewish Autonomy and Inclusion in Early Modern Livorno and Trieste,” *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 5 (2006): 55.

The *livornina* granted privileges not only to wealthy Jewish individuals, but to all members of the Jewish community, and provided for the establishment of an autonomous Jewish communal administration in Livorno. A small oligarchy of Sephardi Jewish families selected from their midst five lay leaders, or *parnasim*, which in Livorno were known as *massari* (stewards). The *massari* had the authority to adjudicate civil, commercial, and minor criminal cases between a Jew and another Jew without the intervention of state authorities, while a special judge was called upon to adjudicate cases between Jews and Christians. The *massari* could decide cases on the basis of Jewish law and custom; however, they were under no obligation to follow the recommendations of rabbinical authorities. The *massari* frequently relied on civil, municipal, and maritime law to decide cases, particularly since the majority of cases that came before them were commercial disputes.¹³

As the Jewish community of Livorno grew in size, so did the structures of communal leadership. In 1667, an assembly of *governanti* was instituted to assist the *massari*.¹⁴ In 1693, the institution of the *congresso della nazione* created another governing assembly. Its sixty members were elected for life and could pass their position on to their descendants for three generations. With the reforms of Cosimo III in 1715, the grand duke attained for himself the right to select the

¹³ Dubin, "Subjects into Citizens," 61; Francesca Trivellato, "Sephardic Merchants between State and Rabbinic Courts: Malfeasance, Property Rights and Religious Authority in the Eighteenth-Century Mediterranean," in *From Florence to the Mediterranean and Beyond: Essays in Honor of Anthony Molho*, ed. Diogo Ramada Curto, Eric Drusteler, Julius Kishner, and Francesca Trivellato (Florence: Olschki, 2009), 634; Gabriele Bedarida, "120 anni di rapporti fra il Gran Duca e la Nazione ebrea di Livorno: Il Problema della Cancelleria (1647-1763)," *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 50 (1984): 606-633.

¹⁴ The community of Livorno gained independence from community of Pisa in 1597. Initially there were 12 *governanti*. The number was raised to 18 in 1690 and to 30 in 1693. Cristina Galasso has argued that for members of the Sephardi diaspora, reestablishing themselves as a Jewish community entailed a complete cultural reversal. While before the Jewish experience was confined to the home and family and under the guidance of women, in Livorno and men were in control and visible in community spaces and institutions (tribunal, school, synagogue, etc.), and the community rather than the family was preeminent in dictating Jewish life. Cristina Galasso, "Religious Space, Gender, and Power in the Sephardi Diaspora: The Return to Judaism of New Christian Men and Women," in *Sephardi Family Life in the Early Modern Diaspora*, ed. Julia R. Lieberman (Boston: Brandeis University Press, 2011), 110.

massari and other communal leaders from a list submitted by the *congresso della nazione*, further strengthening the ties between Tuscan state authorities and the Jewish community.¹⁵ The *governanti* and deputies of the *congresso della nazione* were responsible for tax collection and tax negotiations with the Tuscan authorities, administering charitable societies and distributing charity, managing the Jewish school system, and maintaining the synagogue and the Jewish cemetery. In their role selecting the leadership of the Jewish community, the *congresso* generally sought to increase the number of Sephardim holding positions of power in the community while preventing Italian and North African Jews from having access to these positions.

While the *nazione ebraica* of Livorno was never exclusively composed of members of the Sephardi diaspora, Spanish and Portuguese Jews held a dominant position in the community until the mid-eighteenth century. Unlike Venice, Rome, or Amsterdam, where different congregations of Jews were organized based on customs and places of origin, in Livorno the community was united by a single governing body and prayed in a single synagogue in the Sephardi tradition.¹⁶ Hereditary leadership positions allowed a Sephardi oligarchy to retain control over the communal offices and charitable institutions of the Jewish nation. Sephardi elites also played a predominant role in determining the cultural values of Jewish religious and public life in Livorno. In fact, Portuguese remained the official language of the Jewish community until 1787, when Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo decreed that rulings of the Jewish tribunal had to be written in Italian.

¹⁵ The names of eligible *massari* were drawn from a bag of candidates twice a year, and from this proposed list, the Grand Duke picked two or three.

¹⁶ The Jewish community in Italy is the oldest in Western Europe, tracing its origins to the second century BCE. Italian Jews, often referred to as Italkim, maintained their own distinct rituals and customs. During the early modern era, Jewish communities on the Italian peninsula were often made up of Italkim, as well as Sephardim (originating from the Iberian Peninsula) and Ashkenazim (originating from Central or Eastern Europe). In the Jewish ghetto in Venice, there were five different synagogues for the various rites of the community: the German synagogue, the Canton synagogue, the Italian synagogue, the Levantine synagogue, and the Spanish synagogue.

However, as the Jewish community grew in size and diversity, internal conflicts and tension also developed. Beginning in the first half of the eighteenth century, the Sephardi leadership faced growing struggles over control of the community's leadership. A few wealthy and powerful Italian families, such as the Recanati, began to challenge the Sephardim for positions on the governing bodies of the community. Protesting proposed changes to the leadership of the community, the *massari*, in the name of the *nazione ebrea portoghese e spagnola* of Livorno, wrote to the Grand Duke in 1697 that they had always governed the Jewish nation in Livorno "with the utmost peace and quiet" and "neither by justice or by grace" should Italian Jews be allowed to participate in the government of "our Portuguese and Spanish nation."¹⁷ Alongside this strongly worded letter, the *massari* donated 120,000 ducati of silk over six years "for the benefit and relief of the poor of Florence," which altogether persuaded the grand duke to decree that anyone who did not have Iberian origins was to be excluded from the community leadership. In 1715, the Grand Duke abrogated the ruling of 1697 and allowed for wealthy merchants to participate in the government of the *nazione ebrea* regardless of their origin, and in 1769, the grand duke abolished the hereditary quality of the offices. Initially, there were very few Italian and North African members of the community with enough wealth, status, or influence to enter the newly accessible leadership positions. However, of the 487 new members who were admitted to the Jewish community between 1753 and 1807, 33 percent came from other parts of the Italian peninsula, 29 percent came from North Africa, 16 percent from the Levant, and 11.8 percent from Europe, while only 3 were said to have come from Iberia.¹⁸ By the time of the 1808 census, North African Jews made up 13 percent of the community and

¹⁷ Toaff, *La Nazione Ebraica*, 178.

¹⁸ This percentage of North African Jews in a European Jewish community was rather remarkable for the early modern period. Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: the Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 93.

controlled 42 percent of the Jewish commercial houses in Livorno.¹⁹ Beginning in the last quarter of the 1700s, Italian and North African Jews were able to use their eminent position in the world of affairs to become members of the community's leadership and charitable associations. The origins, organization, and growth of the Jewish subject-nation of Livorno reveal the ways the Jewish community developed in relation to Livorno's evolution as a free port city critical in Mediterranean trade.

The Meanings and Possibilities of the Free Port of Livorno

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth century, Livorno became a major hub of international trade, providing a crucial trading link between Western Europe, North Africa, and the Ottoman Empire. Given the danger of sea travel, the limited capacity of ships to carry cargo, and the difficulties of communication during the early modern period, free port cities conveniently positioned on trade routes were increasingly important for the conduct of commercial transactions. Livorno was strategically located on the western coast of the Italian peninsula, and it was therefore easier for ships entering the Mediterranean from Spain, France, England, Holland, or the Americas to sail to Livorno rather than circumnavigate the Italian peninsula to sail to Ancona or Venice. Livorno came to function both as a regional port serving Tuscany and Italy, and an international port open to the Mediterranean. During the seventeenth century, Livorno grew from a sleepy village into a bustling port city, a central node in the exchange of goods between near and far-flung markets.

The creation and development of Livorno as a port city was a social, political, and economic experiment. The Medici princes intentionally set out to establish Livorno as the trading

¹⁹ Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 93.

center of the Tuscan state.²⁰ However, for the first part of the seventeenth century, the Medici princes or state authorities did not pursue a coherent economic policy in regard to Livorno. Historian Corey Tazzara has argued convincingly that despite the *livornina*'s influence on Livorno's development, "ascribing Livorno's success to its formal legislation is a gross oversimplification."²¹ There was no single collection of decrees or laws that defined procedures in the port, and Livorno's free port status developed in a largely ad hoc way as a "complex of formal and informal practices embedded in a larger institutional matrix."²² Local officials and merchants strategically employed the idea of a free port in order to argue for policies that would promote international trade in the city and protect merchants, ship captains, and their goods.

Although classified as a "free port (or *portofranco*)," Livorno was never truly a free trade zone. Rather, Livorno's free port status was based on a combination of light customs duties with political neutrality and tolerance for foreigners and minorities.²³ In 1646, the grand duke declared the absolute neutrality of Livorno in order to assure a secure and steady flow of goods for the port. In turn, Livorno tended to prosper during times of plague, famine, or war. It had well-developed quarantine facilities for goods from regions suspected of plague and large storage areas for grain during times of famine, while its politically neutral status allowed Livorno to step in whenever war disrupted the commercial traffic of rival port cities.²⁴ In another crucial reform for the port, the grand duke eliminated taxes on imports in 1676, imposing in their place a small

²⁰ Unlike other cities in Tuscany, Livorno was not an existing city-state that was taken over by the Medici. Rather, it was specifically settled and developed to be the port city of the Tuscan state. Samuel Fettah, "Livourne: cite du Prince, cite marchande (XVI-XVII siècle)," in *Florence et la Toscane (XIV-XIX siècles): Les dynamiques d'un État italien*, eds. Jean Boutier, Sandro Landi, Olivier Rouchon (Rennes: Press Universitaires de Rennes, 2004), 183.

²¹ Corey Tazzara, "Managing Free Trade in Early Modern Europe: Institutions, Information, and the Free Port of Livorno," *The Journal of Modern History* 86 (2014): 506.

²² Tazzara, "Managing Free Trade in Early Modern Europe," 506.

²³ Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 108.

²⁴ In addition to taking over their commercial functions, Livorno was able to act as a marketplace for pirated and seized goods and could provision ships on both sides of a given conflict. David LoRomer, *Merchants and Reform in Livorno 1814-1868* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 21.

and fixed stallage tax (*stallaggio*) for depositing and storing goods in Livorno's warehouses. After merchants paid the *stallaggio*, they could store, exchange, and export goods without paying further duties. These light and uniform duties made Livorno ever more attractive and important as an entrepôt, a port of deposit and re-exportation.

In 1757, economist Gian Rinaldo Carli visited Tuscany, and wrote, "I would like to say of Livorno that it is a lovely city with a large and secure port, governed and directed with the nuanced refinement of commercial spirit. Thanks to this no less than favorable situation, in a short time it has become the emporium of goods from the Levant and the Ponente, as well as the most convenient port of call for vessels from all powers that trade on the sea."²⁵ Livorno occupied a critical position in Mediterranean commerce and many ships made Livorno one of their primary ports of call. In the 1590s, deep structural changes in international trade increased the number of British and Dutch ships circulating in the Mediterranean. Beginning in the 1620s, the British chose Livorno as their principal base in the Mediterranean. In 1700, 34 percent of ships entering Livorno were flying the British flag, in 1715, 56 percent, and in 1730, 79 percent. Even with a slight decline in the second half of the eighteenth century, the number of British ships in the port remained notable.²⁶ Many of the British ships did not sail directly to Livorno from the British Isles, but rather came from the American colonies or the Levant. European ships trading in the Mediterranean tended to operate a "commerce of triangulation," calling at numerous ports during a voyage, and loading and unloading goods at each stop. Raw materials, manufactured products, and luxury items were constantly circulating in and out of Livorno. Orders from Northern Europe would arrive in Livorno for products from the Levant and North

²⁵ As quoted in Mario Baruchello, *Livorno e il suo Porto: Origini, Caratteristiche e Vicende dei Traffici Livornesi* (Livorno, Societa Editrice Riviste Tecniche, 1932), 308.

²⁶ In 1751, the percentage of British ships in the port was 49.9%, in 1785 it was 25%, and in 1789 33.5%. Jean-Pierre Filippini, *Il Porto di Livorno e la Toscana (1676-1814)* (Roma: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1998), 45.

Africa. The goods were then sent to Livorno, distributed to the various merchant houses, and then shipped to the buyer.²⁷ Europeans sought out wool, vegetable dyes, wax, leather, cotton, ostrich feathers, wax, grains, and other food stuffs (olive oil, rice, legumes, cheese, etc.) from North Africa and the Levant. And through Livorno, Europeans shipped to the Ottoman Empire: fashion textiles, chemical products, perfumes, metals (steel, copper, lead, iron), colonial products (sugar, coffee, indigo), manufactured items (ceramics, glass ware, soap, knives, scissors, coral beads, paper), and some food stuffs (salt fish, fruits, liquors).²⁸ In a letter to Tuscan authorities in the mid-eighteenth century, the Dutch consul stated, “The position of our port – the convenience of the warehouses, of the canals, of the exchanges, the credit – is the foundation that will always give us superiority over new ports because the difference [in shortcomings] will not prevail over all of these advantages.”²⁹ Writing at a time of growing competition from other port cities, the Dutch consul voiced his confidence in the “advantages” Livorno offered and its continuing importance in international trade.

Although economic policies helped develop Livorno as a port of deposit, they also solidified Livorno’s status as an exceptional port city distinct from the rest of Tuscany. Economic policies in Livorno prioritized the easy exchange of goods and materials over policies that would develop a Tuscan merchant marine or stimulate industry in the Tuscan hinterland.³⁰ Merchants in Livorno tended to charter cargo space for their goods on the large number of ships docked in the port flying French, English, or Dutch flags, rather than Tuscan, and the shipping

²⁷ LoRomer, *Merchants and Reform in Livorno*, 86.

²⁸ Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 105.

²⁹ Genoa blocked all products that were transported through Livorno, and other rival port cities adopted similarly restrictive policies. Baruchello, *Livorno e il suo Porto*, 491.

³⁰ Filippini, *Il Porto di Livorno*, 47. For information on the limitations of available sources on the port activities of Livorno, see D. Biaggiani, “Appunti per lo studio del movimento di navi e merci a Livorno tra XVII e XIX secolo,” *Ricerche storiche* 24, 3 (1994): 701-717.

sector of the economy was firmly in foreign hands.³¹ There were tariffs for moving raw materials and goods from the city to the hinterland and vice versa; however, in Livorno itself, firms could import raw materials, rework them, and export the finished products without having to pay any tariffs.³² Therefore, commerce and industry tended to complement each other in Livorno, and merchants and manufacturers often worked together. The main industries in Livorno were related to the goods that passed most often through the port, such as the reworking of coral, shipbuilding, and the production of clothing, hats, liquor, candied fruit, glassworks, soap, sails, and ropes.³³

During the early modern period, Livorno was not only famous as a free port for its reduced duties on imports and exports, but also for its openness to immigrants of all nations. Historians have pointed out that port cities were not by definition tolerant of foreigners or religious minorities. For example, Marseilles was governed by patently protectionist policies. In this respect, Livorno was rather unique in the early modern world. Historian Thomas Kirk has pointed out that in Genoa, “the term *portofranco* was used with reference to material goods, while in Livorno it was used with reference to persons,” and Livorno could be considered a free port well before the customs reforms of 1676.³⁴ By the mid-seventeenth century, the population of Livorno was made up of small, yet dynamic communities of Greek, British, Dutch, Armenian, and Jewish merchants. The tax registers from 1642 reveal that of 219 merchants, ten were

³¹ This was also a concern in Genoa, with calls for state subsidies to encourage shipping and shipbuilding among the Genoese. Thomas Kirk, “Genoa and Livorno: Sixteenth and Seventeenth-century Commercial Rivalry as a Stimulus to Policy Development,” *History* 86 (2001): 9.

³² LoRomer, *Merchants and Reform in Livorno*, 68.

³³ Marxist historians such as G. Mori considered the position of merchant and manufacturer to be fundamentally opposed, arguing that merchants were attached to free trade policy, while manufactures pressed for tariff protection and for access to hinterland without duties. LoRomer offers a compelling revision of this theory. LoRomer, *Merchants and Reform in Livorno*, 68.

³⁴ Kirk, “Genoa and Livorno,” 9.

British, eight were Flemish, thirty-three were French, twenty-eight were of various nations, twelve were Florentines, and eighty were of “the Jewish nation.”³⁵

Many foreign merchants chose Livorno as a base or branch of their commercial endeavors. A 1765 report entitled, “The Port of Livorno, its commerce, privileges, advantages, and neutrality,” explained the preeminence of foreign merchants in international trade in the city: “There is a fundamental reason why there have not been and are not at present a large number of Tuscan commercial houses. To be a successful merchant in Livorno you need good correspondents outside the city. Three or four London houses, for example, will direct so much merchandise, will recommend so many ships, and will give so many orders to an English merchant [in Livorno] that these transactions in themselves will produce at the end of the year a considerable profit without his [the English merchant’s] having risked anything of his own. It is difficult for Tuscans to have contacts and correspondents of this sort.” The exception was the Jewish population of Livorno, for according to him, “although they can be considered Tuscan they are not in this regard at the same disadvantage. Not only do they have an infinite number of correspondents but they also have branch offices in many foreign countries.”³⁶ This report points out that navigating the risks and rewards of international commerce required a wide range of relationships and sources of knowledge. In order to extend the field of their activities, merchants in Livorno had to establish contacts of varying degrees with other merchants in different markets. Francesca Trivellato has shown that Jewish merchants in Livorno were able to recruit

³⁵ Toaff, *La Nazione Ebraica*, 137.

³⁶ LoRomer, *Merchants and Reform in Livorno*, 293.

business agents in other ports because of their position as both Tuscan subjects and members of an extended trading diaspora.³⁷

Jewish Merchants, Commercial Networks, and Mediterranean Trade

Jewish merchants in Livorno played an enormously influential role in developing the economy of the city and its position in international trade. Jewish merchants generally made up the largest group active in commerce in Livorno. According to the calculations of Jean-Pierre Filippini based on the almanacs of commercial firms, out of roughly one hundred commercial partnerships in the first half of the eighteenth century, 30 were run by Jews, twenty by Dutch or Germans, fifteen by Frenchmen, ten by Englishmen, and ten by Italians, as well as a few by Armenians and Greeks. In 1793, Jewish firms accounted for 44 of a total of 143 firms in the city and 44 of total 199 in 1796.³⁸ These calculations reveal the consistently large number of Jewish individuals and firms involved in commerce in Livorno, although relying only on these numbers can obscure certain important fluctuations. Both Jewish and non-Jewish firms in Livorno rarely had a long life, and bankruptcy was fairly common. In fact, only 12 of the last names of Jewish merchants from the list in 1733 reappear in lists from 1809, and many of the firms in 1809 were directed by North African and Italian Jews rather than Spanish or Portuguese Jews, which suggests a transition in their economic position in the community and the city.

Jewish merchants were not only significant numerically in the economy of Livorno, but also in the diversity of their economic activities and breadth of their commercial networks.

³⁷ Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 22; Gedalia Yogev, *Diamonds and Coral: Anglo-Dutch Jews and Eighteenth-Century Trade* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1978).

³⁸ There is some variation on calculations of commercial partnerships during this period. In 1765, the governor of Livorno, counted about 200 merchants in the city with this breakdown: 50 were Jews, 30 were Tuscans, and 120 were foreigners. These numbers do not fully reveal the number of Jewish individuals involved in commerce, since often multiple people were involved in the operation of one firm. Filippini, *Il Porto di Livorno*, 76.

Reflecting this importance, the commercial newspapers of Livorno not only kept merchants informed of political and economic news such as price fluctuations, currency exchange rates, and ship arrivals, but also on the Jewish calendar and holidays in order to ensure the smooth functioning of business in the city.³⁹ Jewish entrepreneurs also played a role in developing the industries of Livorno, and were particularly involved in the manufacturing of tobacco, brandy, paper, hats, silk, leather, soap, and coral. In other parts of Italy, Jewish merchants were only permitted to be involved in commercial endeavors; however, in Livorno they had the ability to work imported materials without restriction.⁴⁰

In Livorno, Jewish commercial firms mobilized capital and formed partnerships largely within the context of familial relationships. For example, David Busnach and Salomone Coen Bacri were partners and brothers-in-law, while Salomone Aghib joined his brother and nephew in carrying out affairs in Livorno, Venice, Genoa, Alexandria, and Cairo. For Jewish merchants in Livorno, marriage became an act of commercial strategy, with large dowries often forming the basis of commercial firms. For Sephardi Jews in particular, marriage amongst close relations helped ensure that capital remained secure and transferable to future generations. But in general, business and family tended to be tightly linked, and often “marriage contracts substituted for partnership contracts.”⁴¹ In 1750, Lazzaro and Rebecca Recanati swore in front of a Christian notary that the large dower and dowry of six thousand pieces would be registered in the ledgers of the Recanati firm after their marriage.⁴² Although on rare occasions widows managed their

³⁹ Bruno Di Porto, “La stampa periodica ebraica a Livorno,” *Nuovi Studi Livornesi* 1 (1993): 177.

⁴⁰ A number of exclusive government contracts were held by Jewish entrepreneurs in the seventeenth century for manufacturing of tobacco, brandy, and paper. Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 112.

⁴¹ Francesca Trivellato, “Marriage, Commercial Capital, and Business Agency: Transregional Sephardic (and Armenian) Families in the Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Mediterranean,” in *Transregional and Transnational Families in Europe and Beyond: Experiences since the Middle Ages*, eds. Christopher Johnson, David Warren Sabean, Simon Teuscher, Francesca Trivellato (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 115.

⁴² Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 136.

family firms for short periods of time, Jewish women rarely played a direct role in managing the business affairs of family firms. However, women were certainly involved behind the scenes, particularly in the formation and preservation of business relationships and capital. As a growing number of North African and Italian Jewish merchant families began to settle in Livorno, marriages between Sephardi, North African, and Italian Jews of the same social class became more common as a way to help cement their developing commercial relationships.

In her studies of early modern Livorno, Francesca Trivellato has argued that this reliance on the family structure helps explain why so many Sephardi merchants chose to use general partnerships rather than limited liability partnerships in their commercial endeavors. After the sixteenth century, limited liability partnerships (such as *accomandita*) spread among non-Jewish merchants as a way to increase legal protection and reduce risks in a partnership.⁴³ In a general partnership, there was no set expiration date for the firm and all members shared full liability. At the same time, all members had the agency to act on the firm's behalf, which meant that decisions could easily be delegated to partners in different markets. In limited liability partnership arrangements, agents operating abroad needed written permission to act and were therefore limited in seizing opportunities as they arose. Only a few Jewish merchants in Livorno signed *accomandite* agreements, and those who did generally were not related and were creating firms based on smaller investments.⁴⁴ Rather than rely on legal mechanisms for protection, Jewish merchants tended to use shared social norms and relationships to form the foundation of their partnerships. While a few limited liability partnerships between Jews and Christians began to appear after 1770s, they remained extremely rare. Since limited liability partnerships gave

⁴³ Trivellato, "Marriage, Commercial Capital, and Business Agency," 110.

⁴⁴ Trivellato has found that the minority of Jews that did use limited liability partnerships during this period were mostly Jews of Italian origin and used these partnerships to run shops or sell handicrafts in Florence, Pisa, and other areas of Tuscany. Trivellato, "Marriage, Commercial Capital, and Business Agency," 113-114.

partners legal protection in a joint business endeavor, it is the endurance of social and cultural barriers between Jews and Christians that explains the infrequency of their partnerships.⁴⁵ Limited liability partnerships increased among Jewish merchants only during the second half of the eighteenth century, when the growing number of North African and Italian Jewish families in Livorno meant that ties of marriage and business were not as endogamous as before. By the end of the eighteenth century, Jewish merchants based in Livorno were beginning to use diverse partnership agreements, both general and limited liability, in an attempt to adapt flexibly to the changing dynamics of international trade.

Jewish merchants in Livorno participated in extended trading networks that circulated goods, information, and people around the Mediterranean. Jewish merchants were highly mobile, moving to different port cities to conduct business and to take advantage of new opportunities. Aleppo and Smyrna in the Levant, Tunis and Tetuan in North Africa, Livorno and Venice in Italy, as well as Amsterdam, London, Bordeaux, and Hamburg in Western Europe were all nodes of dense networks of exchange and communication for Jewish merchants in Livorno. They relied heavily on both Jewish and non-Jewish correspondents in various ports to help carry out their business affairs. In studying the correspondence of the Ergas-Silvera firm and their cross-cultural trade in coral and diamonds, Trivellato has found that “the creative combination of group discipline, contractual obligations, customary norms, political protection, and discursive conventions” helped the family form business relationships with other members of the Sephardi diaspora, as well as with Christian and Hindu merchants.⁴⁶ Sephardi merchants such as the Ergas-Silvera family were frequently in long term business deals with non-Jews, while Jewish

⁴⁵ Trivellato, “Marriage, Commercial Capital, and Business Agency,” 110.

⁴⁶ Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 16.

merchants who traded primarily with North Africa mainly relied on relatives or coreligionists as correspondents.⁴⁷

Historians have asserted that after 1685 merchants involved in the Atlantic trade began to specialize in single commodities, single geographic regions, or on imports, exports, or re-exports alone. In contrast, most Livornese merchants trading in the Mediterranean developed flexible and diverse approaches to their commercial activities. There was generally a wide range of partnerships and goods involved in Mediterranean commerce, although some Jewish merchants in Livorno specialized to some degree by focusing primarily on trading either with North Africa or the Levant.⁴⁸ North African Jewish merchants based in Livorno tended to orient themselves toward their countries of origin or other North African ports. Sephardi Jewish merchants tended to reinforce their connections with London and Amsterdam, which helped them acquire colonial products, find markets for Levantine products, enter into the international coral and diamond trade, and buy stocks and bonds.⁴⁹ Trivellato notes that after 1760, many Sephardi Jewish merchants registered their wills in London in order to protect their investments in the city. Although this practice was rare among non-Sephardi Jews, some Jews who focused on trade with North Africa also invested in London.⁵⁰ Despite the different strategies between Sephardi and North African Jewish merchants in Livorno, by the mid-eighteenth century many of their commercial networks began to overlap. The diversity in the Jewish community of Livorno and the ways their business practices began to converge and be shared across origins was a principal element of the commercial culture of Jews in Livorno during the nineteenth century.

⁴⁷ Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 67.

⁴⁸ Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 38.

⁴⁹ Livorno was at the center of the coral-diamond trade with India. Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 40, 60. Yogevev, *Diamonds and Coral*, 103-107.

⁵⁰ Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 61.

Over the course of the eighteenth century, Jewish merchants based in Livorno were central actors in a vital trading network that developed between Livorno, North Africa, and the Levant. Livorno was a main port in the commerce of triangulation in the Mediterranean; for example, goods moved frequently between Livorno, Tunis, and Marseilles.⁵¹ In 1748-1750, a treaty between Tuscany and the Ottoman Empire made trade between the Grand Duchy and other parts of the Mediterranean more secure. During this period, a growing number of Jewish families migrated to Livorno from all across North Africa in order to insert themselves more effectively into the routes and rhythms of Mediterranean trade, while Jews from Livorno moved to Aleppo, Salonica, Smyrna, Tripoli, Algiers, and Tunis.⁵² For example, in 1721, Salomone Aghib created a commercial firm in Cairo with Isach Racah. In 1724, Salomone Aghib “was obligated for reasons of his health to repatriate and return to this city (Livorno),” leaving the administration of the firm in Cairo to Isach. In 1727, Isach Racah also repatriated to Livorno, leaving the firm in the hands of Abram Aghib, Salomone’s brother, only to return to Cairo in 1738.⁵³ Livorno, like Venice, was one of the only western European ports where merchants from the Middle East and North Africa could conduct commerce freely. For these merchants, Livorno became an important access point to European markets. For example, the Abudarham family stationed family members in Livorno and Gibraltar in order to reach French and British markets. The Coen Bacri family, originally from Algeria, moved to Livorno and used their new base to turn their business not only towards the Levant, but also France and Britain. In last quarter of 1700s, members of

⁵¹ In order to bypass the protectionist policies of Marseilles, many Jewish merchants in Tunis “borrowed” the names of French merchants.

⁵² Minna Rozen, “The Leghorn Merchants in Tunis and their Trade with Marseilles at the end of the 17th century,” in *Les relations intercommunautaires juives en Méditerranée occidentale: Actes du colloque international de l’Institut d’histoire. XIII-XX siècles* (1982), 51; Filippini, *Il Porto di Livorno*, 91.

⁵³ In the meantime, Salomone Aghib created another firm under name of Salomone Aghib with Prospero Racah in Livorno. Jean-Pierre Filippini, “Il posto dei negozianti ebrei nel commercio di Livorno nel Settecento,” *Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 50 (1984): 643.

Coen Bacri family could be found in Livorno, Marseilles, Genoa, Napoli, and Tunis.⁵⁴ In Livorno, Jewish merchants could find capital, suppliers, transportation, and markets. By the eighteenth century, Livorno had become an important center of finance and insurance, and family members representing North African firms in Livorno helped navigate the transfer of funds for their partners, as well as arrange the boats and insurance for sending goods towards their target destination.⁵⁵

For Jewish merchants, Livorno not only offered the framework for expanding their commercial networks, but also the attractive possibility of Tuscan subjecthood and political protection. Beginning in 1614, the *massari* had the power to naturalize Jews as Tuscan subjects through a procedure called *ballottazione*, and accord them protection of their persons and property under Tuscan law.⁵⁶ Becoming a Tuscan subject through *ballottazione* offered individuals immunity from debts accrued and crimes committed prior to their move to the port as well as access to consular protection outside of Tuscany. Many immigrants chose not to go through this official naturalization process. Indeed, most of the *ballottati* were businessmen and merchants; in 1809, over half of the sixty individuals who went through the process of *ballottazione* were merchants, and if brokers and exchange agents are also included in these calculations, three quarters of the sixty belonged to the world of commerce. However, there were some less prosperous individuals who applied for *ballottazione* and were officially admitted to the Livornese Jewish community; a tenth of the sixty *ballottati* in 1809 were “poor,” including

⁵⁴ Attilio Milano, “Uno sguardo sulle relazioni fra Livorno ebraica e I paesi della Barberia,” in *Miscellanea di studi in memoria di Dario Disegni*, ed. E.M. Artom, L. Caro, S.J. Sierra (Torino: Istituto di studi ebraici, 1969), 144.

⁵⁵ According to Filippini’s calculations based on data from insurance policies, Jewish merchants based in Livorno controlled as much as 83 to 94 percent of the exports from Livorno to North Africa but only between 11 and 35 percent of the exports to the Levant between 1765 and 1790. Filippini, “Il posto dei negozianti ebrei,” 644.

⁵⁶ *Ballottazione* referred to a secret vote by which Jewish leaders admitted individual foreign Jews to the *nazione ebrea* of Livorno.

two beggars, two smalltime merchants, and two laborers.⁵⁷ The exact reasons why these beggars and laborers bothered to undergo *ballottazione* remains unclear, except perhaps the fact that it freed them from debts or other troubles elsewhere.

In 1815, Moise Morpurgo submitted his request for *ballottazione* to the *massari*, writing that he had moved from Salonica to Livorno, “where he has settled and established a commercial firm under the names of Morpurgo, Father, Son, and Company...and [is now] wanting to enjoy the privileges of Tuscan citizenship...[and] all of the privileges and immunities that have been conceded to members of the Jewish nation of Livorno.”⁵⁸ Morpurgo’s letter echoed any number of other requests for *ballottazione*, tracing his origins, his economic activities, and above all, his desire to “enjoy privileges” as both a Tuscan and a member of the *nazione ebrea* of Livorno. As naturalized Tuscan subjects, Jewish merchants could then trade in the Ottoman Empire as foreign protégés under the protection of the French, and later Austrian and Tuscan consuls.⁵⁹ In 1771, Hillel Picciotto, a Jewish merchant from Livorno with a firm in Aleppo, was granted a certificate from the grand duke directing the Tuscan consul in Aleppo and “wherever [Picciotto] moves to regard him and protect him as a true subject.”⁶⁰ This description of protection and its documentation underscored the importance of *ballottazione* for merchants. Merchants could also choose to be naturalized in order to become full members of the Jewish community of Livorno, hoping to assert their social status or become part of the communal leadership. In order to conserve the privileges of *ballottazione*, it was necessary to reside in Livorno and to ask permission to leave. In practice, the importance of international commerce made the *massari*

⁵⁷ Filippini, *Il Porto di Livorno*, 123.

⁵⁸ Archivio della comunità ebraica di Livorno (ACEL), Minute, 1815-1819, Livorno, Italy.

⁵⁹ Until 1753, per an agreement with the Ottoman Empire, Tuscans were under the protection of the French consulate. Jean-Pierre Filippini, “La ballottazione a Livorno nel settecento,” *Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 49 (1983): 199-268.

⁶⁰ Copy of the Picciotto Certificate, Picciotto-Silvera Papers, Private Collection of Helen and Maurice Douek, Los Angeles, California.

largely tolerant of Livornese and neo-Livornese who were absent from the city for long stretches of time. The connection between residence in Livorno and Tuscan citizenship also became an incentive for Jewish immigrants to root themselves in Livorno and make Livorno the base for their commercial operations.⁶¹

A brief examination of the commercial firm formed by the Enriques and Franchetti families helps illuminate how Jewish merchants used Livorno in conjunction with other Mediterranean port cities in order to navigate their commercial endeavors. On April 15, 1782, Salomone Enriches and Joseph Franchetti created a commercial partnership in Tunis “to trade from here with Smyrna and Livorno and whichever other parts.”⁶² The partnership consisted of ten members, although not all of the members shared equal authority and responsibility. Salomone Enriques was the director of the firm and at his death that right passed to his son Isach, while the right to buy and sell was reserved for four members, and one member, Abram Franchetti, was in charge of the accounts. Tunisia was the central office of the firm, but there would also be branches established in Livorno and Smyrna that could make independent decisions for the benefit of the firm. The main focus of the business was on the production and trade of hats “*alla levantina*” (fez); the firm imported Spanish wool through Livorno, manufactured hats in Tunisia, and distributed them in Smyrna. According to the contract, “Il Sig. Abram di Salomone Enriques is obligated to set forth for Livorno...in order to become a Tuscan subject through *ballottazione*,” and as soon as he accomplishes this, “he should embark promptly on the first boat flying a peaceful flag for Smyrna to assist there in the trade” of the firm. The contract clearly reflects an instrumental understanding of Livorno and Tuscan subjecthood;

⁶¹ Francesca Trivellato, “Port Jews of Livorno and their Global Networks of Trade in the Early Modern Period,” in *Jews and Port Cities 1590-1990: Commerce, Community and Cosmopolitanism*, eds. David Cesarani and Gemma Romain (Portland, Vallentine Mitchell, 2006), 33.

⁶² Jean-Pierre Filippini, “Gli ebrei e le attività economiche nell’area nord Africana (XVII-XVIII secolo),” *Nuovi Studi Livornesi* 7 (1999): 135.

Abram Franchetti was to pass through the city only long enough to gain the benefits of a European passport, consular protection, and commercial contacts. In the 1790s, the Franchetti family relocated to Livorno. The outbreak of the plague in Tunis in 1785 and the decline in Tunisian hat production, as well as Livorno's higher position in the hierarchy of the mercantile world, were all deciding factors in Franchetti's move to Livorno.⁶³ Like many other Jewish commercial firms operating in the Mediterranean, the Enriques-Franchetti business partners and family members traced paths and shaped networks that crisscrossed the Mediterranean through Livorno.

Indeed, Jews from places such as Tetuan, Smyrna, and Aleppo came to do business in Livorno, and "colonies" of Livornese Jews could be found from Amsterdam to Salonika to Tunis. The Jews from Livorno maintained a sense of distinctiveness in these "colonies," distinguished by a sense of socio-economic superiority and unique cultural patrimony that often included wearing European clothes and preserving the ability to speak Italian.⁶⁴ In a notable example, the Livornese community of Tunis, referred to as the *Grana*, from the Arabic term for Livorno, strongly differentiated themselves from the *Twansa*, or native Tunisian Jewish population, and maintained their own synagogues, schools, and communal leadership. While deep cultural differences divided "Livornese Jews" and "native Jews" in the Ottoman Empire,

⁶³ During the nineteenth century, the family's commercial network turned towards Trieste and Vienna, although they retained strong connections with Tunis. Subsequent generations chose to pursue careers in the liberal professions rather than commerce. For information on the history of the Franchetti family in the nineteenth century, see Mirella Scardozzi, "Una storia di famiglia: I Franchetti dalle coste del Mediterraneo all'Italia liberale," *Quaderni Storici* 114 (2003): 697-740.

⁶⁴ In some cities of settlement in the Ottoman Empire, the Livornese Jews were known as Italians, Francos, or Portuguese. The francos in the Ottoman Empire were notable in their support for the reform and Westernization of schools in their communities. Matthias Lehmann, "A Livornese 'Port Jew' and the Sephardim of the Ottoman Empire," *Jewish Social Studies* 11, 5 (2005): 59; Aron Rodrigue and Sara Abrevaya Stein, eds., *A Jewish Voice from Ottoman Salonica: The Ladino Memoir of Sa'adi Besalel a-Levi* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2012), xxiv. For more information on communal divides in the Ottoman Empire, see: Minna Rozen, "Contest and Rivalry in Mediterranean Maritime Commerce in the first half of the Eighteenth Century: The Jews of Salonika and European Presence," *Revue des Etudes Juives CXLVII*, 304 (1988): 309-352.

the colonies of Livornese Jews abroad retained deep connections with the Jewish community of Livorno.

In 1822, the Jewish community of Livorno wrote to Tuscan authorities regarding some distressing news brought by the most recent vessel from Tunis. A peace treaty signed between Tuscany and Tunisia included an article directed at Tuscan Jews who moved to Tunis, declaring that “after one, or... two years they can no longer be regarded as Tuscan subjects under the protection of our consul but instead must be regarded as Tunisian subjects and therefore pay taxes and other duties as Jews.” Felice Padova, the chancellor of the Jewish community, asserted, “I believe that our government in its policies and justice will not agree to such a condition so prejudiced against some of its subjects and so injurious to commerce.”⁶⁵ Arguing against the potential treaty, the chancellor referenced the large, distinct, and vital community of Livornese Jews in Tunisia, and emphasized the commercial importance for the Tuscan economy of continuing to consider these Jews, even if living abroad, as Tuscan subjects.

The Port Jews of Livorno: Emancipation, Acculturation, and Integration in a Port City

The important economic and cultural role that Jews played in Livorno shaped the political discourse of Jewish emancipation and transformation in Tuscany. Lois Dubin and David Sorkin have both used the conceptual framework of “port Jews” to offer an alternate model of Jewish emancipation to the better-known cases of Germany or France. In Dubin’s studies, the Jews of Trieste and Livorno were prime examples of “port Jews” whose “civil inclusion” was based on perceptions of economic utility.⁶⁶ In the debate over emancipation in eighteenth and nineteenth century France and Germany, non-Jewish authorities and intellectuals, as well as

⁶⁵ ACEL, Copialettere, 11 November 1822. The chancellor was appointed and paid for by the grand duke to help with the administration of the Jewish community.

⁶⁶ Lois Dubin first proposed the concept of “port Jews” in *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste: Absolutist Politics and Enlightenment Culture*.

some Jewish intellectuals, perceived the pronounced involvement of Jews in commerce as distorted and unhealthy. In his famous 1781 essay, “On the Civil Improvement of the Jew,” Christian Wilhelm von Dohm asserted that the development of Jews had been stifled by centuries of persecution and limits, and that Jews needed to reform their moral, physical, and economic conditions before they could hope to achieve political emancipation.⁶⁷ Jews needed to be “regenerated” before they could be considered equal and receive the rights enjoyed by non-Jews. In contrast, in Livorno, there was never a “Jewish Question” or a discourse of emancipation that revolved around Jewish transformation or improvement.⁶⁸ Rather, Tuscan authorities understood Jewish involvement in commerce as a useful and positive attribute, one to be fostered in order to stimulate the economic growth of the port city. The Jewish elite of Livorno saw no need to “regenerate” themselves; they expressed no need to turn away from commerce nor any desire to move way from a distinct and separate Jewish community.⁶⁹

In Western Europe, calls for Jewish emancipation drew on the principle that Jews needed to renounce any sense of national distinctiveness and communal autonomy if they wanted to enjoy equal rights as citizens. As Count Cleremont-Tonnerre declared at the French national assembly in 1789: “One should deny the Jews as a nation everything and grant them everything as individuals.”⁷⁰ In revolutionary France, the legal emancipation of Jews hinged on dissolving the *ancien régime* formulation of Jewish community as a corporate body and on assimilating Jews as individuals into the nation. In Livorno, however, Jews continued to be treated and considered as a separate and autonomous communal body.⁷¹ In fact, the concept of Jewish commercial utility ensured that throughout the eighteenth century, Tuscan reformers, authorities,

⁶⁷ Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment*, 221.

⁶⁸ Bregoli, “The Port of Livorno and its *Nazione Ebraica*,” 56; Uberti, “The ‘Jewish Nation’ of Livorno,” 168.

⁶⁹ Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment*, 241.

⁷⁰ Bregoli, “The Port of Livorno and its *Nazione Ebraica*,” 63.

⁷¹ Bregoli, “The Port of Livorno and its *Nazione Ebraica*,” 63.

and Jews continued to understand the *nazione ebrea* as a separate corporate community in Livorno, and continued to insist that privileges should be granted to the Jews of Livorno as a community, and not as individuals.⁷² In her research, Francesca Bregoli has suggested that ironically, the distinctive privileges of the port Jews of Livorno “did not promote their transition from civil inclusion to political emancipation.”⁷³ Rather, their “privilege and economic usefulness contributed to the arrested political integration of Livornese Jewry” as compared to other Jewish communities.⁷⁴

During the 1770s and 1780s, the reform-minded Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo instituted municipal councils composed of property owners throughout Tuscany.⁷⁵ Initially, there were suggestions that non-Catholics who owned property, of which Jews made up a significant number in Livorno, would be eligible to participate equally in the magistracy. Instead, the final decree in 1780 reserved a seat for a Jewish deputy who would be chosen by the grand duke from names submitted by the *massari* to represent the interests of the entire *nazione ebrea*. The privilege of having a Jewish deputy on the council in Livorno was a step towards political integration in that it gave the Jews of Livorno a public voice and vote. However, this reform certainly did not signify political equality. The Jewish community continued to be considered as a collective with communal interests, and “the guaranteed Jewish seat remained exceptional, outside the regular norms and procedures.”⁷⁶ A 1789 decree allowed both non-Catholics and Jews to hold municipal office throughout Tuscany, however in Livorno, the special provision for

⁷² Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment*, 228.

⁷³ Bregoli, “The Port of Livorno and its *Nazione Ebraica*,” 63.

⁷⁴ Francesca Bregoli and Federica Francesconi, “Tradition and Transformation in eighteenth century Europe: Jewish Integration in Comparative Perspective,” *Jewish History* 24 (2010): 241.

⁷⁵ In 1737, the Grand Duchy of Tuscany passed from the hands of the Medici family to the House of Lorraine.

⁷⁶ Dubin, “Subjects into Citizens,” 66.

the separate selection of a Jewish representative lasted until 1845. Livorno and its Jewish community remained a singular case, apart from the rest of Tuscany.

By the eighteenth century, Livorno was the largest Jewish community on the Italian peninsula and, next to Amsterdam, the largest Sephardi community in Western Europe. The Jewish community grew over forty percent over the course of the eighteenth century, and at its end comprised approximately ten percent of the total population of the city; the community numbered over 4,300 in 1784 and over 5,300 in 1809. Visitors to Livorno often visited the “Jewish quarter,” regarding it as a kind of tourist attraction. A French traveler in 1719 referred to Livorno as “paradise of the Jews,” while in 1764, Edward Gibbon described Livorno “as a veritable land of Canaan for the Jews,” although he also noted there was a latent “religious hatred” in the city.⁷⁷ Non-Jewish descriptions of Livorno tended to exaggerate the population of the Jewish community to be anywhere from “some thousand Jews” to twenty thousand.⁷⁸ With these inflated numbers, observers insinuated the economic power and marked influence of Jews in the port city, sometimes with appreciation and more often with animosity. Taken as a whole, these exaggerated visitor accounts were built on the premise that the Jewish community held a prominent place in Livorno, but they certainly did not truly reveal the tenor of daily life in the city. Jews were part of the social and urban landscape of Livorno, navigating its spaces, opportunities, and tensions every day.

A formal ghetto was never introduced in Livorno, but the Jews there were concentrated in a neighborhood in the southern part of the city, just behind the Duomo. The first Jewish

⁷⁷ Guyot de Merville (1729) and Edward Gibbon diary (1764) as quoted in Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 71.

⁷⁸ Montesquieu wrote in 1728 of 6000 and 7000 Jews in Livorno, and the Savary brothers mention 10,000 Jews. Captain John Foss estimated 40,000 inhabitants in Livorno, of which 20,000 were Jews. All of these numbers were clearly inflated. Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 71.

migrants to Livorno had initially had settled along the main street, via Ferdinanda (later via Grande), and set up a small synagogue inside a wealthy merchant's home.⁷⁹ In 1603, in an attempt to make via Ferdinanda more distinguished, Ferdinand I designated the area behind the Duomo as the "Jewish quarter," and construction on a synagogue began in 1607.⁸⁰ Already in the seventeenth century the synagogue building was visible from outside of the city. The synagogue became one of the principal buildings in Livorno and the second largest synagogue in Europe after that of Amsterdam. As Saskia Coenen Snyder has articulated in the case of Amsterdam, where its two prominent synagogues were "acceptable and familiar structures integrated with the urban landscape" and "expanded, rather than tested the limits of toleration," the visibility and prominence of the synagogue in Livorno stood as a symbol of Jews' sense of security in the city.⁸¹ Raffaele Ascoli wrote of the synagogue: "this great monument conveys/ the piety of all the Jews that here in Livorno/ found peace...Of marble, silver, tapestry, all is adorned...[and] everyone admires it."⁸² Ascoli emphasized the importance of the richly decorated and prominent synagogue as a symbol of the Jewish community, one that was both markedly distinct and integrated into the landscape of the city.

As the Jewish community of Livorno grew, the designated Jewish streets surrounding the synagogue grew into a virtual Jewish neighborhood. Nuclear families often lived in the same building or on the same floor as their extended families, and their standard of living was quite

⁷⁹ Lucia Frattarelli Fischer, "L'insediamento ebraico a Livorno dalle origini all'emancipazione," in *Le tre sinagoghe: Edifici di culto e vita ebraica a Livorno dal Seicento al Novecento*, ed. Michele Luzzati (Livorno: Umberto Allemandi), 33-46.

⁸⁰ Galasso emphasizes the importance of the synagogue for Marrano Jews returning to Judaism. Galasso, "Religious Space, Gender, and Power," 109.

⁸¹ The synagogues of Livorno and Amsterdam stand in marked contrast to most other synagogue structures in early modern Europe, which often tended to be simple because of the poverty of the Jewish community and inconspicuous because of fear of antisemitic attacks. Saskia Coenen Snyder, "Acculturation and Particularism in the Modern City: Synagogue Building and Jewish Identity in Northern Europe" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Michigan, 2008), 43.

⁸² Ascoli, *Gli ebrei venuti a Livorno*, 46.

similar to that of their Christian neighbors.⁸³ As one non-Jewish visitor in May 1740 observed, “the Jews live cleanly in a certain part of this city and one cannot see a difference between them and other Christian citizens;” the acculturation of the Jewish community of Livorno was in marked contrast with communities of Ashkenazi Jews elsewhere in Europe.⁸⁴ At times Tuscan authorities attempted to introduce firmer boundaries between Jewish and Christian living spaces. For example, a 1625 decree stated that Jews and non-Jews were to use different staircases when living in the same building, and a 1708 decree forbade Jews and non-Jews from living on the same street.⁸⁵ Considering the density of living arrangements between Jews and non-Jews, this was more wishful thinking than practical. In daily life, the borders of the Jewish quarter could be easily crossed. Christians also lived in the neighborhood behind the Duomo, sometimes in the same buildings as Jews, while some Jews lived outside the Jewish neighborhood and had shops and warehouses scattered throughout the city. For example, Andrea Merelli, owner of property in via San Francesco, rented to thirteen people, eleven of whom were Christians and two of whom were Jews; Giovanantonio Franzese rented the ground floor of his building and two floors above it to Isach Baruch Losada and the third floor to a French Christian. Donna Rachele Baruch Eminente rented an apartment on via Santa Giulia where she was the only Jewish resident on the entire street.⁸⁶ Although concentrated in the Jewish quarter, the wealthiest Jews were always able to live or buy property anywhere in city, including the main thoroughfare of via Ferdinanda. In the late eighteenth century, the wealthiest Jewish families began to live in villas outside the city center.

⁸³ The census of 1646 reveals a population of 1245 people in 97 houses. Thirteen families were “miserable” living in one room, thirty-six families lived in two rooms, fifteen families lived in three rooms, nineteen families lived in four rooms (considered ample), and fourteen lived in seven to fifteen rooms (probably with multiple family nuclei belonging to same family). Frattarelli Fischer, “Le case degli ebrei,” 3-39.

⁸⁴ Giangiacomo Panessa, *Nazioni e Consolati in Livorno: 400 anni di storia* (Livorno: Belforte, 1998), 33.

⁸⁵ The 1708 decree was repeated in 1764 -- a sign of its failure to be implemented. Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment*, 23; Toaff, *La Nazione Ebraica*, 138.

⁸⁶ Toaff, *La Nazione Ebraica*, 138.

Unlike most other places in Europe, Jews were able to own property in Livorno, and Jews were major participants in real estate investment both inside and outside of the old city walls. By the 1820s, the Abudarham family possessed no fewer than six large buildings in the old city and paid over 247 scudi annually in property taxes, while the Bacri family held titles of three large buildings and other properties (warehouses and parts of buildings), and paid over 165 scudi, 148 of it for property within the walls.⁸⁷ Although Jews owned a large amount of property in Livorno, only in a small number of cases was the income from property enough to sustain an entire family, and most Jewish landowners continued to rely on commerce as a main source of financial support.⁸⁸ For wealthy Jewish merchants, real estate was both an economic and a social investment. It allowed them to earn income from rents while simultaneously asserting their position and social standing within the city.

In 1790, Isaac Euchel, a maskilic writer, wrote: “The Jews of Livorno live together in peace and security in comfortable homes among the nobles of the land, their houses are built of granite, most of them are respected merchants, clean shaven with curly hair; their clothing does not differ from that of the other people, and they speak the vernacular tongue as lucidly and elegantly as their rhetoricians.”⁸⁹ Writing a fictional travelogue for a Prussian Jewish audience, Euchel held the Livornese Jews up as the ideal of an acculturated and integrated Jewish community. Indeed, just as their granite homes were integrated into the urban landscape, the Jewish elite of Livorno was highly attuned to and participated in the cultural life of the city. As in Amsterdam, the well-to-do Jews of Livorno lived in spacious and well-furnished homes, frequently attended plays and operas, and traveled by carriages. Jews owned twenty percent of

⁸⁷ These records are from 1826 and 1824. LoRomer, *Merchants and Reform in Livorno*, 77.

⁸⁸ Filippini, *Il Porto di Livorno*, 15.

⁸⁹ Isaac Euchel in “Letters of Meshulam ben Uriyah ha Eshtemoi,” as quoted in Lehmann, “A Livornese ‘Port Jew,’” 54.

the theater boxes in Livorno; the Franchetti family bought four for themselves. The library of Giuseppe Attias (1672-1739) was widely visited by both Jewish and non-Jewish scholars, and contained books on natural sciences, theology, moral and political philosophy, jurisprudence, lexicons and grammars, history, literature, geometry, and geography.⁹⁰ Jewish merchants shaved their beards and dressed in fine clothes, but they did not conduct business on Saturdays and kept the dietary laws in their homes.

From inventories of Jewish households that were compiled after death or bankruptcy, it is clear that affluent merchants in Livorno saw their possessions as a way to display their cultural attainments and social status. In 1687, Abram Barzilloi Surat's store in the Jewish quarter sold oil, cotton, silk, writing pens, and sugar. In the living room of his home upstairs, he had ten chairs with arms, a walnut dinner table with six chairs, a large mirror, damask curtains, and ornately framed paintings with scenes from Jewish history and the Ten Commandments. The number of chairs and table settings in the homes of Jewish merchants such as Surat suggest that they entertained friends and family in their homes.⁹¹ While it is impossible to capture everyday interactions between Jews and non-Jews in the streets, taverns, cafés, and customs house of Livorno, it does seem that on some occasions, non-Jewish acquaintances would join members of the Jewish elite for dinner. In 1770, foreign consuls, notable merchants of various origins, and the governor of the city all attended the lavish marriage of Giacob Aghib and Anna Aghib. One non-Jewish attendee described the "house, ornate with paintings and furniture of the best taste,"

⁹⁰ Francesca Bregoli, "Jewish Scholarship, Science, and the Republic of Letters: Joseph Attias in Eighteenth-Century Livorno," *Aleph* 2 (2007): 97-181.

⁹¹ Surat's bedroom contained a four-poster bed with a cupboard full of clothes and linens. The parlor opened up onto the kitchen containing pans, dishes, and a ceramic set of forty pieces. Frattarelli Fischer, "Le case degli ebrei," 36.

and seven days of celebrations complete with musicians, dinners, and dances in great halls illuminated by silver and crystal candelabras.⁹²

Significantly, as Jews negotiated their integration into the surrounding society, the authority and influence of Jewish communal structures in Livorno continued to maintain communal boundaries. In this way, “more self-sufficiency for Jews in Livorno also meant less social integration.”⁹³ While there were some conversions to Catholicism, there was not a marked drift away from the community as there was for upwardly mobile Jews in eighteenth century England; between 1764 and 1790, there were fourteen Jews who converted, mostly women and poor young men.⁹⁴ Highly acculturated, wealthy Jews were inclined to participate in the leadership of the *nazione ebrea*, rather than fall away from the Jewish community. There were over sixty voluntary charitable associations in Livorno, each directed by deputies who used their philanthropic participation to assert their social standing. When the synagogue of Livorno was renovated in 1695, wealthy merchants contributed large sums for the decoration of the building, and requested that their names be engraved on the marble as a testament to their generosity.⁹⁵

While wealthy merchants became the emblem of the commercial and cultural success of the entire *nazione ebrea* of Livorno, they certainly were not representative of the Jewish community at large. About forty-two percent of Jews in Livorno were involved in commerce in

⁹² Bregoli notes that in contrast to the western Sephardi diaspora elsewhere in Europe, Sephardi Jews in Livorno were oriented around Italian culture, rather than Iberian. Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment*, 32. Frattarelli Fischer, “Le case degli ebrei,” 37.

⁹³ Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 99.

⁹⁴ Todd Endelman, *Radical Assimilation in English Jewish History, 1656-1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990). The privileges granted to Jews in Livorno meant that children and youth could not be forcibly converted as they could elsewhere on the Italian peninsula. The house of the catechumens had a charitable element as well. In the nineteenth century, between 1827 and 1865, twenty-three individuals were baptized. While not significant numerically, conversion had an impact as a social symbol and on the level of the family. Silvia Marconcini, “L’esame di accertamento della volontà di conversione degli ebrei a Firenze e a Livorno, dalle livornine alle case dei catechumeni. Il ‘Registro degli atti di esplorazione’ di Livorno (1827-1865),” *Materia giudaica: bollettino dell’Associazione italiana per lo studio del giudaismo* (2014): 212.

⁹⁵ Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 90.

some capacity, but this included not only overseas merchants, but also petty merchants, cashiers, clerks, financial intermediaries, interpreters, storage, packing and shipping professionals, and porters. Another twenty-three percent of the Jewish population supplied services to the community, working as shopkeepers, grocers, tailors, printers, or secondhand clothes retailers, while about six percent of Livornese Jews depended directly on the community for a salary as rabbis, teachers, and public health care providers.⁹⁶ As in many large Jewish communities during the early modern period, a great number of Livornese Jewry were earning low wages or living in poverty. The many charitable organizations of the community were responsible for clothing the indigent, educating the poor, giving dowries to poor young women, offering medical services, burying the dead, and providing for deserving young students. Access to education was determined by gender and social class. While the elite of the Jewish community were educated at home by private tutors, the majority attended the Talmud Torah.⁹⁷

Historian Carlotta Ferrara degli Uberti observes that overall, by the end of the eighteenth century, there was “a marked polarization between a very well-to-do, well-integrated elite increasingly involved in the life of the city, including its cultural sphere, and a mass of poor persons bordering on indigence, dependent on the charitable associations.”⁹⁸ Despite the wide gulf between the rich and the poor in the Livornese Jewish community, the poor showed some measures of integration and acculturation with wider society; they dressed similarly to the non-Jewish poor in Livorno and spoke in Italian. For example, all segments of Jewish society attended comedies in the theaters of Livorno. In her study of coffeehouses in eighteenth century Livorno, Francesca Bregoli notes that while Jewish and non-Jewish authorities sought to

⁹⁶ Bregoli, “The Port of Livorno and its *Nazione Ebraica*,” 51.

⁹⁷ Until 1835, there were three levels of instruction under the name of Talmud Torah: kindergarten, elementary school, and rabbinical school. There were very high literacy levels among both men and women in the Livornese Jewish community.

⁹⁸ Ferrara degli Uberti, “The ‘Jewish Nation’ of Livorno,” 160.

maintain ethnic and religious boundaries, individuals often crossed them in their daily life.⁹⁹ If in early modern Germany, Jews and Christians sat at the same tavern or coffeehouse, but at different tables, Bregoli speculates that this was probably the overarching framework for socializing in Livorno as well, noting, however, that Jews and non-Jews certainly shared public spaces and activities and did on occasion drink and gamble together.¹⁰⁰

The Jewish community of Livorno was divided not only by wealth, but also by ethnic origins. As we have seen, changes in the demographic makeup of the community led to bitter competition over communal leadership positions during the eighteenth century. In 1769, Lazzaro Recanati was still the only Italian among the nine most prominent Jewish merchants in town. The others were five Sephardim (Joseph Franco, Isaac Attias, Joseph Leon, Jacob Ergas, and Jacob Bonfil) and three North African Jews (Judah Farro, Michel Pereira de Leon, and Jacob Aghib).¹⁰¹ The pluralism within the Jewish community of Livorno complicates any suggestions of a singular and unified community. Social relationships and business partnerships between Jews from different ethnic groups developed over time, but only among families of similar rank; divisions between the wealthy and the poor counted for more than ethnicity. And yet, symbolic gaps often remained. In a bitter lawsuit of 1760, Isaac Saccuto replied to an accusation of forgery made by Joseph Nataf of Tunis with the words: “We are not in Barbary,” prompting the reply from Nataf: “I may be a Barbarian but I am no thief.”¹⁰²

The members of the Livornese Jewish community were rooted in the social, economic, and cultural milieu of Livorno, yet their daily lives also had global reach. As individuals,

⁹⁹ Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment*, 154.

¹⁰⁰ Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment*, 154.

¹⁰¹ Visiting Livorno twenty years later, a German traveler noted that the Recanati and Montefiore families had replaced the Francos as the most internationally active Jewish merchants of Livorno. Trivellato, “Sephardic Merchants between State and Rabbinic Courts,” 641.

¹⁰² Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 95.

families, and a community, the Jews of Livorno were deeply connected with relatives, business partners, and Jewish communities around the Mediterranean basin and beyond. The *nazione ebraica* of Livorno was a central reference point for Jewish life in the Mediterranean. Jewish families operated nine different printing presses in Livorno that distributed books all across North Africa and the Levant.¹⁰³ Liturgical books for Jewish communities of Baghdad, Constantinople, Tunis, Tripoli, Algiers, Alexandria, and Tetuan, were all printed in Livorno.¹⁰⁴ The famous rabbinical school of Livorno trained rabbis in the Sephardi rite who then served different congregations throughout the world. The Sephardi community of London had a particularly strong relationship with Livorno, sending regular requests for rabbinical and cantorial applicants from Livorno to fill open positions in their congregation.¹⁰⁵ The charitable associations of Livorno also often extended their reach to Jews in need well beyond the local community. The association responsible for distributing dowries to poor girls initially only allowed Sephardim to sit on its board; however it did not discriminate against any Jewish woman on the basis of her origins, unlike its counterpart in Amsterdam, which distributed funds only to those of Spanish or Portuguese origins. Between 1670 and 1704, ten percent of its beneficiaries were Italian or Ashkenazi girls, while fourteen percent resided in foreign Jewish communities, such as Alexandria, Jerusalem, Amsterdam, Smyrna, Aleppo, Tunis, Venice, and Genoa. Livorno also served as a main hub for the collection and transfer of charitable funds to the Jewish communities of Palestine and as a node for emissaries of this philanthropic network.¹⁰⁶ In order to understand the local and global practices of the Jewish community of Livorno, it is necessary

¹⁰³ For more information on the evolution of Hebrew printing presses in Livorno, see: Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment*, 181-207.

¹⁰⁴ Arthur Kiron, "The Belforte Publishing House and the Art of Ladino Printing," in *Salomone Belforte & C. Duecento anni di un editore*, ed. Guido Guastalla and Silvia Guastalla (Livorno: Belforte, 2006), 20.

¹⁰⁵ ACEL, Minute, 1815-1818.

¹⁰⁶ Matthias Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land: The Sephardic Diaspora and the Practice of Pan-Judaism in the Eighteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 37.

to further examine the social makeup of the city in general, the status and activities of Jewish and non-Jewish merchants, as well as the economic and cultural values of Livornese society.

Social Classes, Social Mobility, and Conflict in Early Modern Livorno

Both Jews and non-Jews believed that the bustling port city of Livorno held the intertwined promises of economic opportunity and social mobility.¹⁰⁷ At the same time, Livorno was a highly stratified early modern society. A small number of nobles and men of citizenship rank (*cittadinanza*) were at the top of the social ladder.¹⁰⁸ Next in rank were a small number of bankers, ten in 1809, and then a larger number of international traders. Bankers and merchants were generally wealthier than nobles and citizens, but they were usually foreign and ineligible for municipal office. Bankers tended to emerge from the merchant class, usually towards the end of a long career in international commerce. After twenty years, Salomone Coen Bacri passed from international commerce to banking.¹⁰⁹ Next in rank were “merchants of the second order,” a class of local merchants who were engaged in regional trade or who dealt in merchandise purchased from other merchants.¹¹⁰ A wide gulf separated international merchants from the merchants involved in retail trade. Those involved in retail were ineligible to serve in the city’s chamber of commerce, and, few, if any, shopkeepers could be found in the membership lists of the city’s philanthropic associations, which suggests a social division between the various merchant classes. Another significant social group in Livorno were the *mezzani*, or commercial agents, who were responsible for drawing up contracts for the sale and shipment of merchandise

¹⁰⁷ LoRomer, *Merchants and Reform in Livorno*, 66.

¹⁰⁸ In 1604, Ferdinand chose 100 urban elite to have citizenship rank, and from this group other leaders of the city were chosen.

¹⁰⁹ Filippini, *Il Porto di Livorno*, 88.

¹¹⁰ Merchants of “the second order” were recognized as such in tax rolls and the administration of Livorno.

as well as facilitating currency transactions.¹¹¹ Other social groups in Livorno included: professionals, porters, artisans, and tradesmen. Much of the population of the city was involved in activities of the port, and in 1790, there were 220 merchants, 250 brokers, and a vast number of clerks, secretaries, apprentices, warehouse workers, porters, stevedores, sailors, etc.¹¹²

A 1790 engraving entitled, “The merchant in his office who listens and gives commissions to the *mezzani*,” captures a Livornese commercial firm at work.¹¹³ The merchant sits in the center of the office at his large wooden desk, quill in hand, ready to sign his orders for the *mezzani* he’s addressing. Everyone around the merchant is captured in motion – the cashier is counting currency, and one clerk is writing a letter while another clerk files paperwork amidst the ledgers and letters on the shelves. On the walls hang a city plan of Livorno, maps of Italy and the Iberian Peninsula, as well as notices of currency exchange rates and commercial edicts. To engage in commerce, merchants needed to know how to read, write, do figures, as well as have a broad understanding of geography, trade routes, legal systems, bills of exchange, insurance policies, and markets. Because Mediterranean trade tended towards the simultaneous exchange of many different goods rather than one good or another, merchants had to be able to judge the weight and quality of a large variety of merchandise and evaluate their fluctuations in price and demand. Merchants had to navigate transactions in pezzi, ducati, scudi, franchi, lire, zecchini, or a host of other currencies; a merchant could take advantage of differences in the exchange rates by buying his goods with one currency and selling them for another.

The merchants of Livorno belonged both to their nation and to a broader community of those engaged in the practice of commerce. Both the “nation” and the community of merchants

¹¹¹ Mezzani were differentiated by what operations they could perform and the volume of their affairs. Many mezzani were the employees of a single firm. LoRomer, *Merchants and Reform in Livorno*, 67.

¹¹² Baruchello, *Livorno e il suo Porto*, 510-511.

¹¹³ The engraving is reprinted in Filippini, *Il Porto di Livorno*.

were powerful and often overlapping spheres of belonging. They could also function separately or in tandem as lobbies defending the interests of their members. When the chamber of commerce was created in 1801, seats in the chamber were allotted by nation – four Tuscans and six from “the nations most representative of the commerce of the city” – two English, one Greek, one Northerner, and two Jews.¹¹⁴ The chamber of commerce not only reflected the continued influence of foreign merchants in Livorno, but also the continued relevance of the “nation” in Livornese society. Carlotta Ferrara degli Uberti has pointed out that both Jewish and non-Jewish merchants came to place meaning in the concept of commercial utility. They shared “a wholly secular definition of virtue... [where] to contribute to maritime commerce meant to be useful, which in turn meant to be virtuous.”¹¹⁵ The concept of utility, which both the Jewish community and Tuscan authorities used to justify the economic and social position of Jews in the city, also “opened the way for the Jews to be integrated” through a powerful system of values, shared among the merchant class of the port city.¹¹⁶

When the Medicis issued a new gold coin in 1676, they chose an image of Livorno’s fort with the motto “*diversis gentibus una*” (many diverse people, one city) inscribed on it.¹¹⁷ Walking through the streets of Livorno, one would encounter people from many different nations, who sometimes looked, dressed, and spoke very differently from one another. Individuals living and working in the city, particularly the very wealthy or the very poor, could interact on a daily basis with people of different religions or origins. Francesca Trivellato has proposed the term “communitarian cosmopolitanism” to describe the “familiarity with strangers common to the least and the most privileged strata of the population of Livorno as well as the

¹¹⁴ LoRomer, *Merchants and Reform in Livorno*, 71.

¹¹⁵ Ferrara degli Uberti, “The ‘Jewish Nation’ of Livorno,” 161.

¹¹⁶ Ferrara degli Uberti, “The ‘Jewish Nation’ of Livorno,” 161.

¹¹⁷ Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 96.

logic that defined and enforced corporate identities.”¹¹⁸ Indeed, despite the openness of Livorno, boundaries and divisions between various corporate groups continued to exist. For most individuals, “the nation to which they belonged constituted the horizon of expectations,” and upward economic and social mobility happened within the context of the community.¹¹⁹ Jews could hope to achieve elite status by serving as a deputy for a Jewish charitable association or moving from the Jewish quarter to a larger home on via Ferdinanda, but this trajectory of success remained within the framework of the Jewish community.

And although many historians associate port cities with open and tolerant environments, in most port cities including Livorno, there were fissures and fractures between segments of the population. In Livorno, legal, social, and cultural divisions continued to exist between Jews and Christians. Jews from Livorno could serve as a Tuscan vice-consul in the Levant, but they continued to be excluded from some professions, such as the practice of law, and certain spheres of society, such as the elite Accademia, which only began accepting Jewish members in 1779. Jews were not the only ones who could perceive themselves to be hindered with their relationships to other groups in the city. In 1834, a Christian commercial agent (*mezzano*) addressed a revealing letter of complaint to the Jewish community. He wrote, “I have noticed the partiality of Jewish merchants for *mezzani di cambio* that profess the same religion as them to such an extent that it can be considered a true exclusion against the *mezzani di cambio* of our religion, since there is no Christian *mezzano* who is currently employed. This partiality does not have, nor can reasonably have any just cause...I don’t want to believe that it results from a misguided spirit of religious intolerance... this spirit of intolerance would be in true opposition

¹¹⁸ Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 73.

¹¹⁹ Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 73.

to the most tolerant customs and opinions of our time.”¹²⁰ He warns that “maintaining these prejudices would be dangerous to the civil well-being of our city, and [sow] in commercial operations a seed of discord.” The author blames his economic troubles and unemployment on what he perceives to be the divisive actions of Jewish merchants, and although he gestures to an idealized vision of a tolerant Livorno, he undercuts this image with his anti-Jewish sentiment and his vaguely ominous forecast of “seeds of discord” in the city.

Occasional outbursts of violence revealed the tensions that often existed right below the surface in Livornese society. In 1722, an angry crowd threw stones at some Jewish houses, and in 1751, a random shooting set off an attack against the Jewish neighborhood.¹²¹ Whenever the holiday of Purim fell during Lent, the Tuscan government offered the Jewish community armed protection, and the processions of the eucharist through the streets of the Jewish neighborhood was similarly seen as potentially dangerous occasions.¹²² There were also larger outpourings of antisemitic violence in 1790 and 1800, times of revolutionary turmoil. In 1790, Jews were accused of using marble meant for a church to decorate the face of the synagogue and of colluding with pirates by feeding them information on the movement of ships. The community had to buy the intervention of the authorities by donating 2000 *pezze da otto reali* to the poor of Livorno. Historians have understood this attack as a reaction to larger economic reforms and concern over skyrocketing grain prices. It certainly also had elements of an urban and class conflict; most of the participants were proletarian warehouse and port workers from the “little Venice” area in the north of town.¹²³ In 1800, a mob entered the Jewish quarter to look for an allegedly stolen cache of arms. This attack happened during the second French occupation of the

¹²⁰ ACEL, *Minute*, 1835-1836.

¹²¹ Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 71.

¹²² Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment*, 60.

¹²³ Samuel Fettah, “Les Émeutes de Santa Giulia À Livourne: Conflits locaux et résistances au despotisme éclairé dans l’Italie de la fin du XVIII siècle,” *Provence historique* (2000): 459-470.

city, a period of tension in the city and a time when the Jews were associated with French revolutionary principles. This time, the intervention from the authorities was more robust, if belated and initially ineffective.¹²⁴ In general, however, it seems that antisemitic violence was much rarer in Livorno than in other European communities.

A Port City in Transition: Livorno's Economy during the Late Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century

Throughout the seventeenth century, Livorno developed into a vibrant port city and came to occupy a pivotal position in international trade. However, by the last quarter of the eighteenth century, its economic health was less robust. It faced growing competition from other ports on the Italian peninsula, such as Genoa, Ancona, Civitavecchia (outside Rome), and Naples, in addition to competition from other Mediterranean ports, most notably Marseilles, whose ascendancy began in the 1720s. The other port cities served more productive and populous hinterlands than Livorno did, and despite attempts under the House of Lorraine to integrate Livorno politically and economically with the larger grand duchy, it remained rather separate from Tuscan production and agriculture. Other port cities began to capture some of the commercial traffic from Northern Europe and the Atlantic, but Livorno was able to compensate by increasing its commerce with the Levant and North Africa. Livorno remained the port of northern European merchants in the Mediterranean, particularly the British, and continued to function as an important financial center for international trade.¹²⁵ In 1789, Livornese exports to northern Europe were still greater than Marseilles'. Despite elements of positive growth in the

¹²⁴ The vice-governor sent four hundred soldiers, who fired onto the crowd and incited them to further violence.

¹²⁵ Filippini, *Il Porto di Livorno*, 30.

economy of the city, this period overall was characterized by rising uncertainty due to wide fluctuations in the activity of the port.

The nineteenth century, in turn, can be characterized as a time of broad scale change for the economy of Livorno. The French revolution and the prolonged conflict between France and Britain fundamentally disrupted the rhythm of port activities. The French briefly invaded Livorno in 1796 and 1799, although during these years Livorno continued to trade, as it often did during times of war. The British blockaded Marseilles and Genoa, so Livorno became the prime port of the Mediterranean, especially for transporting grain and cotton. However, all this changed when Livorno was annexed to the French empire under Napoleon in 1808. The period of annexation and integration into the French empire (1808-1814) exists as a parenthesis in Livorno's history as a free port. The French invasion violated the long-treasured neutrality of Livorno, and many in the city fell on hard times. The blockade immediately caused a dramatic drop in the number of ships entering the port and severely limited the goods merchants could import, particularly colonial products.¹²⁶ From 1809 to 1813, the number of merchants in the city decreased from 212 to 98, the number of brokers decreased from 190 to 21, the number of wholesale merchants went from 36 to 6, retailers dropped from 1267 to 498, and many porters and laborers were unemployed. All spheres of the economy were affected; manufacturers decreased from 570 to 199, hoteliers went from 284 to 151, wagon drivers from 138 to 27, and even those in the liberal professions dropped, from 58 to 21.¹²⁷ The port's stagnation was not offset by supplementary industrial activity, and this sector of the economy also entered a period of crisis. Factories and workshops closed, and while there were 2500 workers employed in

¹²⁶ Jean-Pierre Filippini, "Le conseguenze economiche e sociali della dominazione francese sulla vita del porto di Livorno," in *La Toscana nell'età rivoluzionaria e napoleonica*, ed. I Tognarini (Napoli: Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1985), 322.

¹²⁷ Filippini, *Il Porto di Livorno*, 155.

industrial work in 1810, in 1812, there were only 532.¹²⁸ Consumption of meat and wheat dropped radically in the city, indicating the overall decrease in the standard of living during this troubled time.

The Napoleonic era was undoubtedly a period of economic difficulty and turmoil in Livorno. However, as Silvia Marzagalli has argued, most of the historiography has incorrectly assumed the total ruin and paralysis of merchants during this period. Merchants were in many ways able to adapt to these drastic market changes by drawing on their international commercial connections or adopting not quite legal trading practices, such as bribery or smuggling.¹²⁹ They continued to extend themselves despite the British blockade, trying to profit from the small amount of goods entering the port or from grain speculation. There was still some mobility among merchants coming and going from Livorno for *viaggi di affari* during this period, demonstrating that the port of Livorno did not just cease to operate, as often claimed in the historiography. Usually, these were small merchants accompanying merchandise from North Africa to Livorno, rather than the inverse. Livornese merchants could rely on connections with their correspondents in other cities to avoid relocating during this time.¹³⁰ Although some merchants chose to leave Livorno or abandoned commerce during these hard times, a large number of the population of Livorno was still involved in commerce. From 1809 to 1813, 46 percent of merchants paid the tax for patents to pursue commerce.

In general, historians have described Livorno as a “port city in decline” for much of the nineteenth century. Mario Baruchello, writing during the fascist period, pessimistically traced the

¹²⁸ In 1810, four workshops of coral employed 1100 people, and in 1812, there were three workshops with only 100 workers.

¹²⁹ Silvia Marzagalli, “Port Cities in the French Wars: The Responses of Merchants in Bordeaux, Hamburg and Livorno to Napoleon's Continental Blockade, 1806-1813,” *Northern Mariner* 4 (1996): 65.

¹³⁰ Jewish merchants visiting Livorno usually only stayed for a short time. Jean-Pierre Filippini, “Ebrei emigrati ed immigrati nel porto di Livorno durante il periodo napoleonico,” *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 48 (1982): 45-106.

decline of Livorno from the 1750s on, while Giorgio Mori, writing much later from a Marxist perspective, linked the overall decline of commerce in the nineteenth century to the later expansion of the industrial economy in the city. In contrast, David LoRomer and Samuel Fettah have more recently argued that it is essential not to view the history of Livorno's economy solely through the lens of decline, from the perspective of changes associated with Italian unification and its loss of free port status in 1868.¹³¹ In fact, they point out that a close analysis of the data complicates simple characterizations of Livorno's economy in the nineteenth century. The following chapter will build on this understanding of Livorno's economy.

After the reinstatement of its free port status in 1814, commerce in Livorno began to pick up again, and prosperity once more seemed like a tangible possibility. The number of sailing ships and steamships entering the port from 1815 to 1850s increased steadily. In 1811, during the French occupation, the number of large sailing ships entering Livorno had fallen to a low of 81. Immediately after the restoration of the grand duchy in 1814, the number of ships jumped to 422, and increased again to 943 in 1815, peaking in 1816 at 1124 ships, before dropping to 891 in 1817 and 682 in 1818.¹³² The population of Livorno also grew during the nineteenth century; there were 57,446 individuals in Livorno in 1815 and 83,537 individuals in 1850. Of this population growth, 19,989 was from natural increase, and 13,493 was from immigration to the city.¹³³ Except for the cholera outbreak of 1835, the natural increase of the population was rather steady, and Livorno's population was still growing by an influx of migrants to the city.¹³⁴ While

¹³¹ Samuel Fettah, "Temps et espaces des traffics portuaires en Mediteranee: Le cas du port franc de Livourne (XVII-XIX siècles)," *Ricerche storiche* (1998): 243-273; Baruchello, *Livorno e il suo Porto*; Giorgio Mori, "Linee e momenti dello sviluppo della città, del porto e dei traffici di Livorno," *La Regione: Rivista dell'unione regionale delle provincie toscane* 3 (1956): 3-44.

¹³² LoRomer, *Merchants and Reform in Livorno*, 33.

¹³³ LoRomer, *Merchants and Reform in Livorno*, 51.

¹³⁴ From 1814 to 1850 population grew by 33, 842. Vittorio Marchi and Ugo Canessa, *Duecento Anni della Camera di Commercio nella Storia di Livorno*, vol. 1 (Livorno: Debatte Otello, 2001), 478.

population statistics do not necessarily reveal the health of the economy of Livorno, they do suggest that there was no rapid, precipitous decline of the city's economy.

Indeed, many economists in the nineteenth century took optimistic views about the state of affairs in Livorno. In 1838, Luigi Serristori wrote: "Who does not in fact recognize in Livorno's population many of the external characteristics of prosperity and even of wealth? Houses in large number are being erected that are larger and more pleasant than the old; furniture is increasing in quantity, value, and elegance; there exist a considerable number of carriages of which not a few are deluxe; private foundations have been set up to offer instruction, charity, and credit... Without losing ourselves in figures, are these facts not enough to convince us that the actual condition of the inhabitants of this city is more prosperous than in the past?"¹³⁵ Tension emerged between those who looked at the economic situation of Livorno rosily and those who interpreted it negatively. An 1818 report considered Livorno to be still superior to Genoa in terms of imports, and, in 1839, while Livorno's traffic had fallen behind Genoa's, Livorno was still in fifth place among Mediterranean ports, after Marseilles, Trieste, Constantinople, and Genoa. In the Marseilles newspaper, *il Semaphore*, Emanuele Repetti reported on the number of ships from the Levant in European ports during the last semester of 1832: 388 ships had entered the ports of England, 392 had entered Genoa, 350 had entered the port of Marseilles, and 428 had entered the port of Livorno.¹³⁶ In his 1838 *Dizionario*, Repetti reflected on the difficulty of the age, but was hopeful for the future of Livorno: "they have predicted the decline of the commerce of Livorno since 1758... But still, from that period on, and then with the exception of unforeseen cases of fiscal or political emergencies, Livorno has advanced step by step, prospering in

¹³⁵ Luigi Serristori in *Livorno ed i suoi traffici*, as quoted in LoRomer, *Merchants and Reform in Livorno*, 299 n. 61.

¹³⁶ Baruchello, *Livorno e il suo Porto*, 592.

population, wealth, and commercial activity.”¹³⁷ While port statistics from the period could send mixed messages for Livorno’s prospects, Repetti was insistent on presenting an optimistic image of Livorno’s future as a port city to his readers.

Even as Livorno lost its preeminent position to rival port cities such as Marseilles, Genoa, and Trieste, it continued to function as a Mediterranean entrepôt during the nineteenth century.¹³⁸ In 1838, Edoardo Mayer, director of Livorno’s discount bank, prepared a long memorandum for Emanuele Repetti as he put together his *Dizionario*. Mayer traced the path of the city’s imports and exports. He reported: Of goods from the Levant (an average annual value of 6,500,000 Tuscan lire), Egyptian raw cotton was almost entirely reshipped to manufacturing centers in Switzerland, England, France, and Belgium; two-thirds of the wool went to France, England, and Piedmont; the silk was primarily for either Tuscany or Genoa; wax and linens were consumed in large part in Tuscany, though wax was also sent to Sicily; gall nuts, saffron, and so on were re-exported to England, Belgium, Holland, and Germany; and opium was re-exported to England, France, and America. Of goods from the West and the North, salt fish, metal, wood, pitch, tar, linens, and cowhides (valued at 6,750,000 lire) were consumed in Tuscany or shipped to other areas of the Italian peninsula. Three-fourths of manufactured goods from England, France, and Switzerland, a “rich branch of the market” valued overall at 23,000,000 lire, were re-exported to the Levant, while one-fourth remained in Tuscany or other parts of Italy. Mayer concluded that “Livorno is a central point, where, with a bustle of activity, products arriving by sea from opposite points are exchanged.”¹³⁹ For Livorno, the depot trade and re-exportation of

¹³⁷ Repetti, *Dizionario*, 754.

¹³⁸ Fettah, “Livourne: cite du Prince, cite marchande,” 191.

¹³⁹ LoRomer, *Merchants and Reform in Livorno*, 29.

commodities, especially of grains and manufactured goods, remained important well into the 1840s.

Yet, by the mid-nineteenth century there were certainly changes in the dynamics of international trade that caused concern and uncertainty for those doing business in Livorno. Over the course of the nineteenth century, declining profits, port activity, and sources of credit all contributed to a growing sense of uneasiness amongst those living and working in Livorno. Chapter Two will continue to examine Livorno's economy and position in Mediterranean trade during the nineteenth century, and will explore commercial strategies pursued by Jewish merchants in this shifting economic context.

The Jewish Community of Livorno during the Nineteenth Century

Before investigating the migrations and commercial strategies of Jewish individuals and families from Livorno in the following chapter, it is worthwhile to examine the Livornese Jewish community within the context of social, political, and economic changes taking place during the nineteenth century. These changes had a deep impact on all aspects of the Jewish community. During the period of French control over Tuscany, Livornese Jews were “emancipated,” and the community was reorganized under the consistorial system of French Jewry.¹⁴⁰ However, with the restoration of the Grand Duchy in 1814, the Jews of Livorno successfully petitioned the authorities to reestablish the “Jewish nation” under the old privileges. While theoretically the Jewish community remained under its own autonomous leadership, the institutions and their responsibilities changed dramatically in their restoration. The congress was reduced to forty

¹⁴⁰ Livorno was head of the “consistorial synagogue” of the Department of Mediterranean.

members, and only 13 of 40 were from old Spanish families. There were only three *massari* instead of five, and they were no longer judges of the *nazione ebrea*. Beginning in 1814, the Jews of Livorno were under the same civil and municipal laws as the rest of the population of Livorno, and they were judged as individuals when they appeared in court.

However, there remained elements of administrative autonomy for the Jewish community, particularly in the spheres of marriage, divorce, and *ballottazione*. Within the highly mobile Jewish population, *ballottazione* continued to be an important way of policing the boundaries of the community. For example, in 1818 the chancellor of the Jewish community wrote a letter to the governor of Livorno about a possible Jewish arrival to Livorno: “Haim Curiat, North African, self-styled as a rabbi and coming from Smyrna with his wife and children...last year he was here and had a suspect character. From various reports it seems that he has formed a plan to repudiate his wife and blame her for infidelity in order to marry another woman...The personal character of said Curiat is dangerous and therefore his permanence in this city would be absolutely scandalous and injurious to the community because it is almost certain that he would abandon his family. The illustrious *massari* have charged me to procure from you an agreement blocking said people from setting foot in Livorno.”¹⁴¹ With these words, the leadership of the Jewish community expressed their concerns about admitting newcomers who would be a drain on the resources of the community or tarnish its reputation. The Jewish community vigorously defended their right to oversee the admission or exclusion of Jewish migrants to Livorno throughout the nineteenth century. In 1836, the Tuscan government abolished the general safe conduct provision of the *livornina* and raised the possibility of abolishing the special *ballottazione* procedure, but they abandoned the proposal in the face of

¹⁴¹ ACEL, Copialettere, 2 March 1818.

forceful protests from the Jewish community. The leadership of the community contended that the possibility of becoming Tuscan subjects continued to attract Jewish merchants to the city, emphasizing how important this was for the economy of Livorno. The Jewish community retained this distinctive privilege; when in the 1830s and 1850s some Jews turned directly to the Tuscan authorities to be naturalized, they were instructed to follow the procedures of *ballottazione* through the Jewish community.¹⁴²

Throughout the nineteenth century, the concept of utility continued to form the theoretical foundation for the Jewish community of Livorno. In 1814, a Jewish man was accused of having sexual intercourse with a Christian woman and arrested. The Jewish administration immediately sent two prominent delegates, David Busnach and Salomon Tedeschi, to Florence to defend him against this “slandorous claim,” which in their minds represented an attack on “all Jewish merchants.” They pointed out, “And at a time when the recovery of trade in the port of Livorno attracts Jewish commercial houses from abroad, and especially from the Levant, to enjoy the beneficial effects of the governments of your Imperial and Royal Highness, such harassments could halt it in its course. We supplicants therefore flatter ourselves to think that your Imperial and Royal Highness will deign to take the matter into consideration...in order that the individuals of the Jewish nation may apply themselves to their trade untroubled and in safety, and prove useful to the city and the state as indeed they have done at all times.”¹⁴³ With these words, the community delegates once more relied on the conceptual framework of the utility of the Jewish community of Livorno and its connection with commercial networks abroad. These factors had become even more important in the context of the port’s economic difficulties, and it

¹⁴² Archivio di Stato di Livorno (ASL), b. 942 (1836); b. 897 (1853), Livorno, Italy.

¹⁴³ Ferrara degli Uberti, “The ‘Jewish Nation’ of Livorno,” 161.

was ever more crucial that the Jewish community retain certain privileges and protections in order to continue to contribute to the Tuscan economy.

In her studies of Jewish emancipation in Livorno, Carlotta Ferrara degli Uberti has argued that there was a fundamental shift in the Jewish communal leadership's attitude towards special corporate privileges in the mid-nineteenth century. From the 1820s to the 1840s, the Jewish elite moved from staunchly defending Jewish privileges to loudly supporting equal rights for the Jews as individual citizens. As members of the Jewish community absorbed more fully the general political culture, there "gradually emerged a liberal conception of the state institutions and an ever stronger national ideology with low tolerance of separate bodies."¹⁴⁴ Ideas about Jewish economic utility and commercial success as justifications for communal privilege started to lose their appeal. Undoubtedly, this ideological shift was also connected to the general economic context and declining fortunes of the port, however, Carlotta Ferrara degli Uberti leaves this implication of her argument unexplored. David LoRomer points out that in general, "the commercial elite gradually left behind that 'extraterritorial status' that had formerly made its fortune," and became more involved in supporting the urban economy and consolidating ties between the city and its hinterland.¹⁴⁵ In response to the revolutionary fervor of 1848, the Grand Duke Leopold II issued a statute that declared: "Whatsoever religion they may practice, the Tuscans are all equal before the law, contribute without distinction to the revenues of the state in proportion to their property, and are all equally eligible for civil and military employment."¹⁴⁶ Although the statute only remained in place for four years, it effected a

¹⁴⁴ Ferrara degli Uberti, "The 'Jewish Nation' of Livorno," 167.

¹⁴⁵ As quoted in Ferrara degli Uberti, "The 'Jewish Nation' of Livorno," 167.

¹⁴⁶ Ferrara degli Uberti, "The 'Jewish Nation' of Livorno," 167.

complete reorganization of the Jewish community in Livorno, one that would continue with the unification of Italy and the emancipation of Italian Jews.

The census of 1841 reveals a Jewish community made up of 4,771 individuals, 2,327 men and 2,444 women in 1,178 families and 264 houses.¹⁴⁷ The census of 1841 also reveals the occupational structure of Jewish community. The Jewish community never consisted solely of merchants involved in international trade. The active population made up 60.9% of the total population (2907 individuals), and their economic activities can be divided into seven main categories: industrial workers and artisans, merchants, service workers (such as transportation, teachers, domestic servants), housewives, clergy, students, and the non-active (those without a profession, poor, landowner).¹⁴⁸

While many Jews were still concentrated in the Jewish neighborhood behind the Duomo, by the mid-1830s, some of the wealthiest Jews had started to move from the center of the city to the suburbs. In 1833-1834, the community issued a report describing this migration and the concerns it raised for the community in the future: “the movement of Jews to the suburbs, and the current proximity of the homes of Jews to those of gentiles...renders it indispensable from a prudent perspective to forbid that a Yeshiva can be instituted in any location a person chooses...We would hasten to observe that according to the privileges it is not conceded to us to have more than one Temple, a sage edict issued in order to maintain the unity of our Corporation that has helped avoid fatal divides and schisms in times before.”¹⁴⁹ Even though Jews in Livorno

¹⁴⁷ In 1808-9, the Jewish community was made up of 5338 individuals. Luzzati, *Ebrei di Livorno tra due censimenti*, 25.

¹⁴⁸ Those involved in commerce accounted for 40.8% of the male active population (they had accounted for 37% in 1809). Those involved in pharmacies or selling foodstuffs accounted for 47.9% of the active male population (in 1809, 57%). Jean-Pierre Filippini, “Da ‘Nazione ebrea’ a ‘comunità israelitica’: la comunità ebraica di Livorno tra Cinquecento e Novecento,” *Nuovi Studi Livornesi* 1 (1993): 19.

¹⁴⁹ ACEL, Minute, f. 118, 1833-1834 in Carlotta Ferrara degli Uberti, *La ‘Nazione Ebraica’ di Livorno dai Privilegi all’Emancipazione (1814-1860)* (Florence: Fondazione spadolini – Nuova antologia, 2007), 37.

had frequently lived next door to or in the same building as non-Jews, the accelerating trend of moving away from the Jewish quarter caused concern among the leadership of the Jewish community. The migration towards other parts of the city had the potential to disrupt the dominant place of the synagogue and its surrounding neighborhood as the center of Jewish life in the city, which in turn could potentially diffuse the power and meaning of the Jewish community as a whole.

Even during this period of economic uncertainty, Livorno was still a destination for Jewish migration from abroad and other parts of the Italian peninsula. Jews came to Livorno to flee antisemitism and epidemics, establish partnerships or settle family affairs, or seek employment or education.¹⁵⁰ In 1834, 108 individuals came to Livorno from Tunisia, 90 from Algeria, 52 from Tripoli, 33 from Morocco, and 19 from Egypt.¹⁵¹ The 1841 census reveal the important impact of immigration on the growth of the community, particularly from other parts of the Italian peninsula, Germany, and North Africa.¹⁵² Immigrants did not have trouble inserting themselves into the Jewish community, rather easily finding spouses. By the nineteenth century, social class, rather than origin, had decidedly become the determining factor in marriage decisions.

Throughout the nineteenth century, there was a notable growth in the number of the poor supported in some way by the Jewish community.¹⁵³ The registers of the Jewish community are

¹⁵⁰ In 1805, many Algerian Jews fled turmoil and pogroms in Algeria and tried to move to Livorno. Gabriele Bedarida, "La Nazione ebrea di Livorno e I profughi algerini del 1805," *Rivista italiana di studi napoleonici* 1-2 (1982): 115-186.

¹⁵¹ Milano, "Uno sguardo sulle relazioni fra Livorno ebraica e i paesi della Barberia," 150.

¹⁵² Michele Luzzati, *Ebrei di Livorno tra due censimenti (1841-1938)* (Livorno: Belforte Editore Libraio, 1990), 38.

¹⁵³ This was true for the general population as well. Although many interpreted the growth in the overall population of Livorno as a sign of prosperity, the rapid growth of Livorno left a lot of the population unprovided for. In 1841, the census record from the parish of S.S. Trinità noted that those listed as sailors in fact could be described as "casual indigents," since there were unemployed for months at a time and left their families to often turn to public assistance when they went out to sea. LoRomer, *Merchants and Reform in Livorno*, 222.

full of periodic requests for the reduction of taxes from struggling individuals, such as Samuel, son of Abram Lattes, wine dealer and shopkeeper, or Angelo, son of Moise Orefice, who sold poultry. Some were too poor to be taxed altogether, such as Salomone, son of Fortunato Taib, who sold buttons, or Isache di Giuseppe Coen, who sold bread.¹⁵⁴ At its lowest point, in 1816, only 313 families in the community paid the family tax. Although the number of those paying the tax increased, it remained fairly low (425 in 1834, 473 in 1837, and 421 in 1841).¹⁵⁵ In 1834, of 1438 Jewish families, 310 families were considered *miserabili* and supported by fixed subsidies and charitable donations, and 603 families (or 2305 individuals – almost half of the community) received free matzah for Passover. These occasional emergency handouts as well as the number of families receiving regular relief indicates a certain lack of economic well-being in the community. The Jewish communal leadership increasingly focused their attention on religious matters, charity and assistance for the poor, and the civil and religious education of the lower classes.¹⁵⁶

During the nineteenth century, the discourse around education for the poor reflected the values and concerns of the Jewish community as the economic structure of Livorno changed around them. In 1818, the deputy of the “school of letters, arithmetic, and commerce that the university itself maintains for the benefit of the indigent classes,” wrote to request for more funds and resources to help teach the students of the school foreign languages. He asserted that the school was “a useful establishment that demands every regard and protection of our public...the knowledge of some foreign languages could contribute in a town of commerce like ours and open doors...”¹⁵⁷ The Jewish community had long maintained a school that taught commercial

¹⁵⁴ Filippini, *Il Porto di Livorno*, 118.

¹⁵⁵ Filippini, “Da ‘Nazione ebrea’ a ‘comunità israelitica,’” 19.

¹⁵⁶ Ferrara degli Uberti, “The ‘Jewish Nation’ of Livorno,” 166.

¹⁵⁷ ACEL, *Minute*, 1815-1810.

skills to the lower classes, and for the author, the need to teach students foreign languages was pressing “in a town of commerce like ours.” By 1844, Sansone Uzielli had a different vision for the educational needs of the poor of the Jewish community. Himself an important banker and businessman, Sansone Uzielli pleaded for the establishment of an arts and crafts school in the community, arguing: “We must not lose sight of the fact that the promotion of arts and crafts among us has the all righteous aim of not throwing all our young poor into the careers of business clerks or small tradesmen – careers growing harder by the day as competition waxes keener, careers full of contest and conflict, and far less improving for the poor than a craft or a mechanical skill.”¹⁵⁸ While Uzielli never explicitly raises the idea of “regeneration,” his push for an arts and crafts school does seem to suggest that he was trying to move away from the profound association of Jews and commerce in the city. As the city’s position in economic trade faltered, the association of Jewish morality with commercial utility was no longer taken for granted as the foundation of Jewish communal life in Livorno.

This chapter has explored the economic and social foundations of the port city of Livorno and its Jewish community. The unique degree of self-governance of the Jewish community, including the ability to grant its members nationality, meant that Livorno held both literal and figurative importance for Mediterranean Jews. The economic and cultural position of the Jewish community as well as the almost total absence of a “Jewish Question” in the political atmosphere

¹⁵⁸ Ferrara degli Uberti, “The ‘Jewish Nation’ of Livorno,” 167.

of the city also contributed to the symbolic meaning of Livorno for Jews. Throughout the early modern period, Livorno was a central destination for Jewish migration; during the nineteenth century, for the first time in more than two hundred years, more Jews left Livorno than arrived there. There remains much to be studied about transformations of the community and the city in the nineteenth century, and the following chapter will explore in depth how the Jews of Livorno navigated shifting commercial cultures and endeavors, and traced economic opportunities to the Mediterranean port cities of the Ottoman Empire such as Cairo, Alexandria, Tunis, and Salonica.

Chapter Two

Navigating the Winds of Commerce: Jewish Commercial Culture in Nineteenth Century Livorno

In 1826, the leadership of the Jewish community of Livorno issued a lengthy report on the economic condition of Jews in the city. The report emphatically declared that “the conspicuous advantages that the port of Livorno offers, its commercial conditions, and in particular the privileges of the Jewish Nation, have beckoned, and continue to beckon many foreign coreligionists in order to pursue commerce or to enjoy peacefully the fruits of their labor.”¹ Over the course of the previous two centuries, Livorno had grown to be the second-largest Jewish community on the Italian peninsula after Rome, and had emerged as a vital center of Jewish economic and cultural life in Western Europe and the Mediterranean. In the report, Jewish communal leaders repeatedly emphasized economic opportunities for Jews in Livorno and linked the achievement of financial prosperity to the advancement of moral progress in society. Although the image of financial prosperity did not necessarily align with reality for many in the Jewish community, the very possibility of prosperity served as a foundational idea for the *Nazione ebrea* of Livorno. And yet, in 1826, the Jewish community of Livorno could no longer rely on even the image of prosperity. The report is filled with an undercurrent of concern for the financial stability of the Jews of Livorno, and concluded on a disheartening note: “confirming a deplorable truth, that all of us already know, that is, for some time the finances of

¹ Archivio della comunità ebraica di Livorno (ACEL), Minute, 1826-1828, Livorno, Italy.

the *Nazione* have signaled a notable and progressive decline, a decline that this year has surpassed that of past years.”²

The community report of 1826 was not the only voice in nineteenth-century Livorno expressing fear about economic decline in the city, rather than progress. Shrinking profit margins, periods of limited credit and currency, and declining amounts of goods destined for export all signaled that ominous changes were afoot in the port city. However, past categorizations of Livorno during the nineteenth century as a “port city in decline” obscure the rapid fluctuations in the city’s economy from year to year and the complexities of navigating daily life amidst these vicissitudes. Everyone, from merchants to dockworkers to midwives, observed and interpreted the city’s changing economy, each doing his or her best to survive or even succeed. This chapter will explore further the choices and challenges facing those living and working in Livorno during the mid-nineteenth century, and will examine in particular the evolving economic strategies of Livornese Jews in the Mediterranean.

As Livorno declined in importance as an international port, the international connections of Livornese Jews became even more important. They traced both familiar and new patterns of exchange across the Mediterranean basin. The circulation of goods and people between Livorno and the ports of North Africa and the Levant, although common during the early modern period, accelerated in the modern era. Historians, focusing on the growth of the Jewish community of Livorno during the early modern period, have often ignored the impact of mobility and migration on the community during the nineteenth century. While Livorno had long been a destination for

² The 1826 report proposed imposing new forms of taxes on members of the community, such as a tax on merchandise sent to Jews of Livorno from foreign coreligionists. However, the report also noted the difficulties involved in imposing any new form of taxation, which would cause complaints and lawsuits contesting this taxation. ACEL, Minute, 1826-1828.

Jewish migration, this trend gradually reversed in the nineteenth century, and this chapter argues that it is essential to examine this phenomenon closely. As the economy of Livorno contracted and the economy of other Mediterranean ports, such as Alexandria or Tunis, expanded, Jews from Livorno created patterns of circular migration between port cities, alongside paths of permanent emigration. This chapter focuses on the mobility of Jews to, through, and away from Livorno in order to explore their commercial practices at the intersection of mobility and rootedness. In her study of Tunisia, historian Julia Clancy-Smith has noted that studying movements across the Mediterranean is never in isolation, but rather “tracks from ‘below’ the grand rhythms” of history such as “nation state construction, imperialism, industrialization, boom and bust capitalism, world market consolidation, war and violence, [and] Great Power rivalry.”³ Even after Livorno became part of the modern Italian nation state in 1861, the city and its Jewish community were open to the Mediterranean in ways that fostered transnational contact and exchanges.

Studying Jewish history through an economic lens has often been a fraught endeavor; recent scholarship has tended to avoid describing the role of Jews in the economy in the shadow of antisemitic tropes associating Jews with capitalism, greed, and power. However, considering the economy is essential to the Jewish experience in Tuscany and across the Mediterranean, for, as anthropologist Maurice Godelier has pointed out, economic activities are “organically linked with other activities – political, religious, cultural, family – that along with it make up the content of a life of a society.”⁴ In my understanding, the boundaries of the economic are not

³ Julia Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans: North Africa and Europe in an Age of Migration c. 1800-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 4.

⁴ During the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, Jews were often discussed in terms of the emergence of capitalism, often with explicitly antisemitic overtones. Discussions of the economic “distortion” of the Jews and their association with commerce was another common trope, particularly in the debates over emancipation in central and western Europe. A review of trends in studying the Jewish economic history can be found in: Gideon

limited to transactions of goods or credit, but are part of a broader context that includes familial relationships, social practices, and commercial institutions. This chapter argues that family, ethnicity, and religion all influenced the business strategies and economic pursuits of Jews in Livorno, while also examining the ways migration, networks, and political changes contributed to building a commercial culture in the port city.

Recently, Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, Gelina Harlaftis, and Ioanna Pepelasis Minoglou have suggested that trading networks function by “the elaboration of a common commercial strategy which relied first on the organizational structure of the firms and second on the method of trading.”⁵ However, by asserting that “a common commercial culture is transmitted from generation to generation” and “cohesion is at the heart of extensive commercial networks,” these scholars simplify the process of building, maintaining or dissolving commercial cultures and networks. Examining how the Jews of Livorno maintained and adapted their commercial culture during the economic shifts of the nineteenth century counters this idea by demonstrating how complex and contingent these practices really were.

During the nineteenth century, Jews in Livorno continued to rely on structuring their firms around familial relationships as they had in past generations. Many historical studies of family firms have taken for granted that family firms were built on a foundation of trust and kinship that reduced uncertainty and risk. Recently, historians have questioned these assumptions, asserting that family relationships can not only reduce risk in economic endeavors,

Reuveni, “Prolegomena to an ‘Economic Turn’ in Jewish History,” in *The Economy in Jewish History: New Perspectives on the Interrelationship between Ethnicity and Economic Life*, eds. Gideon Reuveni and Sarah Wobick-Segev (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 2.

⁵ Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, Gelina Harlaftis, and Ioanna Pepelasis Minoglou, eds., *Diaspora Entrepreneurial Networks: Four Centuries of History* (New York: Berg, 2005), xxi.

but also create or exacerbate conflicts.⁶ The evidence from Jewish firms in Livorno demonstrates that family firms were flexible in reacting to the economic and political instability of the nineteenth century, while also revealing the incredible tension individuals and families faced in holding these firms together and envisioning their future.

In his study of jewelry towns in Italy, Dario Gaggio proposes understanding economic practices as “embedded in networks of interpersonal relations” through which historical actors can “can capitalize on family ties, the bonds of friendship, or the complicity of political affiliation to gain access to resources and opportunities.”⁷ In Livorno, Jewish merchants were deeply embedded in the social, economic, and political framework of the port city and the Jewish community. Jewish merchants relied on a commercial culture that was tied to historic pathways of trade through the port city and the traditional relationship of the Jewish community to Tuscan political authorities. Yet, they also adapted these relationships and activities to the decline in international trade in the port city, increasing migration, and the formation of the Italian nation state, creating a hybrid commercial culture that combined old and new patterns of behavior. The chapter will begin by analyzing the changes in Livorno’s economy during the nineteenth century and the reactions of the broader merchant community and political to these changes. This chapter will then bring together records from the Jewish community and the Chamber of Commerce of Livorno in order to examine how Jews in Livorno acted in layered economic spheres as individuals, as families, and as a community to pursue commerce, build networks of trust and vulnerability, and migrate elsewhere.

⁶ Andrea Colli, Paloma Fernandez Perez, and Mary B. Rose, “National Determinants of Family Firms in Britain, Spain, and Italy in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” *Enterprise and Society* 4, 1 (2003): 28-64.

⁷ Dario Gaggio, *In Gold We Trust: Social Capital and Economic Change in the Italian Jewelry Towns* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 17.

A Free Port City's Changing Fortunes: Livorno's Economy in the Nineteenth Century

Throughout the nineteenth century, Livorno's position as a central port of international commerce shifted precipitously. The Restoration of the Grand Duchy in 1814 brought with it the restoration of "free port status" to Livorno; however, the significance of being a free port city for international trade was in the process of changing. During the early modern period, Livorno had been characterized as a "free port" because of its vaunted policies of political neutrality, religious tolerance, and low tariff charges. Yet the period of relative international peace post-1814 meant that Livorno's political neutrality was less consequential in determining trading practices. And although the commerce of Livorno showed signs of recovery after the turmoil of the Napoleonic period, the *stallaggio* tax remained in place on imported goods and the city continued to be separated from its hinterland by tariff zones. In his 1876 work, *The History of Free Trade in Tuscany*, James Montgomery Stuart argued that although Livorno had long been praised as a free port, it was "in truth" governed by "protectionist" policies during the nineteenth century.⁸ While Stuart's understanding of Livorno's history was certainly colored by his perspective as a liberal proponent of free trade ideology, it also reflects how the meaning of Livorno's free port status was never fixed or constant. As the context of international trade changed in the period after

⁸ James Montgomery Stuart, *The History of Free Trade in Tuscany with Remarks on its Progress in the Rest of Italy* (London: 1876), 82.

Restoration, economic actors in Livorno scrambled to adapt economic practices and policies to the evolving framework of the “free port city.”⁹

The traditionally low tariffs in Livorno such as *stallaggio* no longer seemed low enough to be advantageous. They were increasingly a source of anxiety for the merchant community, and merchants in Livorno pressured the government to change its policies in order to encourage the growth of commerce. In 1834, merchants presented the Tuscan government with letters from correspondents that suggested that because of charges levied on goods in Livorno it was more profitable to send merchandise to and through other ports.¹⁰ At the same time, a report from the Tuscan Administrative Council used data from the customs house to point out that deposits in Livorno had reached critically low levels. The decline of imports of colonial products such as coffee and sugar also meant that it was more difficult to export Tuscan silk, rags, linen, oil and marble as return cargo on ships. In response, the government issued a decree on July 23, 1834, that guaranteed the “entire freedom to foreign merchandise introduced into Livorno by way of sea.”¹¹ Not everyone in Livorno reacted favorably to the decree of 1834; one correspondent wrote to the Secretary of Finance that it had “produced an infinite number of laments and protests and a sense of smoldering discontent in the merchant community” since it tended to benefit those engaged in foreign commerce and placed a heavier burden on small merchants and traders.¹² Many in the merchant community were also troubled because the decree ruled that compensation for the lost revenue to the state would come from a personal levy on members of

⁹ There are some interesting parallels between Trieste and Livorno. Declared a free port city in 1719 under the Habsburg Empire, Trieste was a bustling port city with prominent Jewish and foreign communities. The city faced economic difficulties after being incorporated into the Italian nation after World War I in 1918. As Maura Hametz has argued, despite Trieste’s declining fortunes, the city maintained ties to international markets through the Adriatic Sea and continued to play a role in Italian foreign policy. Maura Hametz, “Zionism, Emigration, and Antisemitism in Trieste: Central Europe’s “Gateway to Zion,” 1896-1943,” *Jewish Social Studies* 13, 3 (2007): 105.

¹⁰ David LoRomer, *Merchants and Reform in Livorno 1814-1868* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 113.

¹¹ LoRomer, *Merchants and Reform in Livorno*, 116.

¹² LoRomer, *Merchants and Reform in Livorno*, 117.

the merchant community. The 1834 debate over tariff reform was a moment in which merchants and the government attempted to work together to protect the traditional economic basis of Livorno as a port of deposit, even as it simultaneously exposed tensions between various classes of merchants and government officials over the future of the free port.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the growth of rival ports on the Italian peninsula increasingly challenged Livorno's commercial preeminence. Regional divisions on the Italian peninsula exacerbated competition between port cities, as each state tried to establish the dominance of its designated port city; Ancona for the Papal States, Venice and Trieste for Austria and Lombardy-Venetia, and Genoa for Piedmont. The decree of 1834 was a direct attempt to make Livorno a more attractive port of deposit than Naples, Genoa, Trieste or Ancona. The *Corriere Mercantile*, the local newspaper in Genoa, immediately noted the impact that the elimination of duties in Livorno had on the flow of commerce, for "after publication of the edict of 23 July [1834], an American ship unloading coffee in Genoa has been ordered to immediately weigh anchor and carry the remainder of its cargo to Livorno."¹³ Giuliano Ricci observed in 1837 that Livorno was not the only port city on the Italian peninsula struggling to find its footing amongst the changes of the nineteenth century, and asserted that in the current circumstances, "Every sovereign is studying how to make the commerce of their state more active."¹⁴ However, he concluded that despite the best attempts of the Tuscan government and merchants to protect Livorno's share of international trade, such as the decree of 1834, the significance of other port cities was rising, while Livorno's was waning.

¹³ LoRomer, *Merchants and Reform in Livorno*, 116.

¹⁴ Giuliano Ricci as quoted in Mario Baruchello, *Livorno e il suo Porto: Origini, Caratteristiche e Vicende dei Traffici Livornesi* (Livorno, Societa Editrice Riviste Tecniche, 1932), 488.

Economists, merchants, government officials, and port workers of various levels all struggled to interpret Livorno's role as a port city amidst changing patterns of international trade. In his 1838 *Dizionario Geografico Fisico Storico della Toscana*, Emanuele Repetti concluded that Livorno still held a vital place in international commerce as a clearinghouse for imports and exports and as a central landing point for ships trading in the Mediterranean. He emphasized the large number of ships and products entering the port, reporting that 831 cargo ships flying various flags had arrived in Livorno in 1836 and 1,075 in 1837, and marveled at the fast pace of exchanging raw materials and manufactured goods in Livorno.¹⁵ Other observers were not so optimistic. Enrico Mayer, one of Repetti's central correspondents and director of the discount bank in Livorno, recognized the difficulties Livorno faced as a port of deposit. He wrote that one "could no longer talk about the regularity of arrivals of diverse products that was true once upon a time...affairs are more uncertain" and "in general the circumstances will be and are fundamentally different from what was."¹⁶ Others echoed Mayer's observations of increasing uncertainty in the activity of the port and what it meant for the future of the city.¹⁷ In a letter to an acquaintance, Amadio Bonaventura, a drug and spice merchant in Livorno, described his personal experience of economic difficulty, writing: "The many ups and downs suffered by my firm in the past few years, and especially declaring bankruptcy in September 1838 have made me absent myself from Livorno for almost two years."¹⁸ Upon his return to Livorno, he perceived

¹⁵ Repetti was enthusiastic that the "shipping of manufactured goods sent from Switzerland, arriving in Livorno, and the cargo was sold and the profits and return goods were sent on to the producer within the very brief period of a month." Emanuele Repetti, *Dizionario Geografico fisico storico della Toscana*, vol. 2 (Florence: Presso l'autore e editore), 760.

¹⁶ Enrico Mayer as quoted in Baruchello, *Livorno e il suo Porto*, 591.

¹⁷ Giuliano Ricci also reflected on the profoundly changed circumstances of Livorno; the city had long been "a warehouse open to the needs and interests of all of Italy and other foreign provinces," however, for some time, there had been a "notable reduction in these patterns" and it was unsurprising that the commerce of Livorno was reduced and the port was "languishing." Giuliano Ricci as quoted in Baruchello, *Livorno e il suo Porto*, 487.

¹⁸ Liana Elda Funaro, "Lumi e consigli: i Bonaventura ed altri "negozianti di droghe" a Livorno nel primo Ottocento," *Nuovi Studi Livornesi* 15 (2008): 191.

with shock a marked decrease in port activity, observing that “Livorno is no longer amongst the primary markets of commerce of Europe, no longer even amongst the secondary since Genoa and Trieste have reduced trade almost to nothing and what little does come is a miracle...Americans don’t arrive here with their cargoes of drugs to sell and their orders of drugs to buy, and one doesn’t see any more the great portions of drugs or spices arriving from the Levant.” Bonaventura’s pharmacy was built on the assumption of a steady flow of goods through Livorno, and he was filled with despair at observing changes that he believed signaled the utter collapse of his way of life.

Alongside concerns over Livorno’s place in international trade, there were signs of recovery - or even growth - in some sectors of port activity. In the 1820s and 1830s, Livorno was a central port for transporting and distributing wheat and other cereals from the Black Sea to other parts of Europe.¹⁹ In turn, Livorno functioned as an important port for British manufactured items; after delivering grain to England, ships would stop in Livorno with a return cargo of textiles and other manufactured products. The widespread famines that began to affect Europe in the fall of 1846 provided the stimulus for a short period of even greater economic growth in Livorno. The grain trade was one clear bright spot in the shifting economy of Livorno. In 1844, Carlo Bargagli, the captain of the port, declared that “the deposit of grain is today the principal branch of commerce in this city,” and in 1850, the chamber of commerce firmly stated that “experience had demonstrated that the city of Livorno is considered the principal cereal depôt of the Mediterranean.”²⁰ In 1847, 1,043 large ships carrying grain from Russian ports in

¹⁹ Egyptian wheat was also imported in large quantities, but quality of the wheat mid it less able to be stored for long period of time without spoiling or weevils, and sometimes the Egyptian government imposed restrictions. Patricia Herlihy, “Russian Wheat and the Port of Livorno, 1794-1865,” *Journal of European Economic History* 5 (1976): 45-68.

²⁰ LoRomer, *Merchants and Reform in Livorno*, 32.

the Black Sea docked in Livorno.²¹ In June 1847, so many ships had arrived in Livorno at once that they could not all be admitted into the port. However, the famines of the 1840s also signaled long-term changes in the commercial policies of many European states. Many governments began removing protective tariffs on grains, such as the repeal of the Corn Laws in England in 1846, and moved towards removing tariffs and trade restrictions on other goods. In 1854, the captain of the port of Livorno, Cantini, observed: “if the movement of cereals in this city has been extraordinary, this must be attributed to the unlimited freedom that has been given to speculators of this and similar goods for which this port has become a center of activity. One can predict that insofar as the principal of free trade spreads, Livorno will lose its extraordinary advantage, given the tendency of things left to their natural course to balance themselves out.”²² The extension of free trade policies across Europe displaced Livorno from its special position in international commerce as a “free port city.”

The outsized role Livorno played in the grain trade in the 1840s also did not compensate for the political and economic difficulties facing the city. While the arrival of large square-rigged sailing ships in the port had increased to 2,201 in 1847, it dropped to 1,587 in 1848 and 1,307 in 1849. A high percentage of unemployment, particularly among port workers, created an explosive atmosphere in the city, and riots broke out in September 1847 between dockworkers and foreign port workers. During the widespread revolutions of 1848 and 1849, European political turmoil dramatically disrupted the Tuscan economy. Normal commercial patterns and activities were interrupted, and Livornese residents paid high costs both during and after the period of revolutions. After the Austrian army quelled the revolutions and occupied the city, the population was forced to pay onerous fiscal burdens as punishment for the city’s rebelliousness.

²¹ LoRomer, *Merchants and Reform in Livorno*, 157.

²² Archivio di Stato di Firenze, *Miscellanea di Finanze*, II, f. 464, Florence.

The Austrians imposed on the city “a contribution for the war” of 1,200,000 lire to be paid in twenty-four hours, and taxed merchants in the city heavily.²³

By the mid-nineteenth century, there was a growing sense of uneasiness amongst those living and working in Livorno about the prospects for economic prosperity. As a port of deposit, or emporium, Livorno historically stored goods arriving from disparate origins and shipped them on to other destinations.²⁴ The limits of transportation and inconsistent flows of information during the early modern era contributed to the important role that ports of deposit played in international commerce, since shipments of goods could not be completed in a single voyage and needed to stop in ports like Livorno to be stored, traded, and transferred to different markets. However, technological advancements in transportation and communication over the course of the nineteenth century changed trade routes drastically, making entrepôts such as Livorno less necessary, if not cutting them out completely. In particular, steamships reduced the time of international shipping, railroads helped move goods domestically between ports and markets, and telegraph lines opened up reliable and direct networks of communication. Economists note that the impact of these changes was not instantaneous or absolute; steamships tended to be used at first only for certain goods and routes, and sailing ships were still in use on some routes until 1894.²⁵ However, overall, transportation costs and long-haul freight rates declined in the second

²³ Prices through 1835 were expressed in pezze, and after 1837 mostly in lire toscane. One pezze equaled 5.68 tuscan lire. LoRomer, *Merchants and Reform in Livorno*, 301, n. 83.

²⁴ In the case of Trieste, Purvis notes “most goods moving through the port both arrived and departed by sea.” A “port of deposit” is most often contrasted with a “transit port,” which funnelled goods to more local and regional markets. Martin Purvis, “Between late-lasting empire and late-developing nation-state: a Triestine perspective on city-state relations,” *Social and Cultural Geography* 10, 3 (2009): 303.

²⁵ David Jacks, Chris Meissner, Denis Novy, “International Trade Costs During the Late nineteenth Century Trade Boom: What Role Did They Play and What were Their Determinants,” Paper presented at Yale Economic History Workshop (2005), 5.

half of the nineteenth century, and trade routes shifted to emphasize the direct connection between producers and consumers.²⁶

As commerce shifted towards a more direct connection of products and markets, port cities that were supported by large markets and productive hinterlands became more prominent. In this case, the low industrial and agricultural productivity of Tuscany became a serious liability for Livorno, since it did not have as productive of a hinterland as other port cities. In the 1830s, merchants in Livorno and Tuscan authorities did try to orient their trade more towards Tuscan products, but these efforts only had relative amounts of success.²⁷ Foreign ships had less cause to stop in Livorno, and many were concerned that British merchants would leave the city altogether. Even though British merchants continued to trade in and through Livorno, they also began to direct their attention more towards ports where they could exchange products directly with consumers.²⁸ An 1837 article published in the Milanese journal *Annali universali di statistica* explained, “Now, however, the English were going directly to Smyrna, Constantinople, and Alexandria to make their exchanges. They were carrying their sugar and salted meat products to Civitavecchia, and they would go to the mouth of the Arno if they believed that they could sell a cargo there,” bypassing Livorno completely in the process.²⁹ This fundamental shift

²⁶ David Jacks, Chris Meissner, and Denis Novy note that mapping exact shipping costs was hard because they varied by good, season, and local conditions. For the nineteenth century, freight rates only explain a fraction of expansion of global trade, and that rather global trade patterns were determined by a combination of factors, including distance, railway tariffs, health and safety regulations, and conditions of trade treaties also were part of the nineteenth century trading system. Jacks, Meissner, Novy, “International Trade Costs During the Late nineteenth Century Trade Boom,” 7.

²⁷ This was part of a longstanding attempt to try to grow Tuscan production and exports. Carlo Mangio, “Commercio marittimo e Reggenza lorenese in Toscana (provvedimenti legislative e dibattiti),” *Rivista Storica Italiana* 90 (1978): 924.

²⁸ Trade movements between Britain and Tuscany show an uneven but rising trend between 1817 and 1869. British manufacturers faced relatively low duties on exports into Tuscany, while Tuscan exporters were subject to very high duties on imports into the United Kingdom. Ira Glazier and Vladimir N. Bandera, “Periphery and Metropolis in Historical Perspective: Trade Relations Between the Granduchy of Tuscany and the United Kingdom, 1817-1869,” 61-81.

²⁹ LoRomer, *Merchants and Reform in Livorno*, 23

in commercial patterns is crucially important to understand Livorno's progressive decline as a port city.

The wares passing through Livorno were the same in the mid-nineteenth century — grain from Russia, manufactured items from England, cotton from the Levant, etc. — however, less than twenty-five percent were destined for deposit and successive re-exportation. In a dramatic reversal for this well-established entrepôt, most of the goods that arrived in the port stayed in Livorno and Tuscany. In 1858, the captain of the port of Livorno described the situation the city found itself in: “Our port has felt the general consequences of the new commercial transformations caused by steamships and the telegraph. Since large deposits were made impossible after the almost universal adoption of free trade, traffic had to be limited to consumption, especially after speculation disappeared because of the rapidity with which the telegraph carries news of the prices of goods.”³⁰

Many in Livorno hoped to develop the city's future profile as a “port of transit,” focused on moving goods to and from Tuscany and other regions of Italy, in contrast to its history as a “port of deposit,” focused on transferring goods to international markets. In order to support Livorno's future, local merchants and officials sought to expand both Livorno's port facilities and railroad line connections. The first section of the railroad line built between Livorno and Pisa was viewed as highly successful; between March 1844 and January 1845 approximately half a million people were conveyed between the two neighboring cities.³¹ The railroad line continued to be expanded between different towns and cities in Tuscany, and in 1848, Livorno was fully

³⁰ Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Ministero delle Finanze, Capi Roti, 1858 in Herlihy, “Russian Wheat and the Port of Livorno,” 68.

³¹ Initially, there had been some debate about whether a potential rail line between Livorno and Florence would benefit Livorno. But by 1838, most merchants in the city supported the development of railroads in Tuscany. LoRomer, *Merchants and Reform in Livorno*, 164.

connected with Florence. A telegraph line also linked Florence and Livorno beginning in 1847. However, the railroad system remained an unrealized promise for Livorno. The national railroad line bypassed Livorno for many years, cutting the city off from participating in commerce conducted along transport routes. The long-awaited enlargement of the port in 1851 also did not bring about the sought-after consequences. Livorno was able to accommodate a greater quantity of ships and larger vessels at a time when the declining commerce of deposits made the expansions less necessary.

In a speech given at the Georgofili Academy in Florence in 1856, historian and archivist Francesco Bonaini reflected on the economic future of Livorno and asserted that Livorno should pursue a strategy as a connector port, whose geographic location would be even more advantageous for Mediterranean commerce than it was in the past. He looked to developments in Egypt as an answer for Livorno's uncertain position in international trade. With the proposed Suez Canal, Livorno had the opportunity to serve as an important gateway port to central Italy as well as the Mediterranean Sea. Although Bonaini was vague on the details of how exactly this would come to fruition, he anticipated "both the Mediterranean and Red Sea [would] be newly connected with Italy." After the Suez Canal opened, Livorno, now "separated from the Orient by 14,700 leagues, would not be divided even by 5,400 leagues," which would bring considerable benefits to the people and port of Livorno, for not even the British would be able to transport goods as competitively as the Livornese.³² Relying on the trope of *mare nostrum*, Bonaini repeatedly asserted that the Mediterranean sea was an "Italian sea," before concluding on the

³² Francesco Bonaini, *Livorno considerato nelle sue presente condizioni e nel suo avvenire in ragione del taglio dell'istmo di suez e della centrale italiana* (Florence: 1856), 19.

hopeful note that the Livornese would “retake among commercial people a degree of importance and honor.”³³

Amidst the turmoil of commerce in the mid-nineteenth century, many also pinned their hopes on creating a new Livornese economy more heavily reliant on industry and manufacturing. In his speech, Bonaini proclaimed that “one does not doubt the ability to establish [in Livorno] a new and second Manchester.”³⁴ While the traditional industry of working coral in Livorno had waned by the mid-nineteenth century, other industries were expanding, including: shipyards, refineries of boric acid, and factories for soap, felt and straw hats, tartar, saltpeter, lead, sails, and ropes. In his 1859 work, *Dell’avvenire del commercio europeo*, Luigi Torelli reasoned that although the economy of Livorno was built on the foundation of commerce throughout most of the city’s history, “in our century” many industries had been successfully established.³⁵ According to Torelli, industry in Livorno was based on access to foreign raw materials and foreign markets, and Livornese goods and products were destined “not only for local consumption but also advanced for foreign export.”³⁶ Torelli pointed to the textile trade, through which “rags and fabrics were imported from diverse ports of the Mediterranean, and then separated into various categories, and sent off in large packages, especially to America” and the clothes in Livorno was fabricated for export to the Eastern Mediterranean and the Levant. However, historians have debated the degree to which Livorno truly transitioned from a “port

³³ Bonaini, *Livorno considerato*, 22.

³⁴ Bonaini, *Livorno considerato*, 30.

³⁵ Torelli, *Dell’avvenire del commercio europeo e in modo speciale di quello degli stati italiani*, vol. II (Florence: 1859), 56.

³⁶ Torelli, *Dell’avvenire del commercio europeo*, 56.

city” into an “industrial city.” It seems clear that even as industries expanded in the city in the mid-nineteenth century, many operated in close conjunction with commerce in the city.³⁷

In 1859, Tuscany became part of the Italian nation state. Although Italian unification did not represent the death knell of Livorno, it certainly aggravated the crisis situation of the port city. Historians of the Risorgimento have demonstrated that the unification of Italy and the creation of a modern nation state was a difficult and fraught process. The unification of Italy attempted to unify the peninsula not only politically, but also economically, and a key facet of the unification project was creating a single national market from the various extant regional markets. The fragile and tenuous nature of Italian unification heightened the stakes for creating an economic union and imposing fiscal standardization on the peninsula. Although Italy’s first customs regulation in 1861 stated that existing free ports in the peninsula would remain intact, in 1863 the Chamber of Deputies ruled that Ancona, Livorno, and Messina would “cease to be free cities” by 1868.³⁸ It is important to note that Jews in Livorno regarded these changes ambivalently, for while unification brought them emancipation, it also challenged the economic and political system they had benefited from.³⁹

While the free port city of Livorno had evolved throughout its history, the ruling represented the end of an economic framework that had existed for centuries and presented the people of Livorno with a great unknown for the future. In response, the Chamber of Commerce commissioned Giovanni Baldasseroni, a prominent attorney, to prepare a pamphlet on the

³⁷ Writing during the fascist period, Mario Baruchello was inclined to emphasize the industrial development of the city. Baruchello, *Livorno e il suo Porto*.

³⁸ LoRomer, *Merchants and Reform in Livorno*, 253.

³⁹ There were echoes of this in Trieste during the early twentieth century; many of the economic elite and Jews who benefited from Habsburg rule and policies towards the port city, nonetheless hoped for a union with Italy. The writer Italo Svevo was a notable example of someone with these contradictory feelings. Pamela Ballinger, “Imperial Nostalgia: Mythologizing Habsburg Trieste,” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 8, 1 (2003): 92.

damage that Livorno's economy would suffer as a result of the suppression of its free port status.⁴⁰ Baldasseroni, writing with authority as "an old Livornese," described Livorno as a city "born only for commerce," and dependent on commerce not only for its prosperity but for its entire survival.⁴¹ For Baldasseroni, the government ruling represented an existential threat, asserting that whoever had "lived under the French government could not have forgotten the time in which almost all the warehouses in Livorno remained empty."⁴² The ruling promised that the administration of the former free ports would be modeled after Genoa and assured the cities that they would be compensated for their losses with the building of new customs warehouses and docks. Baldasseroni countered that with these provisions, the port would find itself "under the absolute and severe custody of Customs" with goods taxed immediately upon entry in the port, and concluded that instituting a free deposit zone in a portion of the port (as in Genoa) would simply depress overall economic activity in the city.⁴³ He concluded that although the government formulated the ruling as a repudiation of the "old system" and an important step in the way of progress and liberal institutions, for Livorno the "the old system of privileges and prejudices was the foundation of true commercial liberty and the source of prosperity."⁴⁴ Without free port status, he warned, Livorno would lose the ability to support its growing population. He emphatically repeated that with the abolition of the free port in Livorno, "the commercial flowering of the port would be destroyed, and with the decline of the port, the well-

⁴⁰ Giovanni Baldasseroni, *Livorno ed il suo porto franco considerato nel passato, nel presente e nell'avvenire da un vecchio livornese, socio dell'Accademia Labronica* (Florence: 1863).

⁴¹ Baldasseroni, *Livorno ed il suo porto franco considerato nel passato*, 4.

⁴² Baldasseroni, *Livorno ed il suo porto franco considerato nel passato*, 14.

⁴³ Baldasseroni, *Livorno ed il suo porto franco considerato nel passato*, 9-10.

⁴⁴ Baldasseroni, *Livorno ed il suo porto franco considerato nel passato*, 14.

being of the city would be greatly compromised, until the feared time when the expression ‘the higher the rise, the harder the fall’ will come true.”⁴⁵

Many voices joined Baldasseroni in questioning how Livorno would find its economic footing in the future, decrying the Italian government’s ruling in newspapers, pamphlets, and letters. Despite the protests, the free port of Livorno was gradually abolished between 1865 and 1868. Not all in the city were necessarily opposed to the change. Under the new policies, some thought that industry in Livorno had the potential to grow further and reach national markets. Some commercial interests in the city also believed that Livorno could continue to serve as a link in transporting goods between Northern Europe and the Mediterranean, particularly with the anticipation of joining the national railway system. However, Livorno failed to secure a place major rail line running north-south until 1907. The Italian government concentrated its money and policies on building up Naples and Genoa as the national ports of Italy, rather than Livorno. Additionally, while the former free ports of Ancona and Messina were granted a concession that allowed them to introduce their manufactured products into Italy freely, Livorno was denied this allowance. In historian David LoRomer’s characterization, it “posed a painful dilemma, for the relatively free access to other states of the peninsula which Livorno had enjoyed when these states were technically foreign no longer applied now that they were Italian.”⁴⁶ By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Livorno, despite its strategic location, was no longer a dominant force in the commercial endeavors of the Italian peninsula. While Livorno was tenth among European ports in 1832, it had dropped to thirty-first place in 1887 and to forty-seventh in 1898.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Baldasseroni, *Livorno ed il suo porto franco considerato nel passato*, 41.

⁴⁶ LoRomer, *Merchants and Reform in Livorno*, 258.

⁴⁷ Baruchello, *Livorno e il suo Porto*, 591.

Commercial Subject-Citizens and Economic Actors: Representations of the Jewish Community of Livorno during the Nineteenth Century

Throughout the nineteenth century, the Jewish community of Livorno confronted the port city's shifting political and economic landscape, searching for ways to adapt and strengthen their commercial practices and identities. Commerce had long been linked to the very foundations of the community, and the new frequency of commercial insecurity and uncertainty shook the community to its core. Yet individuals within the Jewish community continued to define their place in society through commerce, particularly in the years preceding the unification of Italy and the concomitant emancipation of Italian Jews. As described in the previous chapter, the principle of the commercial utility of Jews for the economy of the port city consistently framed understandings of Jewish legal status and emancipation in Livorno. During the nineteenth century, when Jews throughout Europe were arguing for their emancipation on the basis of their rights as individual citizens, the Jews of Livorno conceptualized themselves as a community of "commercial subject-citizens" instead.⁴⁸ Jews in Livorno framed their membership in the Tuscan state through commerce; it became the foundational principal of belonging to the Livornese Jewish community, to the Tuscan state, and to a larger community of Livornese Jewish merchants worldwide. Two salient moments of debate from the mid-nineteenth century shed light on how the Jewish community carved out a distinct space for themselves as commercial citizens and economic actors within the broader environment of the city.

⁴⁸ I use the term "commercial subject-citizens" to emphasize that Livornese Jews during the nineteenth century were both individuals and part of a community, moving away from references to them solely as a "subject nation." This extends Lois Dubin's argument for more nuance in understanding pre-emancipation Jewish legal and political history in terms of intermediate spaces and combinations, such as the subject-citizen, and moving beyond a false dichotomy of collective and individual. "Subjects into Citizens: Jewish Autonomy and Inclusion in Early Modern Livorno and Trieste," *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 5 (2006): 51, 57.

In 1835, representatives of the Jewish community, addressing the Grand Duke as “faithful subjects,” weighed in on the need for a commercial tribunal in Livorno in order to “give commercial disputes a more uniform and rapid process” and to follow “the example of so many other commercial centers of Europe, in which similar disputes are brought before a special judge, different than those who judge other civil disputes.”⁴⁹ The Jewish community petitioned to have a representative of the Jewish community on the new commercial tribunal, contending that it would be extremely “odd” to exclude Jews from this institution.⁵⁰ The Jewish community built their argument on the basis of the long tradition of tolerance shown towards Jews in Livorno, the overall heterodox environment of the city, and the respected service of Jews as members of the Chamber of Commerce of Livorno and as consular representatives of Tuscany in the Levant. The Jewish communal leadership did not shy away from reminding the Grand Duke that “for their fortunes, their knowledge, their relations, and their conduct,” members of the *nazione ebrea* “constituted the most considerable and most numerous portion of the commercial class,” a distinct and important presence in the port. Conducting commerce required a legal infrastructure, and if the Jews in Livorno did not have recourse to justice through the fair judgement of the commercial tribunal, it would be “damaging to their interests and credit in Tuscany and abroad.” In formulating their petition, the Jews of Livorno argued for their ever-further integration into the commercial institutions of city with the presumption of their ever-unique position in society.

In 1859, the place of the Jewish community within the commercial framework of Livorno again came to the forefront. A group of Florentine merchants proposed that the Tuscan practice of *feriato*, or the suspension of business in Livorno on important Jewish holidays, ought to be done away with, and argued that Jews should pay their commercial obligations before they

⁴⁹ ACEL, Minute, 1834-1836.

⁵⁰ ACEL, Minute, 1834-1836.

expired to avoid any delays based on the Jewish calendar. The Jewish communal response to this proposal was swift and decisive. In drafts of letters and petitions sent to the Tuscan government, Jewish leaders outlined their objections to the abrogation of a longstanding privilege. These measures would have a negative impact not only for the Jews of the Grand Duchy, but for “commerce in general,” leading to either the “paralysis of commercial and banking contracts or [causing Jews] to violate constantly their own religion.”⁵¹ The proposal would require Jews to act differently as creditors and debtors than non-Jews, complicating even further the already complex practice of circulating bills of exchange, which would harm transactions of goods and credit in Livorno and abroad.⁵² In another draft of the petition, the Jewish community protested that the ruling would be “contrary to the moral center and interests of Tuscan subjects” on two important counts. For one, obligating Jewish merchants to pay in advance of expiration dates “would put Jews, their traffic, and their banking operations in a worse condition as compared to other subjects” and obstruct their commercial operations. The Jewish community objected that the measure represented the undue regulation of the free carrying out of commerce and subordinated Jewish subjects involved in commerce in relation to other subjects, both violations of the guiding principles of the free port of Livorno. Secondly, the provision of *feriato* “served as a good thing for everyone...operating as a means of public morality and a provision of social security because religion is the most effective of all civil orders.” The Jewish community asserted their right to practice both their religion and their commerce – proposing that in doing so they would continue to be productive and decent subjects. The petitions from 1834 and 1859

⁵¹ ACEL, Minute, 1859-1861.

⁵² For more on the bill of exchange, see David, Landes, *Bankers and Pashas: International Finance and Economic Imperialism in Egypt* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958); Markus Denzel, “The European Bill of Exchange: Its Development from the Middle Ages to 1914” in *Cashless Payments and Transactions from the Antiquity to 1914*, ed. Sushil Chaudhuri and Markus A. Denzel (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2008), 153-194; Francesca Trivellato, “Credit, Honor, and the Early Modern French Legend of the Jewish Invention of Bills of Exchange,” *Journal of Modern History* 84, 2 (2012): 289-334.

demonstrate that the Jewish community of Livorno had developed a common language to discuss their economic rights and articulate their position in the free port. As “commercial subject-citizens,” Jews conducted commerce as individuals and belonged as a community within the city of Livorno and the Tuscan state.

Jews in Livorno remained at once distinct economic actors and part of a broader merchant community throughout the nineteenth century. The Chamber of Commerce of Livorno, founded in 1801, was made up of four Tuscan members and six members from “the nations most representative of the commerce of the city”; two English, one Greek, one Northerner, and two Jews.⁵³ Jewish members of the chamber of commerce were included on the basis of representing Jewish commercial interests; yet, in their service on the chamber of commerce, they articulated and fought for the interests of the merchant classes of Livorno as a whole. Nineteenth-century observers of the Livornese economy consistently pointed out the numerical significance of Jewish commercial firms operating in the city. In 1838, Emanuele Repetti reported that out of a total of 293 merchants of the first class in Livorno, 100 were Jewish, 95 were Tuscan or “*nazionali*,” 25 were English, 23 were Greek, and 50 were German, Swiss, or other Europeans. In the second category of commercial firms, which included retail merchants, shopkeepers, and manufacturers, there were 450 *nazionali*, 110 Jews, and 71 foreigners; and the major brokers were comprised of 230 *nazionali* and 115 Jews.⁵⁴ In his report from 1858, Luigi Torelli felt fit to

⁵³ A regulation in 1815 called for the continued distribution of seats in the Chamber of Commerce by nation.

⁵⁴ According to Repetti, the commercial community of Livorno was rounded out by 266 innkeepers and coffee shop owner, as well as 226 small merchants and minor brokers. In his 1837 report for the British House of Commons, John Bowring state that Jews carried out 28% of business in Livorno. He found the first class was made up of 308 merchants, bankers, etc., who earned 100 to 6,000 lire toscane per year. The second class was made up of 476 traders who earned 20 to 450 lire per year, and was comprised of 354 Tuscans, 71 Jews, and 51 foreigners. The third class of 233 shopkeepers, brokers, and middlemen earned from 20 lire to 3,000 pounds annually, and was comprised of 163 Christians (natives) and 70 Jews, while the fourth class was made up of 274 hotelkeepers, coffee and lodging house owners who earned from 220 lire to 450 pounds annually. John Bowring, *Report on the statistics of Tuscany, Lucca, the Pontifical, and the Lombardo-Venetian States* (London: 1838); Repetti, *Dizionario*, 762. For more

mention that of the small number of firms (twenty-four) in Livorno that had a minimum capital of at least one million francs, “there were six Tuscan (five of which were Jewish), eight Greek, and ten others (English, French, Dutch, and non-Tuscan Italians).”⁵⁵ Although Torelli categorized the Jewish merchants as Tuscans, he also classified them as a slightly separate entity within the group. Beyond their numerical significance, Jewish commercial firms participated notably in shaping the broader commercial culture of Livorno. The next section will examine the dynamics of the Jewish family firm in Livorno and the evolution of Jewish business practices.

The Search for Binding Connections: The Creation and Dissolution of Jewish Family Firms in Livorno

In 1816, thirteen-year old Moise Vita Bonaventura wrote a letter to Antonio Targioni Tozzetti, a well-known doctor, botanist, and professor of chemistry in Florence, and asked for advice on expanding his scientific knowledge. He introduced himself by explaining, “I belong to a family dedicated to commerce, in which I am being principally instructed, which makes it impossible to benefit from the Academy... it is therefore necessary for me to turn to books and to erudite friends like you.”⁵⁶ Despite his youth, Moise Vita Bonaventura firmly and emphatically situated himself within a particular context, a “family dedicated to commerce,” and suggested that this context delineated both his present and future way of life. In the Livornese Jewish community, Moise Vita Bonaventura was not unique in conceptualizing his place in the world through a family of commerce. Decades later, in 1854, the Abudarham family informed the chamber of commerce that after the death of the family patriarch they “desired to continue in the

information on the tax system in place in Livorno during the 1830s, see LoRomer, *Merchants and Reform in Livorno*, 113-120.

⁵⁵ Torelli, *Dell'avvenire del commercio europeo*, 59.

⁵⁶ Soon after reaching religious maturity, Moise Vita Bonaventura entered the family firm trading in drugs and spices. He wanted to pursue studies in medicine. Funaro, “Lumi e consigli,” 171.

practice of the ancient and traditional system of our family,” and would continue to operate a family firm together.⁵⁷

Although traditional narratives of economic history of the nineteenth century focus on the movement away from family firms towards more anonymous business organizations, such as the joint-stock company, historians such as Andrea Colli, Mary Rose, and Sylvia Yanagisako, have observed the general prevalence of family firms in Italy throughout the modern period.⁵⁸ For Jews in Livorno, family relationships were interwoven with economic endeavors, and the boundaries of many partnerships were explicitly framed by the purview and lens of family. Partnerships that formed along the lines of extended kinship or friendship could act with a certain flexibility in extending their business affairs outside of Livorno and expanding their capital resources. In January 1826, Samuel Picciotto informed the chamber of commerce that “wanting to demonstrate my approval of the marriage between Moise d’Illel Picciotto with my beloved niece, Laura, daughter of my dead brother of blessed memory...I am determined to associate my commerce with this youth, forming a new firm under the name *Samuele Moise Picciotto*.”⁵⁹ Presenting himself as the *paterfamilias* fulfilling his duties, Samuele Picciotto broadened the sphere of his commercial partnership to accept his new nephew as a full participant in their commercial affairs. As Sylvia Yanagisako notes in her study of the Italian silk industry, family firms often combined different rationalities and motivations, including affection, profit, and competition.⁶⁰ Commerce was risky and uncertain, and many Jews in Livorno

⁵⁷ Archivio Storico della Camera di Commercio di Livorno, Antiche ditte livornesi, f. 7 (1854), Livorno, Italy.

⁵⁸ Sylvia Junko Yanagisako, *Producing Culture and Capital: Family Firms in Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Colli, Perez, Rose, “National Determinants of Family Firms,” 28-64; Andrea Colli and Mary B. Rose, “Families and Firms: The Culture and Evolution of Family Firms in Britain and Italy in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 47, 1 (1999): 24-47.

⁵⁹ Archivio Storico della Camera di Commercio di Livorno, Antiche ditte livornesi, f. 2380 (1826).

⁶⁰ Yanagisako, *Producing Culture and Capital*, 11.

continued to believe that relying on a family firm structure represented the best potential for the financial stability or success of the family.

Although discussions of the family firm often emphasize shared interests and trust amongst family members and business partners, it is important to note how complicated these relationships of family and business could be; there often was no clear boundary between the “economic” and the “family.” Historians note that there are often “tensions between the family sphere and the business sphere,” and that family relationships and concerns can add instability to already difficult economic situations.⁶¹ Moments of rupture, such as death and divorce, could have profound reverberations beyond the family. And the very bonds that offered trust and stability also created obligations and vulnerabilities that had the potential to threaten more than just economic assets.⁶² The 1826 ketubah between Giuseppe Vita Cingoli and Giuditta Rosselli, outlined clear expectations for a commercial relationship between Cingoli and his father-in-law, Angelo Rosselli, the owner of two commercial firms, one in Livorno and one in Rome. The ketubah obligated Cingoli to reside “in Livorno or in another city of Tuscany,” and implied that he would work in his new father in law’s firm.⁶³ When Angelo died several months after the wedding, Cingoli and his wife moved to Rome, despite the provisions of the ketubah, where he founded a new commercial firm with his wife’s brothers and the capital from his dowry, but under his own name. The evolution of Cingoli’s firm also suggests that despite the elusive evidence of women in business archives, women had a hidden, yet prominent role in a firm’s survival through marriage, kinship connections, and as a source of information and capital.⁶⁴

⁶¹ This particularly comes to the forefront in deciding issues of inheritance or succession. Colli, Perez, and Rose, “National Determinants of Family Firms,” 28-64.

⁶² Dario Gaggio, *In Gold We Trust*, 1-32.

⁶³ Michele Luzzati, ed. *Ebrei di Livorno tra due censimenti (1841-1938)* (Livorno: Belforte, 1990), 158.

⁶⁴ Colli, Perez, and Rose, “National Determinants of Family Firms,” 42.

Out of the thousands of documents submitted by Jewish firms to the Chamber of Commerce of Livorno during the nineteenth century, only a handful were submitted by women. In most of the cases, women inherited firms from their dead fathers or husbands, and received permission to carry on the commerce of the firm on behalf of their children, usually with the aid of a male relative. Only three files demonstrate a woman running a business endeavor in her own name. In 1873, after the death of her husband, a time of uncertainty for her family, Regina Abeniagar took over her husband's commercial operations in the interest of her two young children. Having a woman expressly direct the commercial operations of a firm was atypical in Livorno, and in her letter to the chamber of commerce, co-signed by her father-in-law, she described herself as "trustworthy because of her zeal and proven capacity as a shop assistant, and [because she was operating] with the assistance of her father-in-law."⁶⁵ Seven years later, Regina Abeniagar clarified to the chamber of commerce that she would continue to engage in the buying and selling of furniture and tapestries, but this time solely under her own name. Initially framing her activities within the needs of her family and auspices of her father-in-law, Regina Abeniagar was then able to parlay her experience into commercial independence.

Family firms were not static entities, nor did the bonds of family did guarantee trust or reliability. In capturing firms at moments of transition, the documents that merchants submitted to the Chamber of Commerce reveal glimpses of Jewish economic strategies in pursuing trade in and beyond Livorno. In January 1823, L. Tedeschi informed the chamber of commerce of changes to the structure of his family's commercial endeavors. He wrote:

⁶⁵ Archivio Storico della Camera di Commercio di Livorno, Antiche ditte livornesi, f. 2, 3 (1873). In slightly different circumstances, Rosa Massiah founded a firm in 1905 for commissions and deposits, especially of salumi, under the firm name R. Massiah. Archivio Storico della Camera di Commercio di Livorno, Antiche ditte livornesi, f. 2535 (1905).

Wanting to lessen my mercantile concerns, I am determined to renounce affairs of commissions and involvements abroad, and to continue with only local operations on my own behalf. My oldest son, instead, wants to continue to occupy himself usefully in other branches of commerce, and with my satisfaction and approval, and supplied with sufficient capital, he will be united in a firm with my good friends, Sig. I. Morpurgo and Son, already established here for many years. The new firm, Morpurgo e L. Tedeschi will cultivate for their own behalf my old relations and will acquit themselves with the same zeal and care employed by me every time.⁶⁶

Although L. Tedeschi was stepping away from the risks and stress of international commerce in his old age, he emphasized the continuity between his abilities and pursuits abroad with the abilities and pursuits of the new firm and stressed that his son was following in his footsteps, well-prepared in terms of knowledge, skill, and capital. In creating the new firm, Morpurgo and Tedeschi echoed L. Tedeschi, explaining that they had found it “of mutual benefit to tighten our bonds of interests and friendship, already extant between the two families, [in order to] continue with the same business both in this market and abroad.” Morpurgo and Tedeschi intertwined “bonds of interests and friendship,” relying on their long-term relationships and shared contacts as the “stable” foundation for their venture. However, there were no guarantees of stability either in business or in their relationships, and interpersonal relationships were layered onto contractual ones.

Although some Jewish family firms in Livorno continued to use general partnership agreements, there were a growing number of firms that relied on limited partnership agreements instead. Limited partners helped provide part of the total capital of the firm, while leaving the daily direction and personal liability to managing partners. Partnerships were established for specific purposes and usually for a specific length of time with agreed-upon terms for review and

⁶⁶ Archivio Storico della Camera di Commercio di Livorno, Antiche ditte livornesi, f. 2982 (1823).

evaluation of the firm's finances. The structural changes in Livorno's economy meant that firms had to take into account added uncertainty when forming joint business ventures, and the evidence suggests that Jews in Livorno began to enter into more limited partnership agreements during this period.

Although Jews in Livorno occasionally entered into limited partnership agreements with non-Jews, the majority of their business partnerships continued to be formed within the context of the Jewish community. Jewish and non-Jewish merchants occupied "two coexisting cultural spheres" in Livorno; they relied on a common language of trust and honor and a shared understanding of belonging to a community of merchants, even as many of their trading practices and partnerships remained divided.⁶⁷ According to economist Mark Casson, developing and articulating a shared culture in commercial centers functioned as a recognizable economic asset, with the potential to reinforce trust, help with decisions, and monitor business activities.⁶⁸ However, bonds of family, friendship, or marriage, while often the basis for entering into partnerships, were not guarantees of cohesion or stability. As Francesca Trivellato has pointed out, "networks of trust" in partnerships "were not amorphous, boundless, and spontaneous, but inscribed in social norms, legal customs, and rules for communication that gave them stability."⁶⁹

The letters submitted to the Chamber of Commerce of Livorno were framed in formulaic language that consistently reinforced a sense of belonging to a community of Livornese merchants, with relationships bound together by shared values and honorable conduct.

Athanasios Gekas has found that the establishment of chambers of commerce in Greek port cities

⁶⁷ Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: the Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 17.

⁶⁸ Robert Lee, *Commerce and Culture: Nineteenth Century Business Elites* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 18.

⁶⁹ Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 275.

“gave merchants agency” and allowed them to create networks between themselves, authorities, and other groups in the city.⁷⁰ In Livorno, notifying the chamber of commerce of new commercial firms or changes in the composition of a firm was completely voluntary during the nineteenth century.⁷¹ Yet it was an extremely widespread practice for merchants in the city. Merchants seemed to feel as though they gained an added safeguard by submitting contracts and firm changes to the chamber of commerce. The chamber of commerce also became a stage for performing a firm’s reputation, and served to portray the firm and merchant’s investment in Livorno. In informing the chamber of commerce of their affairs, merchants repeatedly describe their “enthusiasm,” “honor,” and “reliability” in their commercial relationships and endeavors. Through these letters they became part of a defined community of merchants in the city, and had outlet for presenting complaints and concerns about conducting business in Livorno. During times of stress, change, or fracture, merchants concluded their letters to the chamber of commerce with the “hope that you will continue to honor us with the trust and favor you have for many years,” emphasizing continuity and solidarity in relationships amongst the merchants of Livorno.

However, the dissolution of family firms and bankruptcies happened frequently, with all of their attendant disruptions in the lives of merchants. In 1857, Daniel Fernandes wrote to the chamber of commerce that “the recent catastrophe, commercial difficulties...make it necessary for me to suspend payments immediately” and he would liquidate his goods and patrimony in

⁷⁰ The Chamber of Commerce was founded in Corfu in 1851 and was a way for merchants to be involved in local politics and urban affiliation. Athanasios Gekas, “Migrants, Merchants and Philanthropists: Hierarchies in Nineteenth Century Greek Ports,” in *Trade, Migration, and Urban Networks in Port Cities, c. 1640-1940*, ed. Adrian Jarvis and Robert Lee (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), 114, 116.

⁷¹ Founded in 1801, the specific powers granted to the Chamber of Commerce of Livorno included: advising the government of commercial affairs, suggesting improvements to regulations, and proposing new laws to foster commerce in the city. Notifying the Chamber of Commerce of Livorno of changes in businesses was not required until the twentieth century.

order to satisfy his creditors. He nursed the “most profound conviction of trying to do honor to his name, and of not retiring from commerce until totally and completely satisfying his creditors.”⁷² In his declaration of bankruptcy, Fernandes stressed the struggle to conserve his identity and reputation as a trustworthy merchant and the tension of maintaining relationships during times of difficulty.

Bankruptcies were moments that cast into sharp relief issues of honor and responsibility in the marketplace. In encompassing business affairs carried out both in local and foreign markets, bankruptcies disrupted relationships of trust and networks of exchange, and revealed their contradictions. In a commercial conflict in Alexandria in 1839, Isache Sonnino accused Carlo Moritch of declaring bankruptcy three times over the last few years, twice in Livorno and once in Alexandria.⁷³ Carlo Moritch countered these accusations indignantly, writing to Sonnino, “How do you know what happened in Livorno? Perhaps I didn’t go through bankruptcy?” and professed his honesty repeatedly in his testimony before the consular court. Moritch claimed that there was a disconnect between the local economic life of port cities and merchants with them. However, Sonnino’s accusations show how trust and mistrust, good business practices and malfeasance functioned simultaneously on local and international registers.

In their considerations of Livorno, nineteenth century economists Luigi Serristori and Guiliano Ricci both outlined a profound change in the ways merchants carried out business in Livorno in the nineteenth century and the commercial opportunities they seized. During the eighteenth century, commerce in the city was dominated by a few large foreign firms with the resources and capital to carry out international business directly, while smaller merchants needed

⁷² Archivio Storico della Camera di Commercio di Livorno, Antiche ditte livornesi, f. 1220 (1857).

⁷³ Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 20 (1839).

to rely on foreign firms in order to do business abroad. However, during the nineteenth century there was an overall increase in the number of merchants and firms in the city. Serristori noted that “many of the approximately 280 wholesale merchant and banking firms in the city are in direct contact with foreign firms, and some had also opened branch offices in other cities.”⁷⁴ And according to Ricci, merchants had proved their ability to adapt successfully and evolve despite difficult economic circumstances in Livorno.

By the mid to late nineteenth century, the economic endeavors of Jews in Livorno can be framed by two separate processes, that sometimes converged and sometimes diverged. Many Jewish families rooted themselves in Livorno, investing in real estate or manufacturing. For example, Isaac Tedesco, born in Rome in 1812, moved to Livorno as a young man to flee the hard conditions for Jews in Rome and to pursue commerce. In Livorno, he bought an office and house in the city, as well as a villa in the countryside.⁷⁵ However, as Samuel Fettah has pointed out the ownership of properties, even factories or spaces of industry, cannot be considered as a signal of turning away from commerce. Rather than buying land to enhance their social status, merchants often invested in property as part of a commercial business strategy. Owning property served as “a refuge and a guarantee,” and important proof of a merchant’s faithfulness and reliability, so much so that possessing real estate was essential for constructing business relationships and a mortgage was critical for engaging in the local credit market.⁷⁶ The tax declarations of Salomone Abudharam, brother of the prominent merchant Samuel, demonstrate how commerce and real estate investment functioned together. In 1849, the firm submitted net earnings of 52,145 lire toscane, composed of 10,786 lire from real estate earnings, 11,358 lire

⁷⁴ LoRomer, *Merchants and Reform in Livorno*, 87.

⁷⁵ Luzzati, *Ebrei di Livorno tra due censimenti*, 127.

⁷⁶ Samuel Fettah, “Note sull’elite livornese dell’Ottocento. I soci fondatori dell’Accademia del Casino di Livorno,” *Nuovi Studi Livornesi* (1997): 137.

from credit payments, and 30,000 from capital engaged in commerce; four-fifths of Abudarham's earnings were from movables, showing how important commerce remained in determining his income despite the large amount of property he owned.

Other Jewish families Livorno turned even more decidedly towards alternate economic paths. In the case of the Franchetti family, historian Mirella Scardozzi has traced a gradual movement away from the port and away from commerce. The family moved from Tunisia to Livorno at the end of the eighteenth century, and operated a successful international firm with branches in Tunisia, Livorno, and Smyrna.⁷⁷ However, beginning in the 1830s, the family left the port and commercial affairs. By the end of the century, none of the branches of the large family were involved in commerce or lived in Livorno; the extended family included professionals, politicians, and ennobled landowners in Piedmont. The process of turning away from commerce can also be found in the case of Jews who remained in Livorno. In 1880, three brothers, Angelo, Sabatino, and Pellegrino Rosselli, met in the living room of their deceased father's house to draw up a contract for a new mineralogical firm, outlining their plans for mining, excavation, and sales. Although their family had long looked to the sea for their economic fortunes, now they turned decidedly to the ground.⁷⁸

And yet, commerce continued to play an outsized role in Jewish economic practices centered in Livorno. Even though the port could no longer rely on playing a central role in international trade, many family firms continued the practice of positioning different members of

⁷⁷ Mirella Scardozzi, "Una storia di famiglia: I Franchetti dalle coste del Mediterraneo all'Italia liberale," *Quaderni Storici* 114 (2003): 697-740.

⁷⁸ Angello Rosselli had been elected director of Roman Society of Maritime Insurance in 1850, and the family had a commercial firm in Livorno. They appointed two non-Jewish men to oversee the mine, Abbadia Salvatore and Pian Castagna. Other partners in the venture included Virginia Mieli Nathan (daughter of Anna Rosselli) and her husband, Ernesto Nathan (the future mayor of Rome). The mining towns, Abbadia San Salvatore and Piancastagnaio, mined cinnabar for mercury. Archivio Storico della Camera di Commercio di Livorno, *Antiche ditte livornesi*, f. 2625 (1880).

the family in various port cities in order to facilitate operations. In this way, the structure of the family firm allowed Jews to continue to access international markets and build ties and networks between ports. For example, the Franco family, involved in the trade of fez hats to the Ottoman Empire, stationed two brothers in Livorno and two brothers in Constantinople to take care of affairs, frequently exchanging letters and accounts amongst all of the brothers.⁷⁹ However, many of the documents filed at the chamber of commerce indicated that firms were moving their operations from Livorno to other rival port cities of the Mediterranean or to the major cities of Florence or Rome in response to changing trade routes and economic conditions. Often those who stayed in Livorno and those who left coexisted within the same family. In 1854, Moise di Jacob Molco's brother remained in Livorno, while he moved to Marseilles to direct their affairs, and in 1865, Soria and Fratelli Bondi established a new branch of their firm in Florence that would operate alongside their firm in Livorno. In other cases, the firms moved away from Livorno permanently, for example, in 1863, Isaac Pereya de Leon left Livorno and transferred his commercial firm and all of his affairs to Genoa. As Jews in Livorno structured their business relations around expanding commercial opportunities elsewhere, migration became an important aspect of the Jewish experience of daily life in Livorno.

The Movements of Livornese Jews around the Modern Mediterranean

In 1817, the Governor of Livorno, Spannocchi Piccolomini, wrote to the government in Florence to ask how to handle a potential upswing in emigration after fifteen Tuscan artisans left simultaneously for Cairo. Aurelio Puccini, the Presidente del Buon Governo, responded that Piccolomini had done well to give the artisans their passports, for "Our laws do not prohibit

⁷⁹ Franco family archive, Private Collection of Alberto Bedarida, Livorno, Italy.

emigration, nor does it seem to be in the interests of the government to stop it, however, unrest or upheavals that render emigration more frequent or widespread ought to be prevented.”⁸⁰ With this exchange, the Tuscan government acknowledged that migration was of fundamental importance for the functioning of Livorno and its economy, even as it also carried with it the danger of disturbing the economic and social order of the city, particularly at a moment when Livorno was trying to find stability in the post-Napoleonic era. As a port, Livorno had long been a city in flux; the ships crowding Livorno’s harbor signaled not only the circulation of goods to and from Livorno, but also the circulation of people. However, political turmoil and fluctuations in the Livornese economy accelerated the routes and rhythms of mobility around the Mediterranean during the nineteenth century. For the Jewish community of Livorno, the centripetal forces of tolerance and opportunity that had led to Livorno’s position as a destination for Jewish migration seemed to be shifting, and the Jews of Livorno increasingly navigated the tensions between the creative or disruptive possibilities of migration.

Despite growing economic uncertainty in Livorno during the nineteenth century, the records of the Jewish community reveal many Jews who continued to immigrate to Livorno from across the Italian peninsula and the Mediterranean. For many, Livorno still represented the idea of economic opportunity – the chance to make a life and a living. For example, in 1853, Emanuele Modigliani submitted his request for *ballottazione* to the Jewish community of Livorno. He explained that he “had abandoned his domicile in Rome,” where conditions for Jews were especially bad, and “come with his family to this city of Livorno with the firm intention of

⁸⁰ Archivio di Stato di Livorno (ASL), Governo di Livorno, n. 660 (1817), as quoted in Michel Ersilio, *Esuli italiani in Egitto, 1815-1861* (Pisa: Domus mazziniani, 1958), 5. The office of Presidente del Buon Governo was similar to a minister of internal affairs. Created in 1784, under the reforms of Peter Leopold, the office directed the police, administered prisons, censorship and all aspects of public order. Giovanni Ciappelli, *Un Ministro del Granducato nell’età della Restaurazione: Aurelio Puccini (1773-1840) e sue memorie* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2007).

moving here and acquiring domicile. [He has] already acquired a property and has opened a commercial house.”⁸¹ Modigliani attached documents to his request that supported his “good moral, political, and religious conduct, held constant both in Tuscany and in his last place of domicile,” and offered 133.6 lire as a contribution to the Jewish poor in Livorno in honor of his *ballottazione*.⁸² Throughout the process of *ballottazione*, Emanuele Modigliani sought to assert his potential as a productive member of the Livornese Jewish community.

Many others arrived in Livorno with the hope of being integrated into the Livornese Jewish community and Livornese society more broadly without the economic resources of traders like Modigliani. Ester Fermi, newly resettled in Livorno in 1866, found herself forced by necessity to write to the leaders of the Jewish community for aid. As a trained midwife, Ester Fermi had spent years working with the women of Livorno, “never eschewing her duties, never leaving the city” even during the dire outbreaks of cholera in 1854 and 1855.⁸³ She had then “moved to Egypt together with her family to establish herself in the city,” but not finding the climate suitable for her health, decided to return to Livorno. Now she “found herself in an unhappy state with a family [she] could not support,” and asked to be appointed to a post in the community with some form of monthly salary to provide for her and her family. Like Modigliani, Ester Fermi framed herself as a productive member of the *nazione ebrea* with the potential to contribute to the community. However, her request for employment and aid is also revealing of the uncertain economic position many found themselves in during the nineteenth century. Ester Fermi was one voice among many struggling to support themselves in mid-nineteenth century Livorno.

⁸¹ ACEL, Minute, 1853-1855.

⁸² ACEL, Minute, 1853-1855.

⁸³ Ester Fermi had first moved to Livorno in 1851. ACEL, Minute, 1866-1871.

The historical records reveal that Livorno served as a critical juncture for larger patterns of movement around the Mediterranean world. In 1853, the Jewish community reported that Giuseppe and Giacomo Menasce, cousins from Constantinople, had arrived in Livorno on a Spanish ship after passing through Smyrna and Malta. They were discovered on board because their passports lacked the endorsement of the Tuscan consul, and they did not have means to pay for their passage (about 80 franks). The unfortunates languished, “suffering from hunger...they decided to come to Livorno believing that the relatives they had there could help them, but their only relative, Roberto Cabib, was not in a state where he could be considered useful. They made an appeal to the *nazione ebrea* in order to borrow charitable assistance and to pull them out of their present sorrowful position.”⁸⁴ In their unsanctioned movements around the Mediterranean, the Menasce cousins seemed to believe that making it to Livorno would offer them succor from two potential sources, either from their cousin or from the renowned Jewish community. In their desperate mobility, the Menasce brothers acted on the information and limited resources they had access to. This incident is revealing not only of the misery that forced or encouraged movement, but also the currents of information that circulated the Mediterranean through the node of Livorno. In 1819, the chancellor of the Jewish community of Livorno reported to the Jewish community of Urbino that Moise Emanuel da Fano had not passed through Livorno – they had gathered the information that two years ago he had passed from Livorno to Tunis, and from there to Tripoli and then to Alexandria in Egypt – after that his trail had gone cold.⁸⁵

While many historians, such as Jean-Pierre Filippini, Lucia Frattarelli Fischer, and Renzo Toaff, have explored the expansion of the Jewish community of Livorno throughout the early

⁸⁴ ACEL, Minute, 1853-1855.

⁸⁵ It is unclear why the communal leadership in Urbino was looking for da Fano; the archives only leave traces of the search for information on him. ACEL, Copialettere, 28 June 1819.

modern period in detail, historians have left largely unexplored the demographic changes experienced by the community during the nineteenth century. By 1841, more than 78 percent of the Jewish community (3,738 individuals) had been born in Livorno; the Jewish community was growing more through natural increase than through immigration.⁸⁶ And throughout the nineteenth century, the Jewish population of Livorno steadily decreased; in 1861, the Jewish community was made up of 4,308 individuals, whereas in 1841, it had been made up of 4,771. Between the end of the eighteenth century and the end of the nineteenth century, there were roughly a thousand fewer Jews in Livorno, even as the general population of Livorno continued to grow. Historian Attilio Milano attributed the emigration of Jews away from Livorno to the abolition of free port status in 1868, writing that “immediately, crowds of Livornese Jews set off for all of Italy or moved to Tunisia or the Levant, wherever they had constituted agencies of affairs before or they had any relations.”⁸⁷ In fact, Jewish emigration from Livorno had already started some decades before the abolition of free port status. Moments of conflict, such as the political revolutions of 1848-49 or the severe cholera epidemic of 1854-55, contributed to the decline of the Jewish population of Livorno. But, perhaps the single most important factor in the decline of the Jewish population of Livorno was the search for economic opportunities through outward migration.

The *Registri di Partenze* for the Jewish community of Livorno from the nineteenth reveal the intense and increasing mobility in the Jewish population of Livorno as rabbis, merchants, shopkeepers, bankers, and craftsmen moved alone or with their families to Tunis, Marseilles, Salonica, and Alexandria. The Jews who emigrated from Livorno were part of a larger pattern of

⁸⁶ Anna Sercia Gianforma, “Gli Ebrei Livornesi nel Censimento del 1841,” in *Ebrei di Livorno tra due censimenti (1841-1938)*, ed. Michele Luzzati (Livorno: Belforte, 1990), 35.

⁸⁷ Attilio Milano as quoted in Mirella Ronchetti Vitaloni, “Fonti archivistiche sull’evoluzione demografica economica e culturale della comunità israelitica di Livorno tra ‘800 e ‘900,” *Italia Judaica. Gli Ebrei nell’Italia unita, 1870-1945* (Rome: Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, 1993), 248.

migration from the Italian peninsula. Roughly two million people migrated from the Italian peninsula between 1790 and 1870, and many Italian migrants during this period tended to come from northern and central regions, and move to other parts of Europe or the Mediterranean, rather than across the Atlantic.⁸⁸ Between 1825 and 1865, over 5,000 names were registered in the *Registri di Partenze* of the Jewish community. During this period, 75.8 percent (about 3,615) of the Jews emigrating from Livorno were economically active, or working in some capacity, while about 24.2 percent (about 1,152) were inactive, or not working.⁸⁹ The *Registri di Partenze* reveal a total of 2907 men (or 61%), 784 women (or 16%), and 1076 children (22.6%) leaving Livorno.⁹⁰ A separate communal list of emigrants from 1837 supports the theory that migration was much more common for men than for women. Of the 206 individuals leaving Livorno during 1837, the vast majority were men, often travelling alongside their brothers, fathers, uncles or cousins; there were only ten women on the list.⁹¹ This suggests that much of the migration from Livorno continued to be driven by commercial or economic activities. The *Registri di Partenze* also demonstrated the intersecting phenomena of recurring movements through Livorno and more permanent migrations away from Livorno. Names in the *Registri di Partenze* often appeared several times over the course of years, sometimes multiple times in a single year, revealing the frequent mobility in the lives of individuals, particularly as they pursued

⁸⁸ Donna Gabaccia has argued that migrations from the first part of the nineteenth century were significant for their political and economic impact, rather than their quantity. Fourteen million Italians left the peninsula between 1876 and 1914. Donna Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 3.

⁸⁹ The economically active population included industrial workers and artisans, merchants, domestic servants, housewives, clergy, students. The inactive population included those without a profession, the poor, and landowners. There are some issues with using the *Registri di Partenze* as sources – the register from 1843 to 1853 is missing, and the registers have suffered water damage. Some of the economic activities mentioned are: shopboys, clerks, warehouse workers, merchants, traders, and vendors; in particular commerce of foodstuffs, commerce of manufactures, and secondhand dealers.

⁹⁰ Daniela Pennacchio “Ebrei fra Livorno e altri porti del Mediterraneo secondo i registri delle emigrazioni dell’Archivio Storico della Comunità Israelitica,” in *Studi Mediterranei ed extraeuropei*, ed. Vittorio Salvadorini (Pisa: Edistudio, 2002), 225.

⁹¹ Five women were listed as widows, and two women were listed as leaving with families. ACEL, Minute, 1836-1837.

commercial affairs. Anna Sercia Gianforma has argued in her research that the data on age distribution from the 1841 census indicates a spike in the amount of children aged 4 to 9 and 10 to 14 in the Jewish community, suggesting that it was common for entire families who had moved away from Livorno to then reenter Livorno with their young children.⁹² This pattern of return can also be explained by the reason behind their initial migration; unlike Jewish migrants from other parts of Europe fleeing religious intolerance or persecution, Livornese Jews left to pursue commercial opportunities.

By the mid-nineteenth century, migration from Livorno was a growing economic strategy for a range of individuals and families – from the truly desperate to the upwardly mobile. In 1833-1834, the Massari voted in favor of teaching multiple foreign languages in community schools, asserting that “the knowledge of other languages would not only make finding employment easier in Livorno, but it would also promote emigration, lowering the number of indigents in the community.”⁹³ Indeed, outward migration was an important safety valve for the community. Raffael Modigliano wrote to the Massari that he “found himself in a deplorable state, [and so] decided to go with his family to Tunis where he hopes to better his conditions.” However, because of his “lack of means,” he couldn’t put this plan in place, and he asked for charitable support of his migration.⁹⁴ The community provided some aid to the impoverished who wanted to move elsewhere. Others in less dire economic straits also ventured to developing cities in the Mediterranean. In 1830, Moise Moreno set out for Tunis from Livorno with his wife Grazia and children, invited by the bey of Tunisia to open a European-style pharmacy in the

⁹² Sercia Gianforma, “Gli Ebrei Livornesi nel Censimento del 1841,” 27.

⁹³ ACEL, Minute, 1833-1834.

⁹⁴ ACEL, Minute, 1799-1801.

city.⁹⁵ In Livorno, Moise Moreno worked as a collection agent for recurring debts such as rents, while also possibly working in the pharmacy of his wife's relatives, and opening a pharmacy in Tunis represented an enticing economic opportunity for the family.

Mobility was a familiar concept for many of the Jews of Livorno. Those who left Livorno found their way eased by existing networks of exchange between Livorno and other ports of the Mediterranean. Although the historical records are sparing in their information, they reveal glimpses of the individual participants and protagonists of migration through and away from Livorno. Many of these individuals traced not only their own paths across the sea, but also the paths of their family before them. For example, on September 2, 1858, Clementina Canneo left Livorno with her two children Enrico, aged 5, and Anna, aged 3, in order to reunite with her husband, who had a commercial firm and home in Alexandria, while a young Giuseppe Cameo testified before the leadership of the Jewish community that he had parents living in Alexandria and he had been "called to them to exercise his trade and industry."⁹⁶ In his studies of migration, Charles Tilly noted that throughout the nineteenth century there were high rates of return amongst European migrants; "the returnees reinforced the ties between origin and destination, and thus facilitated further migration along the same lines."⁹⁷ The experiences of artisan Angiolo di Vita Funaro exemplified this pattern of departure and return from Livorno.⁹⁸ After the war of

⁹⁵ In Livorno, there was a long history of Jews being involved in the commerce of spices and medicine. In Tunisia, the beys often preferred having Tuscan Jews as their personal doctors. Funaro, "Lumi e consigli," 191. ASL, Archivio della famiglia Moreno, box 2.

⁹⁶ ACEL, Minute, 1840-1841 and Vitaloni, "Fonti archivistiche," 249.

⁹⁷ Charles Tilly, "Transplanted Networks," in *Immigration Reconsidered: History, Sociology and Politics*, ed. Virginia Yans-McLaughlin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 85.

⁹⁸ In the 1870s, Angiolo di Vita Funaro, an artisan in Livorno, wrote to his cousin, Sabato Morais, a well-known rabbi in Philadelphia, for financial help. Angiolo had been orphaned young with six siblings, and as an adult he struggled to support his wife and family. He was able to acquire three small real estate units to use as the possible future dowry for his three daughters. He was concerned over education of his kids, and improving the fortunes of the family of the next generation. Liana Elda Funaro, "Il ruolo degli ebrei livornesi: due percorsi individuali su uno sfondo mediterraneo" in *I Laboratori Toscani della Democrazia e del Risorgimento: La 'repubblica' di Livorno, l'*

1859 and the successive economic crisis, Funaro moved away from Livorno to Egypt, where he suffered and survived typhus. He then returned to Livorno in 1860 only to leave once more to open a shop in Tunisia. However, after a crisis in the Tunisian economy in the mid-1860s, he returned once more to Livorno, where he found his affairs worsening with the loss of free port status. Funaro consistently sought to use his mobility to escape difficult economic situations, and despite his struggles, Funaro wrote with the hopeful conviction that his itinerant life would lead to the future success and happiness of his six children.⁹⁹ While the emigration registers reveal how common mobility was in the lives of Livornese Jews, they obscure how potentially challenging or disruptive migration could be on the level of individuals or families.

Increasing migration amongst the Jewish community of Livorno in the mid-nineteenth century exacerbated certain social pressures within the community. When Vita Piperno announced that he had been called to Tunis to exercise his profession as a woodcutter for perhaps as long as a year, he informed the community that he had left his “family with means to provide for their needs...for the period of time that he would be absent from the city,” so that they would not become indigent and dependent on the community.¹⁰⁰ Piperno’s request alludes to the disruptive potential of leaving behind a sick wife and two sons, and his wife submitted her written consent for her husband to leave her in Livorno. Indeed, Jewish women had a relative power to give consent for the migration of their husband or children as a form of protection

“altro” *Granducato, il sogno italiano di rinnovamento*, ed. Laura Dinelli and Luciano Bernardini (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2004), 86.

⁹⁹ In his letter, he prostrated himself before Morais, writing: “I am the last of men and don’t pretend to be anything; I lack instruction, I am miserable, but I am not senseless nor a man without heart,” but asserted his aspirations that “a man like me, without means and with six kids, has the courage to want to produce a doctor...to want to make a mistress of letters, a mistress of the piano and one of embroidery.” Funaro, “Il ruolo degli ebrei livornese,” 86.

¹⁰⁰ ACEL, Minute, 1856-1858.

against abandonment or bigamy.¹⁰¹ On April 13, 1859, Abramo Varios presented himself in front of the chancellery of the Jewish community, to state that his brother in law, Israel Procaccia, was leaving Livorno for Alexandria, with the “full knowledge and consent of his wife,” she would not become the responsibility of the community and would live in her father’s house.¹⁰² This perhaps shows the double bind of women: even though she was giving her consent, she was spoken for by her brother and consigned to be the responsibility of her father. In another case, Samuel Arbib, a merchant, presented himself personally to the *massari* to facilitate the departure of Leone Bargas for Tunisia. Arbib promised to take in Rosa Bargas, Leone’s daughter, as a domestic servant, arguing “this young woman is Livornese and Jewish, and therefore has the right to the assistance of her correligionists.”¹⁰³ Despite Arbib’s statement, Rosa was from Tunisia and not actually a native of Tuscany, and the community leadership debated whether or not she had the “right to the assistance of her correligionists,” ultimately concluding that Rosa could be taken in and treated as a member of the Jewish community of Livorno. Although they recognized that Rosa was not from Livorno, they opened the boundaries of the community to include her, implying the permeable nature of these boundaries. Accelerating migration created enormous difficulties in determining who belonged to the Jewish community and the roles of its members. The increasing economic difficulties of many members of the Jewish community and the financial straits of the communal structure itself during the mid-nineteenth century meant that these questions of movement, need, and belonging were ever more pressing.

¹⁰¹ Liana Elda Funaro, “‘Compagna e partecipe’: Donne della comunità ebraica livornese nel secondo Ottocento,” *Sul filo della scrittura: Fonti e temi per la storia delle donne a Livorno*, ed. Lucia Fratarelli Fischer and Olimpia Vaccari (Pisa: Pisa University Press, 2005), 335.

¹⁰² ACEL, Minute, 1859-1861.

¹⁰³ ACEL, Minute, 1840-1841.

This chapter identifies several interwoven social, economic, and political dynamics in the commercial culture of the Jews of Livorno. During the nineteenth century, the foundation of commercial life in Livorno was more precarious than ever before. In pursuing commerce, Jews saw continuing the tradition of family firms as a path towards both stability and flexibility. However, family firms were also unstable and vulnerable; turning to newly formed merchant institutions such as the chamber of commerce was one way to try to define and shore up these ties. Through their private business dealings and family relationships, Jews formulated public positions for themselves as merchants in the relation to the Tuscan state and a larger merchant community in the city. While the commercial culture of Jews in Livorno functioned on the level of individual relationships and activities in the port, it also functioned as a creator of wide networks of people, goods, and information in the Mediterranean.

In 1842, economist Luigi Serristori observed, “For quite some time emigration from Livorno has been notable, since this market is ceasing to be an active center of commerce...the Jews of Livorno will go establish themselves wherever advantages will arise. Many will move to Africa for the resources offered there and for the easy employment of youth with some education. Others will establish new commercial firms in other markets.”¹⁰⁴ Beginning in 1821 and accelerating throughout the mid-nineteenth century, many Jews from Livorno followed the paths of opportunity from the increasing economic uncertainty of the port of Livorno to the

¹⁰⁴ Luigi Serristori in *Livorno ed i suoi traffici*, 372 as quoted in Roberto Bachi, “La demografia italiana dell’Ebraismo prima dell’emancipazione,” *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel Scritti in onore di Dante Lattes* 12, 7-9 (1938): 284.

growing economic vitality of the port of Alexandria. From 1825 to 1865, about 1,370 men, women and children, made their way from Livorno to Alexandria. The next chapter will focus on tracing the development of Alexandria into a modern Mediterranean port city during the nineteenth century, and examine the ways Jews in Egypt formulated economic strategies around connections to Livorno and access to the consular court system.

Chapter Three

Commerce in the Courts: Exchanging Goods and Negotiating Commercial Relationships

In March 1858, Joseph Pinkhas Piha, a Tuscan protégé living in Egypt, sent a letter to the Tuscan consulate in Alexandria, levying serious charges against his former employer and business partner, Angelo Tedesco. Piha outlined the specific contract violations and business improprieties committed by Tedesco, before declaring: “Guilty! because [Tedesco] breaking the laws of prudence, without precaution, has disregarded the ordinary pathways of commerce. Guilty! because in his unadulterated desire to get ahead.... He has been taking risks, provoking danger, and turning towards speculation.”¹⁰⁵ With these words, Piha forcefully asserted that Tedesco had turned away from a shared understanding of honorable commerce in favor of speculative gain, and he summoned the full force of the law to judge him. He scoffed at Tedesco’s assumption that “no one would know the gravity of this misconduct,” and concluded that “Civil, commercial, and penal laws, will all come together to condemn him.” Indeed, over the course of 1858, the conflict between Piha and Tedesco traversed British, Austrian, and Tuscan consular courts in Egypt as both men attempted to harness the legal power available to them as individuals, as merchants, and as foreign nationals. Claiming these overlapping legal identities allowed active and strategic individuals such as Piha and Tedesco to mobilize the consular courts to support their economic endeavors and dissolve their business relationship.

¹⁰⁵ Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 56 (1858), Rome, Italy.

Alongside the shops, streets, and customs houses of nineteenth century Egypt, the consular courts emerged as a central venue for negotiating commercial relationships and articulating social and economic interests. Creditors and debtors, husbands and wives, business partners and neighbors, all appear in the consular court records as legal and economic actors, seeking ways to exercise power and agency over their everyday lives by playing the competing legal systems in Egypt off of each other to try and settle their disputes. Within this commercial culture, the consular courts functioned as both an institutional space and decipherable language; competing courts, claims, and narratives created and dissolved commercial possibilities.

This chapter focuses on the intersections between commerce and legal practice for Jews in Egypt. Although episodic by their nature, the records of the consular courts – the bankruptcy proceedings, inheritance disputes, debt settlements, and criminal investigations – help reveal the daily commercial practices of Jews in Egypt as well as the legal and cultural understandings at their foundation. The history of Livornese Jewish merchants in Alexandria is part of a larger Mediterranean story, connected to Jewish communities and port cities such as Tunis and Salonica. Without losing sight of this broader context, this chapter focuses on Alexandria because of the port city’s rapid economic and demographic transformations during the nineteenth century, including the marked growth in the number of Jewish merchants from Livorno, as well as the system of multiple legal regimes in the city.

As the Jews of Livorno created overlapping networks of mobilities, migrations, and commerce in the modern Mediterranean, they became architects of a trading diaspora, defined by Phillip Curtin as a group of merchants “linked to one another by several kinds of mutual

solidarity: common profession, religion, language and so on.”¹⁰⁶ While some European Jewish historians, such as Jonathan Israel, have characterized trading diasporas as a premodern phenomenon, I argue that the Jews of Livorno in Egypt demonstrate how trading diasporas were also a way to be modern.¹⁰⁷ The commercial strategies of Livornese Jews in Alexandria during the nineteenth century reflected both continuities and changes. Livornese Jewish merchants in Alexandria relied on older patterns of Mediterranean networks to create new trading relationships, but in the process, reoriented these networks based on their geographic, legal, and economic position in Egypt. In Alexandria, Jews traded with Muslims, Greeks, Maltese, British; however, capital, business partnerships, and loans were often conducted within an ethno-religious circle. The connections between Livorno and Alexandria did not pass unbroken, generation to generation, but rather were a series of choices in terms of investments, divisions, and alliances.

Using the framework of the “trading diaspora” for Livornese Jews in Egypt should not imply a sense of rootlessness or transience, and this chapter illustrates the ways Livornese Jews in Egypt became incredibly integrated in their Egyptian surroundings. In studying the role of Swiss-German entrepreneurs in developing the cotton industry of nineteenth century Naples, Daniela Caglioti has found that despite their economic investments in the city, the Swiss-German entrepreneurs “simply did not integrate into the local society.”¹⁰⁸ This was simply not the case for Livornese Jews in Egypt, who became “local” in their economic and social investments in

¹⁰⁶ Philip Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 46; Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, Gelina Harlaftis, and Ioanna Pepelasis Minoglou, eds. *Diaspora Entrepreneurial Networks: Four Centuries of History* (New York: Berg, 2005).

¹⁰⁷ Jonathan Karp argues against schools of economic theory that privilege industry over commerce as “the pivot of development,” and states that examining Jewish economic history can “subvert the paradigms of modernity.” Jonathan Karp, “Can Economic History Date the Inception of Jewish Modernity?” in *The Economy in Jewish History: New Perspectives on the Interrelationship between Ethnicity and Economic Life*, ed. Gideon Reuveni and Sarah Wobick-Segev (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 27, 36-37.

¹⁰⁸ Daniela Luigia Caglioti, “Trust, Business Groups, and Social Capital: Building a Protestant Entrepreneurial Network in Nineteenth Century Naples,” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 13, 2 (2008): 220.

Egypt. Deeply embedded in the political and economic landscape of Alexandria, Tuscan Jews also relied on their transnational commercial connections with Livorno; Livorno served as a touchstone of economic resources, information, solidarity, and political status. This becomes even more striking when we consider that this trading diaspora did not just include Jews who migrated directly from Livorno to Alexandria, but also those in Alexandria who traced more tenuous links to Livorno after living for generations in the Ottoman Empire. While historical sources often leave vague the precise geographical origins of individuals in nineteenth-century Alexandria, “such criteria of classification and identification acquired increased importance in the early nineteenth century as a means of network building and instruments for creation of new solidarities.”¹⁰⁹ In particular, Jews moving through the Egyptian consular court system enacted their individual movements across the Mediterranean and reinforced dense networks between port cities such as Livorno and Alexandria.

Matthias Lehmann has pointed out that although a network can be enduring, it is also unstable and dynamic, and it must be understood as “something that ‘happens’ rather than a structure that simply ‘is.’”¹¹⁰ This chapter builds on this conception of networks, focusing on the consular courts as a site where networks are forged and broken apart. Alongside other economic strategies, Livornese Jews in Egypt relied on the consular court to widen, solidify, and break the commercial bonds that connected them to neighbors, family members, and strangers. Relying on the Tuscan consular court became a shared economic space and practice, even if it was simultaneously often a forum for conflict and disruption. Looking at the courts underscores that shared origins or origin story, ethnicity, or religion did not guarantee bonds and how individuals,

¹⁰⁹ Pascale Ghazaleh, “Governance in Transition: Competing Immigrant Networks in early nineteenth-century Egypt,” *The City in the Ottoman Empire: Migration and the Making of Urban Modernity*, ed. Nora Lafi, Ulrike Freitag, Malte Fuhrmann and Florian Riedler (London: Routledge, 2011), 136.

¹¹⁰ Matthias Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land: The Sephardic Diaspora and the Practice of Pan-Judaism in the Eighteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 11.

confronted the interconnections of trust and vulnerability in carrying out commerce. Conducting commerce through the consular courts served to root Livornese Jews in their local context, while also building and defining wider Mediterranean networks.

Alexandria: Mediterranean Port City on the Rise

Throughout the nineteenth century, Egypt emerged as an ever-more critical node in the circulation of people and commodities across the Mediterranean. Eurocentric histories of Egypt have often characterized the eighteenth century as a long period of “stagnation” and attributed the transformation of Egypt to contact with the West, beginning with the brief period of French occupation (1798-1801). More recent studies have conclusively argued that the period of French occupation was too brief to have had any real impact on Egypt, and have undermined this stark contrast between the Ottoman eighteenth century and the modern era in Egypt, tracing “the existence of sophisticated commercial structures and practices in the economy before 1800, which facilitated the rise of a more commercialized economy in the nineteenth century.”¹¹¹ The elements of continuity between the Ottoman era and the era of Muhammad ‘Ali’s reign, however, should not discount the nineteenth century as a period of broad economic, political, and social transitions in Egypt.

While historians have debated the role of Muhammad ‘Ali (1805-1848) as “the founder of modern Egypt,” Egypt changed in several critical ways during his long reign.¹¹² Muhammad

¹¹¹ Kenneth Cuno, “Muhammad Ali and the Decline and Revival Thesis in Modern Egyptian History,” in *Reform or Modernization: Egypt Under Muhammed Ali*, ed. Raouf Abbas (Cairo: Supreme Council for Culture, 1999), 97. See also: Dror Ze’evi, “Back to Napoleon? Thoughts on the Beginning of the Modern Era in the Middle East,” *Mediterranean Historical Review* 19, 1 (2004), 73-94.

¹¹² Muhammad ‘Ali (of Albanian origins) came to Egypt in 1801 with an Ottoman expedition to fight French forces. He was appointed pasha of Egypt by Sultan Selim III in June 1805. During his rule, he declared his family hereditary rulers of Egypt. His descendants in the twentieth century supported schools of historians who gave him a

‘Ali created and maintained a modern conscripted army, reformed systems of education, taxation, and administration, encouraged foreign immigration, and developed irrigation and canal systems. Beginning in 1809 and lasting through the 1820s, ‘Ali took control of agriculture in Egypt; he dictated to peasants the type and quantity of crops to plant, bought the products at artificially low prices, and then sold them to Europe at market price.¹¹³ There was a marked increase in agricultural production of exportable cash crops, such as long-fiber cotton, sugar, indigo, and wheat. Agricultural exports accounted for as much as one-fifth of Muhammad ‘Ali’s yearly revenues, and as early as 1825, profits from the sale of cotton made up 20 to 25 percent of the total revenue of Egypt.¹¹⁴ The role of agricultural exports, particularly of cotton, would play an even greater role in the Egyptian economy by the mid nineteenth century. Muhammad ‘Ali set up factories for weaving cotton, jute, silk, and wool, and protected the nascent industries through tariffs. Even after Muhammad ‘Ali’s “command economy” was abolished in the 1830s, agricultural exports were a key aspect of Egypt’s integration into the world economy.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, Alexandria developed into a booming port city, based on its strategic location, infrastructural development, and productive hinterland and markets. In 1820, the Mahmudiyya Canal was completed, providing Alexandria with fresh water

crucial place in the nationalist narrative of modern Egypt. For why he was declared founder, dominance of his family in ruling family in 20th century, nationalist reaction, etc., see: Cuno, “Muhammad Ali and the Decline and Revival Thesis,” 99. Khaled Fahmy, *All the Pasha’s Men: Mehmed Ali, his Army, and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2003).

¹¹³ The command economy impoverished a large number of peasants. Many landholders could not afford to pay their taxes, and as a result a large amount of land was redistributed. Due to the command economy’s failures, only summer crops were controlled by the late 1830s. Ziad Fahmy, *Ordinary Egyptians: Creating the Modern Nation through Popular Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 22.

¹¹⁴ Kenneth Cuno, “Egypt to c. 1919,” *The New Cambridge History of Islam: The Islamic World in the Age of Western Dominance*, vol. 5, ed. Francis Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 84. Michael Reimer, “Colonial Bridgehead: Social and Spatial Change in Alexandria, 1850-1882,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 20, 4 (1988): 532. Until 1829, Muhammad ‘Ali sold cotton on his account using Greeks with strong connections as intermediaries. To overcome his financial difficulties, from 1829 he sold to big merchant houses. Gelina Harlaftis, *A History of Greek Owned Shipping: The Making of an International Tramp Fleet, 1830-Present Day* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 50.

from the Nile and helping connect the city with its hinterland, and in 1829, the Liman dockyards were built and the harbor was deepened to accommodate larger vessels.¹¹⁵ Historian May Seikaly notes that Ottoman port cities such as Salonica, Alexandria, Haifa, and Beirut experienced similar changes over the nineteenth century, including “sharp population growth, the assembling of many religious and ethnic minorities employed in mercantile professions, and the emergence of new social groups empowered by wealth.”¹¹⁶ The population of Alexandria grew rapidly due to accelerating migration to the city from both other parts of Egypt and from abroad, by some estimates expanding from 16,000 in 1825 to 200,000 in 1868.¹¹⁷

Alexandria was home to a diverse and growing number of foreign communities, particularly from Greece, Italy, Malta, and other parts of the Ottoman Empire. In 1831, Consul Fantozzi of Naples reported from Alexandria that “the number of Europeans in the city, whether merchants, shopkeepers, artisans, or other classes has grown here for some years because of the commercial relations that exist with almost all of Europe. They come, attracted and employed by the local government in its new institutions, both civil and military, as well as for the numerous ships, both war and mercantile, that frequent the port.”¹¹⁸ No less significantly, the Ottoman capitulations in place granted those who were classified as foreign subjects and protégés

¹¹⁵ Khaled Fahmy, “Towards a Social History of Modern Alexandria,” *Alexandria, Real and Imagined*, ed. Anthony Hirst and Michael Silk (London: Ashgate, 2004), 281-306.

¹¹⁶ May Seikaly, “Haifa at the Crossroads: An Outpost of the New World Order,” in *Modernity and Culture: From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean*, ed. Leila Tarazi Fawas and C.A. Bayly (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 96-7.

¹¹⁷ During this period, there was vast internal migration in Egypt as the main cities drew many away from small towns. The city grew even more dramatically in the second half of the nineteenth century: between 1848 and 1897 the population of Alexandria tripled, and between 1848 and 1927 it grew more than five times. Nancy Reynolds, *A City Consumed: Urban Commerce, the Cairo Fire, and the Politics of Decolonization in Egypt* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2012), 24. Gabriel Baer, “Urbanization in Egypt, 1820-1907,” *Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East: Nineteenth Century*, ed. William Polk and Richard Chambers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 158. Reimer, “Colonial Bridgehead,” 532.

¹¹⁸ Archivio di Stato di Napoli, Consolato d’Alessandria, f. 2362, Ersilio, *Esuli italiani in Egitto*, 45.

privileges such as tax exemptions and access to the consular court system. Between 1822 and 1838 the number of European firms carrying on business in Alexandria increased from 16 to 44.

During the 1820s, Egypt's trade with Europe grew from two million Egyptian pounds to fifty million Egyptian pounds, and Europe's share of Egypt's growing foreign trade rose from an estimated fourteen percent in 1800 to about fifty percent by mid-century.¹¹⁹ The conflict between Muhammad 'Ali and the Ottoman Empire between 1839 and 1841 disrupted Mediterranean commerce and caused international controversy, particularly amongst those countries with commercial interests to protect in the region.¹²⁰ In 1838, Britain and the Ottoman Empire signed the Balta-Liman treaty as part of a larger British policy of "free trade imperialism" that aimed to abolish "monopolies" throughout the Ottoman Empire, but especially in Egypt.¹²¹ The Balta-Liman treaty opened Ottoman markets to European goods, particularly British textiles. In 1934, Arthur Redford described the treaty's profound impact: "The export of plain cotton goods to the Levant had been greatly stimulated as a result of the Anglo-Turkish Commercial Treaty signed at Balta-Liman in 1838; and by the middle of the century the Sultan's dominions were taking more Manchester piece goods than all the European countries put together."¹²² In exchange for raw materials, manufactured goods from Europe flooded the Egyptian market. Despite the changing dynamics of the import and export trade in Egypt, indigenous artisans making commodities such as shoes, textiles, furniture, brass wares, and pottery still had a share of the market.

¹¹⁹ Between 1833 and 1846-47 the income from the Alexandria customs increased from 6000 to 54,710 kis. Cuno, "Egypt to c. 1919," 90.

¹²⁰ The end to the crisis established the hereditary rule of Muhammad 'Ali's descendants in Egypt, provided a legal framework for Egyptian institutions to develop. Some historians do assert the continuing Ottoman influence in political culture and institutions. Kenneth Cuno, "A Tale of Two Villages: Family, Property, and Economic Activity in Rural Egypt in the 1840s," *Agriculture in Egypt from Pharaonic to Modern Times*, ed. Alan K. Bowman and Eugene Rogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 301.

¹²¹ Cuno, "Egypt to c. 1919," 86

¹²² Arthur Redford, *Manchester Merchants and Foreign Trade: 1794-1858* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1934), 199.

Egypt experienced two economic boom periods in the mid-nineteenth century that dramatically increased the demand for agricultural products from Egypt. The Crimean War in the 1850s created a strong demand for various cash crops, and cotton shortages caused by the American Civil War in the 1860s led to increasing demand for Egyptian cotton. Egypt became a major exporter of cotton to the West. While in 1854 Egypt had been listed as fifteenth as a source of British imports, in 1864-65 it was third, behind only France and India.¹²³ Even after the United States resumed exporting cotton after the end of the Civil War, Egypt's output of cotton continued to grow over the next decades.¹²⁴ Cotton accounted for over 80 percent of Egyptian exports, and by the late nineteenth century, much of Egypt's agriculture was devoted to long-staple cotton, which sometimes replaced food crops. As Roger Owen has posited, with the cotton boom, each village became linked "directly to the world market, forcing it to live and breathe according to the dictates of producers and consumers, bankers and politicians far away."¹²⁵

Throughout the nineteenth century, Egypt became an increasingly important participant in international trade and the world economy. Both Cairo and Alexandria served as critically important junctures of international exchange and trade.¹²⁶ By 1867, Alexandria was served by no less than fourteen shipping companies. In Alexandria, new jetties, wharves, docks, and

¹²³ In 1860, the United States supplied 5/6 of European supply of cotton and 80 percent of the British supply. This supply of cotton was cut off during the American Civil War. Indian cotton exports also rose dramatically during this period. David Landes, *Bankers and Pashas: International Finance and Economic Imperialism in Egypt* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 55.

¹²⁴ This is in contrast to Western Anatolia, which increased export of cotton during the American Civil War, but whose exports fell at the end of the Civil War. Up until the 1830s, a considerable quantity of cotton was also used in domestic industries in Egypt (up to 1/5 of the production). After the end of state monopolies, domestic production decreased dramatically, replaced by cheaper European manufactured textiles. The price of Egyptian cotton was generally higher than American because of its quality. Laura Panza, "Globalization and the Near East: A Study of Cotton Market Integration in Egypt and Western Anatolia," *Journal of Economic History* 73, 3 (2013): 850, 855.

¹²⁵ Roger Owen, "A Look at Nearly Two Centuries of Long Staple Cotton," *Proceedings in British History* 96 (1999): 363.

¹²⁶ An indication of Alexandria's role in Mediterranean trade is the fact that between 1840 and 1850, about 10 to 15 percent of total tonnage in Marseilles arrived from Alexandria. Cairo played an extremely important role in commerce through the Red Sea. Ghazaleh, "Governance in Transition: Competing Immigrant Networks."

warehouses were built between 1869 and 1880. Advancements in transportation fundamentally changed the nature of commerce in Egypt; in particular, the growth of steam ship service in the 1830s and the introduction of a railroad line connecting Cairo and Alexandria in 1854, which reduced the travel time between the cities to four and a half hours.¹²⁷ The increase in the speed and reliability of communication was also a veritable revolution. A telegraph line was laid between Alexandria and Cairo in 1854 and then to Europe by the 1860s. By the 1860s, postal services representing Austria, France, Britain, Russia, Italy, and Greece were operating in Alexandria in addition to the Egyptian post. In 1820, it took 53 days between dispatching information from Alexandria and receiving or publishing that information in London; in 1860, the number of days required dropped to 10, and in 1870 it took just two.¹²⁸ Trade relations between Egypt and Europe accelerated even further after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. The Suez Canal, built under the auspices of the French, and taken over by the British in 1875, dramatically reduced the distances between Western and Eastern ports, and played an especially critical role in expediting traffic to India. As Egypt became a crossroads for international trade, Livornese Jews became architects of trading networks that operated in both local and global registers.

The Jews of Egypt: A Brief Overview

¹²⁷ Under Isma'il Pasha, the railroad system expanded from 500 miles to 1,100 miles. He also oversaw enlarging the irrigation system, digging 112 canals. Reimer, *Colonial Bridgehead*, 115.

¹²⁸ Kaukiainen argues that the revolution in communication cannot just be attributed to the telegraph, and was rather part of a longer process. Yrjö Kaukiainen, "Shrinking the World: Improvements in the Speed of Information Transmission," *European Review of Economic History* 5 (2001): 1-28.

In 1854, the Romanian Jewish traveler, J.J. Benjamin, recorded his observations of the Egyptian Jewish community for his readers in *Eight years in Asia and Africa from 1846 to 1855*. He wrote: “two Jewish communities exist in Alexandria, of which one is formed by natives, the other by Italians. The African community consists of about 500 families, the Italian of about 150.”¹²⁹ On his visit to Cairo, he again described his discovery of two distinctive Jewish communities, made up of 6,000 indigenous families and 200-250 Italian families.¹³⁰ J.J. Benjamin overstated and simplified the boundaries that existed amongst the Jews of Egypt. However, distinguishing between the “native” Jews of Egypt from “other” or “European” Jews in Egypt was common amongst nineteenth century observers from Europe. In 1839, a group of Scottish missionaries noted that in Alexandria, one hundred European Jewish families lived alongside three hundred Egyptian Jewish families.¹³¹ Describing their experience visiting the “synagogue of the Franks,” the Scottish missionaries wrote, “we found there ten people, three of which were born in Egypt and dressed in Oriental costume, the others were from Livorno, Trieste and the other commercial cities of Europe.”¹³² With this passage, the Scottish missionaries pointed out their observations of differences in dress and custom amongst the Jews of Egypt, and directly suggested the influence of commerce in driving the growth of the Jewish community.

¹²⁹ While in Alexandria, he stayed with a banker, Chaim Mosero “who lived quite in the European style, and whose house was also arranged in the European fashion,” and in Cairo, he stayed with Moses Mosero, a money changer and the father of his host in Alexandria. J.J. Benjamin, *Eight Years in Asia and Africa from 1846-1855* (Hanover: 1859), 277- 278.

¹³⁰ Benjamin writes, “the dress of Egyptian Jews is like that worn by the Jews in Turkey. Many wear white turbans, and they often dress with great splendor...houses are handsome and richly ornamented inside, but they have no windows: light comes from the terrace above. The rich live almost entirely in the European style. Benjamin, *Eight Years in Asia and Africa*, 284.

¹³¹ Yves Fedida, “The 1840 Montefiore Census of Jews in Alexandria, Egypt,” *Avotaynu* 10, 4 (2004): 20. All of these numbers are uncertain.

¹³² Alexander Keith, Alexander Black, Andrew Bonnar, and Robert McCheyne Murray, *Les Juifs d'Europe et de Palestine* (Paris: Delay, 1846), 31.

During the nineteenth century, the Jewish community of Egypt grew rapidly through migration from across Europe and the Ottoman Empire. In the mid-nineteenth century, the Jewish community of Egypt numbered 6,000 to 7,000, growing to 25,000 by 1897.¹³³ As alluded to by European travelers, in Egypt there were Jews of diverse origins, rites, places of residence, languages of choice, nationalities, and occupations, though such differences were routinely oversimplified. The Jews of Egypt included Jews indigenous to Egypt, a small number of Karaite Jews, Ashkenazi Jews, and Sephardi Jews. The Sephardi Jews of Egypt included Jews from southern Europe and the Ottoman Empire, and the Italian Jews made up a distinct subgroup. In 1854, the Italian Jews of Alexandria had even felt strong enough to try to form a communal structure separate from the official Jewish community. However, they failed to win the necessary support, and rejoined the *Communauté Israélite d'Alexandrie* a year later. This paralleled the efforts of Ashkenazi Jews to found their own community in Cairo throughout the 1850s; these efforts were finally successful in 1865. Not all of those considered “Livornese” or “Italian” Jews came to Egypt directly from the Italian peninsula. In fact, many had come from other areas of the Mediterranean and had acquired Italian nationality along the way or in Egypt; a phenomenon that will be discussed further in a later chapter.¹³⁴ As the chancellor of the Jewish community of Livorno pointed out to the Tuscan government in 1841, the Tuscan Jews of Egypt “have been established in Egypt for quite some time,” some were “born there, some migrated directly from Livorno, and some have obtained a Tuscan passport through their travels.”¹³⁵

During the nineteenth century, most of the Jews in Egypt tended to live in the main cities, Cairo and Alexandria. Small numbers of Jews could also be found in the trading towns in the

¹³³ Jean-Marc Ran Oppenheim, “Egypt and the Sudan” in *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times*, ed. Reeva Spector Simon, Michael Menachem Laskier, and Sara Reguer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 412.

¹³⁴ Oppenheim, “Egypt and the Sudan,” 414.

¹³⁵ Archivio della comunità ebraica di Livorno (ACEL), Copialettere, 28 January 1841, Livorno, Italy.

Delta, such as Tanta, Mansoura, Zagazig, and, after the opening of the Suez Canal, in Port Said. In Cairo, almost all Jews from the Ottoman era until the mid-nineteenth century lived in the Jewish quarter, the *harat al-yahud*, with more prosperous families living in larger houses and the poorer families in crowded, rented apartments. Beginning in the 1860s, individual members of the wealthiest families began to leave the Jewish quarter to settle in newly developed neighborhoods to the west and north of the old city specifically designed for Europeans. By the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, it was common for the wealthy and middle class to move to the newly developed suburbs of Cairo, such as Zamalek and Garden City.¹³⁶ In Alexandria, the homes of members of the Jewish community were not concentrated in one particular quarter as they were in Cairo. The Jews of Alexandria lived in neighborhoods based on socioeconomic and occupational status, with the Sephardi or Italian Jews often living alongside other members of foreign communities in the city.

In the early years of the nineteenth century, the Jews of Egypt were largely poor and concentrated in certain occupations. Edward William Lane, a British Orientalist living in Egypt between 1825 and 1835, described a Jewish community made up of: “sarrafs (or bankers and moneylenders) ...Some are goldsmiths or silversmiths; and others pursue the trades of retail grocers or fruiterers, etc. A few of the more wealthy are general merchants,” while many were paupers.¹³⁷ Jews were particularly involved in trading precious metals and stones, fruit, tobacco, silk, cotton, and cloth, and later sugar, and many operated as money lenders, money changers, or

¹³⁶ The chief rabbinate, the community center, and the community school were all housed in a large complex in the center of town. Oppenheim, “Egypt and the Sudan,” 415. The development of the suburbs in Alexandria and Cairo was driven by the spread of tram lines. Other new neighborhoods where Jews concentrated included: Héliopolis, Giza, and Isma’liyyah in Cairo, and Muharram Bey, al-Manshiyah and Ramleh in Alexandria. Dr. Victor Cohen recalls of his childhood in Cairo that in the new neighborhood of Abbassieh, there were four synagogues. Liliane Dammond, *The Lost World of the Egyptian Jews: First Person Accounts from Egypt’s Jewish Community in the Twentieth Century* (Lincoln: iUniverse, 2007), 32.

¹³⁷ Jacob Landau, *Jews in Nineteenth Century Egypt* (New York: New York University Press, 1969), 10; Gudrun Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt: 1914-1952* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1989), 13.

pawnbrokers. In 1840, Moses Montefiore and Adolph Cremieux, notable representatives of Western European Jewish communities, travelled across the Middle East after the Damascus Affair in order to intervene on behalf of their brethren in the Ottoman Empire. Passing through Egypt on his journey, Montefiore commissioned a census of the Jewish community of Alexandria.¹³⁸ The Montefiore census focused on the economic status of the Jewish community, classifying individuals into broad, subjective categories of either “rich, medium, or poor.” According to the census, the rich accounted for only 3.3 percent of total Jewish population; 31.3 percent of the total population had “average wealth,” and more than 65 percent of the population was considered poor. Although the data from the Montefiore census was vague, the census clearly suggested the limited wealth and widespread poverty among the Jews of Egypt in 1840.

The economic activities and endeavors of the Jews of Egypt expanded radically in the second half of the nineteenth century. In his account from 1854, J.J. Benjamin concluded his section on the Jews of Egypt on this note: “with regard to the general condition of the Jews in Egypt, I will only add that our brethren live happily there under the present Government and enjoy every privilege. They trade with all countries of Europe – particularly with England and even with the farthest parts of the world. There are many very rich bankers among them. I believe they owe all the privileges they enjoy to the great influence of the European consuls.”¹³⁹ At the beginning of the nineteenth century, there were a few notable Jewish families, such as the Tilches, the Aghions, and the Addas, that became prominent through the expanding trade with Europe. This trend extended even wider as the century progressed. The overall growth in Egypt’s economy attracted many entrepreneurs, merchants, and traders from across the Mediterranean, including increasing numbers of Jewish immigrants. Many of these Jewish immigrants engaged

¹³⁸ Fedida, “The 1840 Montefiore Census,” 21.

¹³⁹ Benjamin, *Eight Years in Asia and Africa*, 285.

in importing European manufactured goods and exporting Egyptian cotton and textiles.¹⁴⁰ During this period, some Sephardi families already established in Egypt such as the Cattaouis, Mosseris, de Menasces, Suareses, and Rolos, were able to use their experience as humble moneylenders to enter modern banking and international trade.¹⁴¹ In the mid-to-late nineteenth century, prominent Jewish families also invested in cotton gins, tobacco, sugar refineries, and railways in Egypt.¹⁴² Beginning in 1858, foreigners were permitted to acquire land in the Ottoman Empire, which opened up many opportunities for investment; they tended to not purchase large tracts of land, but urban property and real estate.¹⁴³ However, the large majority of Jews in Egypt were not part of upper-class families of merchants, bankers, entrepreneurs, or professionals. The Jews of Egypt also worked as shop owners, commercial agents, brokers, craftsman, peddlers, clerks, or shop assistants.¹⁴⁴

Converging Networks: The Jews from Livorno and Trade between Tuscany and Egypt

In 1818, Champion, the Austrian vice-consul in Alexandria, mused to the Governor of Livorno: “every day the arrival of Tuscan subjects grows, and by now they have built in this

¹⁴⁰ With the increase in tourism in the late nineteenth century, more and more Jews entered the import and export trade of antiques and souvenirs. Landau, *Jews in Nineteenth Century Egypt*, 10-11.

¹⁴¹ Many of these families had arrived in Egypt by the end of the eighteenth century.

¹⁴² Across the Mediterranean, Jewish merchants and bankers invested in factories. In 1892, Eugenio Lumbroso, from a famous Livornese Jewish family in Tunisia, opened an olive oil refining plant in Tunisia. In Salonica, Jews were involved in distilleries, flour mills, the cloth industry, and a cigarette factory. Michael Menachem Laskier and Reeva Spector Simon, “Economic Life” in *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times*, ed. Reeva Spector Simon, Michael Menachem Laskier, and Sara Reguer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 42.

¹⁴³ It seems from John Bowring’s 1839 report, that many tracts of land, houses and warehouses had already passed “in fee” to the hands of European colonists. By the late nineteenth century, Jews were involved in the development of suburbs such as Garden City. In the 1920s, an Iraqi-Jewish cotton trader from Manchester named Joseph Smouha developed a suburb of Alexandria named Smouha City. There were also some Jews who did invest in large agricultural pursuits. In 1896, three prominent Jewish banking firms, Suarès Frères, J.L. Menasce, Figlio & Co. and J.M Cattaui et Cie, founded the Société Foncière d’Égypte to operate an estate of 6,250 feddans in Giza province. E.R.J. Owen, *Cotton and the Egyptian Economy, 1820-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 281.

¹⁴⁴ Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt: 1914-1952*, 46, 17.

market various commercial firms.”¹⁴⁵ In a series of letters from 1823, Champion was able to report to the Governor of Livorno that the commercial ties between Egypt and Tuscany were growing stronger, writing that “major commercial activity between Egypt with Tuscany is progressing, and Tuscan navigation has been advanced in Egypt as Your Excellency wished.”¹⁴⁶ He was optimistic that Tuscany could use Alexandria as a base for Tuscan ships and merchants, and encouraged the Tuscan government to take measures that would facilitate the Tuscan merchant marine’s full participation in a commerce of triangulation around the Mediterranean. Although efforts to build up the Tuscan merchant marine met with limited success, a growing number of Tuscan merchants established themselves and their commercial ventures in Egypt in the nineteenth century.

From the early to mid-nineteenth century, Livorno served as an important node of exchange for carrying out commerce in the Mediterranean involving Egypt. From data collected by the port of Livorno, the early nineteenth century saw a dramatic increase in the number of large trading ships arriving in the port from Egypt. While from 1780 to 1789, the annual average number of ships arriving in Livorno from Egypt was twenty-one, in the period from 1816 to 1825, there was an annual average of ninety ships arriving from Egypt.¹⁴⁷ In 1838, Tuscan consul De Rossetti reported that a Tuscan ship was engaging in regular maritime service between Alexandria and Constantinople, leaving every twenty days and “transporting people and merchandise and postal service.”¹⁴⁸ The success of this service led De Rossetti to order the

¹⁴⁵ ASL, Governo, b. 872.

¹⁴⁶ ASL, Governo, b. 877, 1 March 1823. Harlaftis, *A History of Greek Owned Shipping*.

¹⁴⁷ The increase of ships from Egypt was second only to ships from the Black Sea (which increased from 4 ships to 82). The number of ships from England increased from 59 to 109. LoRomer, *Merchants and Reform in Livorno*, 41.

¹⁴⁸ Despite attempts to develop and strengthen the Tuscan merchant marine and its presence in the Mediterranean, Tuscan merchants trading in Egypt adopted an instrumental approach to transportation. They often used ships and captains flying different flags, particularly relying on Austrian, Sardinian, and Greek shipping networks. ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 18 (1838).

building of two more Tuscan ships to engage in “similar service” around the Mediterranean. Expanding commercial linkages between Tuscany and Egypt meant that Tuscany was also an important participant in the growing import-export trade of Egypt. In 1823, the total amount of Egyptian imports from Europe was 2,888,552 Spanish dollars, of which 131,222 was from England, 300,157 was from the Adriatic, 504,690 was from Turkey, and the largest amount was from Livorno – 769,801.¹⁴⁹ The total amount of Egyptian exports was 5,518,870 Spanish dollars, of which 186,439 went to Great Britain; 593,286 to Marseilles; 736,721 to Syria; 949,520 to Livorno; and 1,252,676 to Constantinople. There were certainly fluctuations in the trade between Tuscany and Egypt; in his report to the British Minister of Foreign Affairs, John Bowring noted a slight decline in their exchanges beginning in 1826. However, Livorno functioned as a center of redistribution in Mediterranean trade. While the exchange of cotton or grain for manufactured goods played an important role in the commerce carried out between Livorno and Alexandria, there was in fact a wide variety of goods exchanged between the two ports. During an 1830 sailing of a brig departing from Livorno and bound for Alexandria, the goods onboard included: hats, shoes, bundles of iron, wax candles, marble columns, tables, knick-knacks, black pepper from Spain, wood, paper, and clothes.¹⁵⁰

Although the nineteenth century could be overall characterized as a period of growth for the commerce of Alexandria, it was certainly not growth that was untempered. As Robert Thurnburn, the British consul in Alexandria, explained in 1838, “the trade of Egypt...has experienced very great fluctuations, which have proceeded partly from political causes and partly from the internal regulations of the local government.”¹⁵¹ In particular, periodic outbreaks of

¹⁴⁹ John Bowring, *Report on Egypt and Candia* (London: 1840), 62.

¹⁵⁰ ASMAE, *Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto*, b. 1 (1830).

¹⁵¹ Bowring, *Report on Egypt and Candia*, 63.

plague or cholera had devastating effects on the activity of Mediterranean ports, bringing about “a general languor” and “the serious deterioration of commercial affairs.”¹⁵² Outbreaks of cholera in Egypt in 1831 and 1848 and of plague in 1834-1835 led to a staggering loss of life in Cairo and Alexandria and caused the complete and utter stagnation of commerce.¹⁵³ The correspondence between the Tuscan consuls in Egypt and the Tuscan government was dominated by these concerns of public health, by reports of outbreaks of plague or reassurances that all was proceeding normally. In 1837, the Tuscan consul De Rossetti, observed with some disbelief: “It is truly incomprehensible that in Europe, with so many reports that should be able to thoroughly explain the situation in Egypt, where one could say there is nothing other than misery, Europeans generally believe that they will all die rich and well-to-do in Egypt. The dead son of the doctor Luigi Minutelli left only a small amount of effects and goods that altogether were not sufficient to cover his debts.”¹⁵⁴ De Rossetti observed that although Europeans continued to come to Egypt even during difficult times in the hope of improving their personal situation, believing they would gain wealth and fortune, it was far more likely that they would die with debts. Records from the consular courts reveal migrants to Egypt caught up in the tension of reconciling the struggle of daily life with their previous hopeful expectations, bumping up against the boundaries of commercial risks and opportunities.

In Egypt, Jewish merchants, brokers, and bankers were at the forefront of establishing a trade diaspora with ever-denser connections between Alexandria and Livorno. When Raphael

¹⁵² ASL, Governo, b. 872.

¹⁵³ There were ten epidemics of cholera that broke out in Egypt between 1831 and 1902. In 1831, the news that 335 had died in Cairo within three days paralyzed Alexandria with fear; consular and commercial agents' offices closed and business came to a standstill. Despite the best efforts to prevent the spread of cholera to Alexandria, cholera broke out in Alexandria with the same deadly force; the daily mortality in Alexandria exceeded 100 and Alexandria lost one-third of its population during this time. LaVerne Kuhnke, *Lives at Risk: Public Health in Nineteenth Century Egypt* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1990), 49.

¹⁵⁴ ASL, Governo, b. 1176 (1837), as quoted in Ersilio, *Esuli italiani in Egitto*, 74.

Loria decided to move to Livorno in 1817 and establish a commissions firm under “my name only” after many years of working for the Fratelli Loria and Tilche firm in Alexandria, he declared that he still “conserved my established business relationships in Egypt,” and confidently proclaimed that his contacts and experience abroad would guide his judgement towards success.¹⁵⁵ Jewish merchants in Livorno often redistributed goods from Egypt through Livorno, especially in serving as the partners or agents of foreign firms. However, it is important not to distort the degree of Jewish presence in Mediterranean commerce; Jewish merchants were one of several trading diasporas, particularly the Greek and Armenian, operating in Alexandria during the mid-nineteenth century. According to Bowring’s report, the list of seventy-two merchants active in Alexandria in 1837 included fourteen merchants who were Tuscan protégés or subjects, eleven of whom were Jews, such as “the Brothers Castro, Levantine Merchants, Tuscan protégés” and “Montecorboli and Co., Tuscan merchants.”¹⁵⁶

On April 20, 1830, prominent Tuscan merchants in Alexandria, many of whom were Jews from Livorno, sent a letter to the Tuscan consul protesting “unfair” custom charges in Egypt; there was a general tariff, common to Austrians and Tuscans, and then an extra tariff for Tuscan subjects. The merchants asserted, “Tuscan subjects cultivate the richest part of commerce of Egypt and form the majority of customs...we should enjoy same privileges as all other merchants without distinction.”¹⁵⁷ In their petition, the Tuscan merchants inflated their importance in the commercial activity of Egypt in order to strengthen their argument and

¹⁵⁵ Later joined by his brother in Livorno, Rafael Loria retained an interest in their relatives’ firm, Loria and Tilche, in Egypt. Archivio Storico della Camera di Commercio di Livorno, Antiche ditte livornesi, f. 1711 (1817), Livorno, Italy.

¹⁵⁶ The list included Austrian, French, English, Maltese, and Greek merchants. Three Jewish merchants on the list were Austrian protégés. Bowring, *Report on Egypt and Candia*, 80.

¹⁵⁷ ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 4 (1830). The letter from April 20, 1830, was signed, among others, by Emanuele Rosselli, Azulay, ML Valensin, Aug. Ercole, Jacob Morpurgo, Jacob Nunes Vais, Montecorboli, Raff. Calvo, G. Terrazzi, J. Fernandes, Cardoso e Franco, Fiorentino, Gallichi, David Flannum, Gronchi, Donato Lattas.

encourage the Tuscan consul to intercede on their behalf. However, in their exaggeration about Tuscan participation in Egyptian commerce, there were also kernels of truth – Tuscan merchants made up a conspicuous commercial element in Alexandria. While most historians discuss the system of capitulations in terms of privileging “foreigners” as a general category, this petition shows that there was a regional dimension as well. The Tuscan merchants built their petition on the understanding of themselves and their rights as specifically Tuscan subjects, and created a link between their Tuscan status and potential economic opportunities.

Many of the commercial firms that Jewish merchants formed (and dissolved) in Alexandria had explicit connections with commercial firms in Livorno. As Tuscan subjects living in Egypt, Jews from Livorno were uniquely positioned to join “preexisting commercial networks,” even if bonds of trust were not necessarily automatic among coreligionists.¹⁵⁸ In 1857, Moise Curiat and Aron Vitali submitted a contract to the Tuscan consulate in Alexandria in order to establish a new joint business venture, a commissions firm with branches in Livorno, Alexandria, and Cairo.¹⁵⁹ The members of the firm had different spending allowances; “in order to balance the major deprivations of the sojourn and the major connections of Egypt,” Salomon Vitali received 30,000 piaster for Cairo, and Moise Curiat and Aron Vitali received 15,000 each for Alexandria, and 12,000 piaster went to Angiolo Garsin in Livorno.¹⁶⁰ The structure of the Vitali Curiat firm implies that although the firm would conduct commerce in and between all three cities, Alexandria and Cairo were prioritized.

¹⁵⁸ Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 22.

¹⁵⁹ The terms of the contract dictated that each branch would be under the direction of certain members, and that the net profit would be divided with respect to initial contributions of capital. Although firms commonly allowed members to carry out business affairs for their own behalf on the side, in the case of Vitali and Curiat, members were prohibited from carrying out any business for themselves or for others if not in name of society, with the exception of Aron Vitali’s continued stake in a food shop in Livorno. Archivio Storico della Camera di Commercio di Livorno, *Antiche ditte livornesi*, f. 3160, 3162 (1857).

¹⁶⁰ ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 54 (1857).

Relationships of family and commerce in Egypt often formed around past or present connections to Livorno; as Tilly has argued, migration involved the “negotiation of new relationships both within and across networks.”¹⁶¹ Yet, the networks and connections of Livornese Jews in Egypt could also dissolve or diverge. After Angelo Lusena closed branches of his import-export firm in Livorno and Alexandria, he established a new commercial firm with branches in Livorno and Trieste, focusing on opening up his trading networks to the Adriatic and Central Europe through Trieste. However, he remained one of the principal shareholders of the Leoncalvo commercial house in Alexandria, and he appointed agents in Alexandria to direct the firm’s affairs “for all of Italy and Trieste.”¹⁶² Records from the consular courts and the Chamber of Commerce of Livorno reveal that Jews in Livorno often served as limited partners and investors of capital for the firms of Jewish merchants in Egypt.

Despite the declining position of Livorno in international trade, Jewish merchants throughout the Mediterranean relied on exchanges with Livorno as the basis of their commercial pursuits. As a long-established center of trade in the Mediterranean, Livorno served as an important source not only of goods, but also credit, capital, and insurance. During the 1820s and 1830s, there were a growing number of new insurance companies based in Livorno, and a large number of commercial firms conducting international trade from Alexandria used Livornese insurance companies.¹⁶³ Livorno was also a significant node in the circulation of bills of exchange and promissory notes in the Egyptian market. The circulation of bills of exchange, which often involved the exchange of two or more currencies between two or more markets and

¹⁶¹Tilly, “Transplanted Networks,” 87.

¹⁶² Archivio Storico della Camera di Commercio di Livorno, *Antiche ditte livornesi*, f. 1738, 1739 (1861, 1863).

¹⁶³ Sanacore argues insurance companies were the principal instrument with which livornese commercial bourgeoisie tried to solve the crisis of port. Merchants could compare rates and premiums in Livorno with Venice, London, Amsterdam, and other major centers of trade. Massimo Sanacore, *Alle origine delle anonime livornese di assicurazione: dalla rinascita del 1827 alla crisi del 1833* (Livorno: Sindacato nazionale assicuratori, 1991), 10.

two or more merchants, was fraught with risks, uncertainty, and complications. In one of many suits of payment in the consular court records, Meyer and Lieber, merchants in Livorno, sought payment for a bill of exchange issued to Isaac Ventura, a Livornese merchant currently residing in Alexandria.¹⁶⁴ Isaac Ventura protested that he had already paid the note through J. Belimbau in Livorno, and argued that moreover, he was not a merchant by profession and therefore could not be held accountable in the courts by the Code of Commerce for these practices. For his part, J. Belimbau denied paying for the note, and Meyer and Lieber countered that Ventura was indeed a merchant, having bought and sold goods, and a negligent one at that, for leaving Livorno without appointing a representative for his obligations. The conflict between Meyer and Lieber and Ventura hints at the vast financial infrastructure of Livorno and the crucial role Livornese merchants and bankers continued to play in international commerce.

Although Jewish firms in Egypt traded often with Livorno, they certainly did not do so exclusively. Jewish commercial firms in Alexandria often sought ways to establish themselves in the routes that were acquiring more importance in Mediterranean trade, particularly in exploring trade with England, either through Livorno or directly. Many Livornese Jews in Alexandria were involved in commerce as brokers and commission agents, working both on their own behalf and for other merchants. The inheritance proceedings of Tuscan merchant Sabato Montecorboli demonstrate the confluence of entangled trading routes in Alexandria. While he was alive, Montecorboli had served as representative for a British firm in Egypt, *Linder and Carter*. At the time of his death in 1848, Montecorboli owed customs 5,311 Egyptian piasters. He had a shipment of goods from Livorno, along with a shipment of goods from Liverpool, both for his own behalf, and goods from Malta purchased on behalf of another merchant, all stuck in the

¹⁶⁴ ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d'Egitto, b. 61 (1859).

customs house. In his sequestered warehouse, the consular assessors found a large quantity of promissory notes, seventeen barrels of sugar, two barrels of tin, three casks of water, three cases of paint, and tapestries, which gives a sense of the diversity of Montecorboli's commercial exchanges.¹⁶⁵

The Consular Court: A Site of Exchange and Commercial Practice

In Egypt, consular courts emerged as critical institutions for regulating, moderating, and policing the marketplace. As Francesca Trivellato has pointed out, the market functioned both as a “physical location” and an “ongoing process of negotiation,” that “created new opportunities for encounters and cross-cultural fertilization.”¹⁶⁶ The consular courts acquired a meaning well beyond their physical location as a forum of “negotiation” and “encounters,” a site of possibilities and disappointments. In the consular courts, people with certain knowledge, languages, and status often attempted to navigate the overlapping codes and laws of the courts in order to reconcile and regulate their commercial transactions and relationships. As they went about their lives in Egypt, many individuals would find themselves intermittently passing through the space of the consulate, navigating the various seals, signatures, and procedures of officialdom. Called in to testify in a case before the Tuscan consulate court, Sabato Soschino, a young small-time trader, said, “I have no idea [why I am here]...I don't have any debts and I don't have any complaints against me.”¹⁶⁷ This small exchange captured Sabato Soschino's basic assumptions about the typical function of the consular courts as a place for resolving social and

¹⁶⁵ Montecorboli was a sixty year old native of Livorno. ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d'Egitto, b. 32 (1848).

¹⁶⁶ Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 20.

¹⁶⁷ In fact, the consul had called in Sabato Soschino to testify to the living and working arrangements of his younger brother, Flaminio, who was accused of stealing iron from the warehouse he worked in. ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d'Egitto, b. 59 (1859).

economic conflicts, particularly regarding the payment of debts. Sabato Soschino found himself caught in the interrogatory crosshairs of a court case, which was not necessarily a comfortable position, and his surprise as to his presence in the courtroom is indicative that the legal system was not always a consistent point of focus in the daily lives of Jews in Egypt.

In recent studies of the modern Mediterranean, scholars such as Jessica Marglin and Julia Clancy Smith have pointed out how the existence of multiple legal systems opened up avenues for individuals to “forum shop” or turn to competing legal authorities in order to potentially attain more beneficial outcomes.¹⁶⁸ In Morocco, Jessica Marglin has found that Jewish merchants felt comfortable using Islamic law and appearing before the shari’a court as well as the consular courts and Jewish court; Jews had “privileged access to the full range of institutions that made up Morocco’s legal system” during the nineteenth century.¹⁶⁹ In Egypt, there was a remarkably complex system of overlapping legal authorities in place. In addition to the numerous religious courts and consular courts, mixed commercial courts were instituted in 1826 and reconstituted in 1842 to adjudicate commercial disputes between indigenous merchants or between indigenous merchants and foreign traders. The mixed commercial courts ruled based on a version of French commercial and civil law, and were not presided over by a *qadi*, but by a board of local and foreign merchants and chaired by a state functionary.¹⁷⁰ While traditional

¹⁶⁸ Julia Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans: North Africa and Europe in an Age of Migration c. 1800-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 4; Jessica Marglin, *Across Legal Lines: Jews and Muslims in Modern Morocco* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

¹⁶⁹ Marglin, *Across Legal Lines*, 16.

¹⁷⁰ In 1840, John Bowring reported that there were fifteen of these merchant-assessors, and grouped them by ethnicity and religion: “two Turks, three Egyptians, two Maghribis, two Greek Orthodox, two Greek Catholics, two Armenians, and two Jews.” In 1850, one French observer noted that out of nine assessors serving the court, there were only three “Europeans.” The commercial courts were then reorganized in 1861; they were composed of an “Egyptian” president (most likely appointed by the government) two Muslim merchant assessors, and two Europeans. Reimer, *Colonial Bridgehead*, 81, 147, 218; Rudolph Peters, “Administrators and Magistrates: The Development of a Secular Judiciary in Egypt, 1842-1871,” *Die Welt des Islams, New Series* 39, 3 (1999): 378-397; Jan Goldberg, “On the Origins of Majālis al-Tujjār in mid-nineteenth century Egypt,” *Islamic Law and Society* 6 (1999): 195.

interpretations of the mixed commercial courts assumed that they replaced shari‘a law, more recently, historians such as Khaled Fahmy, Rudolph Peters, and Liat Kozma have shown that beginning in the 1840s, a parallel system of modern police stations, commercial courts, and councils supplemented, but did not fully replace shari‘a law in Egypt.¹⁷¹ The main struggle of the mixed commercial courts was to establish their jurisdiction amongst the various legal authorities. In one case, an Ottoman plaintiff suing a French protégé was awarded a payment of 38,000 piasters by the court. The defendant fled to the protection of the consul, and the court had to then ask the French consul to hand the defendant over to the police, because it was impossible to override the authority of the consulate.¹⁷²

Although “forum shopping” can sometimes imply rational, seemingly omnipotent historical actors, Jessica Marglin and Ido Shahar each point out the contingency and uncertainty involved in this process; individuals did not always know the outcome of their legal affairs or which court would best support their interests at the outset.¹⁷³ In Egypt, Jewish merchants most often relied on the consular courts to pursue legal action in commercial affairs, so long as they could establish their foreign protection or nationality, a process which will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter. Jewish merchants frequently turned to the consular court despite the time, expense, and uncertainty involved. Jews also held a prominent role as merchant-assessors in the Tuscan consular court. Access to the consular courts also gave foreign subjects and protégés the legal recourse to bring suits against the local government, particularly

¹⁷¹ Liat Kozma, “Negotiating Virginitly: Narratives of Defloration from late nineteenth-century Egypt,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24 (2004): 55-65; Khaled Fahmy, “The Police and the People in Nineteenth-Century Egypt,” *Die Welt des Islams* 39 (1999): 340-377.

¹⁷² In another case, an Izmiri merchant sued an Albanian for non-payment of debt, won favorable verdict; the Albanian was sent to prison, and after a month, appealed to the shari‘a court and released. In 1876, the Egyptian legal system was further reformed with the introduction of the Mixed Tribunals, which will be discussed in the following chapter. Reimer, *Colonial Bridgehead*, 81.

¹⁷³ Marglin notes that these interests were not always financial either, for “values such as communal solidarity and religious observance also weighed in the final calculus about where to go to court.” Marglin, *Across Legal Lines*, 13.

with regard to the payment of customs. Since many merchants bought and sold on credit and exchanged bills of exchange and goods across great distances, the court system played a crucial role in underpinning the risks of international commerce.

In the marketplace of the consular courts, merchants frequently debated the price and quality of goods, protested damages to goods during transport, and contested delivery arrangements. For example, when Leone Dello Strologo brought a suit to the consular courts against Elia Vita Halfon for the rejected delivery of an order of eighty-four handkerchiefs of Indian silk, Halfon brought forward a countersuit that the handkerchiefs were not made of silk from India, but rather a mixed blend of silk and cotton from France – the lower price they would fetch in the market did not justify the formerly agreed upon price.¹⁷⁴ And after a few men made away with a cart laden with a bale of Indian textiles worth 13,000 piasters and conspired to sell the stolen goods, the assessors of the consular court worked to gather testimony and track down the stolen goods.¹⁷⁵ In 1831, broker Jacob Nunes Vais complained to the consular courts that he was still waiting to be paid from a lawsuit from the previous year, objecting that “neither jewelry nor gold nor silver nor mortgages, rental agreements, nor transfer in receivables; neither in goods, coffee, iron, paper, manufactures, silk, linen, or indigo”; this list of possible forms of payment alludes to the wide variety of goods that could be exchanged through the consular courts alongside the market.¹⁷⁶

In the wider marketplace, Jews in Egypt navigated different social groups, power relations, and rivalries. Their appeals to the consular court often captured the complex alliances and divisions created during frequent exchanges among economic actors. In 1855, Rahamin

¹⁷⁴ ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 4 (1830).

¹⁷⁵ ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 56 (1858).

¹⁷⁶ ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 5 (1831).

Cesana, who we've seen inherited his status as a Tuscan subject from his father, relied on the consular courts to resolve the entanglements of several contentious commercial relationships. Based in Alexandria, Cesana established a commercial firm for the "buying and selling of products of Egypt for commissions and for his own benefit," and recruited Ibrahim Romano, a Jewish Austrian protégé living in Tanta, a town located on the railway line connecting Alexandria and Cairo, to assist him in this venture.¹⁷⁷ However, according to Cesana, Romano violated their contract fairly quickly; Ibrahim Romano was obliged to send cotton to Cesana right away, and then after thirty-one days, he was to come personally to Alexandria to give a reckoning of accounts for all merchandise sent and to receive accounts of all the articles sold.¹⁷⁸ Cesana took to the consular courts to liquidate their affairs, since Romano had not fulfilled either of his duties, sending only a small quantity of cotton to Cesana and never arriving in Alexandria. Romano protested that the contract should not be dissolved, insisting that he was in the process of setting off for Alexandria when he was struck by an illness and could no longer travel.¹⁷⁹ This incident reveals the delicate and necessary relationship between agents in the countryside and merchants in Alexandria in order to support a commercial venture in the port city; merchants relied on their brokers as "crucial links through which networks of information, market opportunities and personal contacts flowed."¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ The contract was written in Arabic and signed in Hebrew, with a translation submitted to the consular courts. ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d'Egitto, b. 47 (1855).

¹⁷⁸ ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d'Egitto, b. 47 (1855).

¹⁷⁹ ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d'Egitto, b. 47 (1855).

¹⁸⁰ It seems that other members of the Romano family were agents or employees of Cesana. In 1855, in order to piece together a case of contract violation between Cesana and Gabriello Campos, the consular authorities took the testimony of a supporting cast of characters, including: Haim Romano, aged twenty-four, by profession a money changer, and employed in the warehouses of R. Cesana, not often in Alexandria, but rather often in the villages, and Nissim Romano, forty-two year old a clerk in R. Cesana's office. ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d'Egitto, b. 47 (Rome, Italy). Elena Frangakis-Syrett, "Networks of Friendship, Networks of Kinship: Eighteenth Century Levant Merchants," *Eurasian Studies* 1-2 (2002): 187.

Many of the Livornese Jews in Alexandria made up part of this network of brokers or commission agents in Egypt. Conducting commerce in either local or foreign markets depended on making judgements about international patterns of supply and demand and understanding broader fluctuations in prices of currencies and commodities, and commercial firms needed “trustworthy” brokers or commission agents in order to navigate their varied and complicated transactions. The client or firm commissioned the buying and selling of merchandise or currency of interest to him, and then the broker carried out these orders, charging credit and issuing bills of exchange in his client’s name, and keeping the agreed commission.¹⁸¹ Historian Elena Frangakis-Syrett describes a process of overlapping chains of brokers by which the sales of imported goods, generally made on credit, were conducted by the European merchant’s broker, who then dealt with the street or Ottoman buyer’s broker.¹⁸² A good broker understood local and foreign markets, and relied on not only their knowledge and judgement, but also on their personal relationships and distant contacts in order to carry out their exchanges.

Following the traces of one commission agent, Jacob Nunes Vais, through the consular courts in 1830, sheds light on the complicated role of commission agents as commercial intermediaries in Egypt. In 1830, Nunes Vais protested the actions of the firm Loria and Tilche. Nunes Vais had expected the delivery of a large shipment of coral to him in Alexandria, which he would then send to Cairo on behalf of Graziadio Soares. Instead, Loria and Tilche had sent the coral directly to Cairo.¹⁸³ The consular courts ruled that Loria and Tilche were “within their rights to send the coral to Cairo, as long as they informed [Nunes Vais],” since Cairo was a more suitable market for a large order of coral, and it would have been ill-advised to send it to

¹⁸¹ For example, Jacob Nunes Vais refused to deliver his goods to Adda since he hadn’t paid his commission, therefore the goods were technically his by a third. Brokers acted on behalf of various firms, but they also had the right to trade on their own account, at times ‘unofficially’ mortgaging their employer’s funds to do so.

¹⁸² Frangakis-Syrett, “Networks of Friendship,” 187.

¹⁸³ ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 4, Rome.

Alexandria and then to Cairo considering the risks of navigation. Perhaps the most damaging conclusion the consular court reached was that “Suarez and Nunes Vais seem to lack total expertise in the trade of coral.” Amidst the risks and uncertainties of commerce, brokers operated at a critical juncture in the exchange of goods and information. A few months later, Nunes Vais once more found himself in a defensive position in the consular courts. Emanuello Rosselli, acting on behalf of David Ventura in Cairo, protested that he had not received large pieces of marble he had imported from Livorno for a fountain. Nunes Vais had received the eleven boxes containing the marble and deposited them outside the customhouse to await transport, only to find later that two of the large packages had disappeared. Nunes Vais, denied responsibility, calling in multiple merchants and brokers to testify that packages of large weight and volume, especially those destined for Cairo, were typically left outside of the customs house, which was generally understood to be more secure than an interim private warehouse.¹⁸⁴ Rosselli countered by arguing that Nunes Vais had committed a cardinal sin, for according to the Code of Commerce, a broker should give goods in his possession “all the care for their conservation as a diligent father for his family.”

In sorting out business entanglements and relationships, the consular courts helped create and set the expectations of a commercial culture and its operations in the market. In his conflict with Nunes Vais, Rosselli complained that he was sick of “libel after libel, copy after copy, case after case, and demand after demand.” In fact, the duration and complexities of court cases could be a drain on the resources, finances, and relationships of merchants. Yet, the ability to use and appeal to the court systems was a formative aspect of the commercial culture of European Jews in Egypt during the nineteenth century. Between 1853 and 1859, a contentious fight between the

¹⁸⁴ ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 4 (1830). The consular court ruled that because Nunes Vais didn’t deliver, he must pay.

firms of Hakim Figli, Tuscan bankers, and Fratelli Busnach, French merchants, swept across Tuscan and French consular courts in Egypt and various courts of appeal in Aix, Marseilles, Lucca, and Florence. In the court case(s), the delivery of a large quantity of grain from the warehouses of the viceroy of Egypt became the frontispiece for examining the parameters of carrying out commerce in Alexandria.¹⁸⁵ On December 16, 1852, Hakim Figli left an order with their warehouse to deliver the quantity of grain to a buyer, Servadio; however, Servadio, facing insolvency, transferred the order to Casdagli, which was then transferred to Fratelli Busnach. When the merchants of the Busnach firm tried to retrieve the quantity of grain, they were rebuffed time and again. Busnach asserted that not only commercial codes had to be taken into consideration, but also “customs of the market of Alexandria.” For Hakim, the fact that the goods came from Abbas Pasha, rather than from a different seller, meant that if it was unclear if the order was transferrable; however, Busnach, in his case, provided testimony from bankers, merchants, and brokers of Alexandria about the common and well-acknowledged practice of transferring a contract of sale or an order to another merchant or broker in order to settle a debt.

Typically, deliveries were carried out without a care in this situation, although there were exceptions, such as when the “cession is not accepted by the first seller” or “when the first buyer hasn’t already paid the price or signed the delivery,” then the seller wasn’t obligated to turn over the goods because the buyer had contracted a debt with him. Significantly, custom in the market of Alexandria stood alongside legal doctrines in untangling the actions and responsibilities of Hakim and Busnach. In determining whether the order was or was not transferrable, the courts debated the extent to which exchanges were a function of money and thus always fungible, or the

¹⁸⁵ The 1,000 ardebbs of grain was priced at 91,762 piaster. ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 1 (1863).

extent to which they were embedded in and determined by unique relationships. For the courts, the crux of the issue was determining what role Hakim played in the transaction, whether he was acting as the seller or as an agent. Based on the evidence and testimony, the consular courts finally ruled that Hakim was acting for the seller, Abbas Pasha, as a broker, and therefore was obligated to deliver the grain to whoever was holding the order; declaring that “it is well-known in this market that the same person can often be a banker, merchant, and broker.” With this ruling, the courts acknowledged the multiple roles and experiences commercial actors could have in different transactions, or even in the same transaction, as they carried out international trade.

Narratives of Commercial Conflict: Agency, Reputation, and the Breakdown of Trust

The legal conflicts between Jewish merchants in the consular courts reflected and caused fractures in commercial relationships. While economic historians have considered the growth of impersonal markets as the hallmark of economic development in the modern era, the consular court records reveal that extended family and kinship networks continued to be an important source of trust, information, and capital in commercial enterprises in Egypt throughout the nineteenth century.¹⁸⁶ Jews in Egypt traded with and pursued legal action against people across boundaries of religion, ethnicity, or nationality. However, they often continued to create business partnerships and exchange capital along ethnic and religious lines. This “ethnic ecosystem” was never exclusive and unchanging, as participants in networks both supported each other and fell

¹⁸⁶ Terence Walz, “Family archives in Egypt: New Light on Nineteenth Century Provincial Trade,” *L’Egypte au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1982): 24.

out with each other.¹⁸⁷ Trust was a practice that was undergirded by the possibility of betrayal, and the consular courts became a space of narrating these conflicts.¹⁸⁸

In fact, legal action against family members was not uncommon. In 1859, Isaac Ventura approached the consulate with a series of legal actions against his brother, David, claiming a large debt based on various commercial operations he had mishandled. David was living in Alexandria, and serving as an agent for Isaac in Livorno in an import and export firm.¹⁸⁹ Isaac Ventura explained to the courts that he had “approached [David] multiple times directly and through friends,” but “he has maintained an incongruous silence.” While Isaac had tried to appeal to resolve the conflict outside of the court system, he felt constrained to bring their conflict before the court because he could no longer prolong his stay in Alexandria due to “the caprice or eccentricity of David Ventura.” In building his case against David, Isaac Ventura submitted a private letter he had sent to his brother, in which he inquired after specific goods he had sent to Egypt, noted that David had “[sold goods] without consulting me,” and found that he had made intentional errors in his accounting.¹⁹⁰ David’s silence and accounting mistakes compounded the already risky business of exchanging goods between two markets, and for Isaac, the brothers were no longer functioning as either brothers or business partners working for their “mutual benefit.” Although Isaac did not shy away from mentioning family connections between

¹⁸⁷ Adam Mendelsohn, *The Rag Race: How Jews Sewed their Way to Success in America and the British Empire* (New York: New York University Press, 2015).

¹⁸⁸ Dario Gaggio, *In Gold We Trust: Social Capital and Economic Change in the Italian Jewelry Towns* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 37.

¹⁸⁹ ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 59 (1859).

¹⁹⁰ He had been consistently sending goods to Alexandria from Livorno, such as the 20 barrels of potatoes he sent in 1857, but had not heard word back from David. In fact, David had filed a suit against the shipping company in 1857 for damages to the goods after a prolonged stop in Malta on the journey from Livorno to Alexandria.

him and David, he subsumed this relationship under their business partnership, flattening the complicated elements of their relationship into a legally intelligible difference of accounts.¹⁹¹

In the consular courts, Jewish merchants searched for strategies to navigate and explain difficult times. On July 6, 1855, Graziadio Soares wrote a heartfelt letter to the consulate: “Because of the terrible losses that I have had in commerce...I have decided to leave Alexandria for the moment... I am extremely regretful to have left my affairs in this state, but I have been obligated by the fear and continuous torment of my creditors, and above all the hope of finding in Livorno the support that will free me from my misfortunes. My hope is that my creditors will wait for my news.”¹⁹² By sending a direct letter to the consulate, Soares framed himself as an honest and desperate merchant battered by changing fortunes. For Soares, who was part of an established Livornese Jewish merchant family, returning to Livorno offered him the potential access to credit and goods that would allow him to gain financial solvency. However, by leaving Alexandria, he relinquished any role he might play in the bankruptcy proceedings. Soares’ bankruptcy illustrates how individuals could struggle with and against legal customs, for although he confessed his financial difficulties to the consulate, he also exercised his personal mobility to escape the consequences.

By leaving Alexandria, Soares physically moved himself outside the purview of the legal regime in Egypt. The tribunal convened by the Tuscan consulate concluded: Soares “has distanced himself from his obligations and duties...His irregular accounting, as well as his

¹⁹¹ In a letter following up on the case, the consulate in Egypt reported to the Governor of Livorno that David had left city clandestinely, before resolving the issue with Isaac, and he was possibly “somewhere in hinterland, under other name, other clothes...hard in countries such as this to have news of him.” ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 38 (1851).

¹⁹² Although Soares asked for a delay in bankruptcy proceedings so that he might sort out his financial affairs, official bankruptcy proceedings began almost immediately after he left the city. His books and accounts were collected, his property sequestered, and his creditors were encouraged to come forward with public announcements in Alexandria and Livorno. ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 49 (1855).

departure from Egypt shows an evidently intentional attempt to defraud those who had placed their faith in him - Soares doesn't deserve anything." As Soares' business relationships fractured and dissolved, so did his marriage, and Rosa Solal came forward against him in the courts as a creditor. Although her initial claims were rejected by the appointed manager of the bankruptcy, she continued to bring lawsuits and appeals to the consular court for over five years in order to claim the large dowry and precious jewelry she had brought to the marriage. As we have seen, for Jewish merchants from Livorno, marriage strategies went hand in hand with business strategies as sources of capital and business connections.¹⁹³ When the manager claimed that a Jewish divorce could not have been granted without settling the question of the dowry, the head rabbi of Livorno, Abram Piperno, testified that the dowry's restitution had never taken place, and the consulate court ultimately ruled in her favor.¹⁹⁴ Rosa Solal had legal recourses available to her as a woman and wife, but her voice in court was represented by her father, and she occupies a liminal place in the consular records.

Jewish merchants often navigated the labyrinth of lawsuits and appeals of the consular court system to posit self-representations as social and economic actors. As Francesca Trivellato has argued, even though "ethno-religious networks facilitated circulation of information and credit," an "individual's creditworthiness and business proficiency (rather than religion) dictated his standing."¹⁹⁵ Even as transnational trade widened and personal knowledge of one's business partners became more tenuous, a merchant's identity was built upon his reputation for being

¹⁹³ Rosa Solal submitted her 1843 betrothal agreement as evidence in her case. This lengthy discussion about the exchange of property, currency and jewels, clearly showed the material and financial dimensions involved in marriage. Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 136.

¹⁹⁴ Lawsuits involving family matters, such as marriage and divorce, usually fell under the purview of rabbinic authorities. Rabbis often provided the Tuscan consulate with information regarding the birth, death, marital status, and origins of those involved in lawsuits. In a rare case, a rabbi could be called in to help arbitrate a financial dispute. ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d'Egitto, b. 31 (1847).

¹⁹⁵ Francesca Trivellato, "Credit, Honor, and the Early Modern French Legend of the Jewish Invention of Bills of Exchange," *Journal of Modern History* 84, 2 (2012): 301.

capable and trustworthy. In this environment, a merchant's reputation carried with it tangible value in the marketplace and could be attacked or buttressed in the courts. In a prolonged lawsuit between Angelo Tedesco and a dismissed employee of his bank, Elia Montefiore, both imbued vitriolic attacks on the other's personal and economic character with legal meanings. Montefiore noted furiously the high stakes of this court case for him, since Tedesco had charged in private correspondence, public arguments, and consular documents that Montefiore did not know how to conduct business correspondence, handle accounting, or approach commerce with the "right attitude and habits."¹⁹⁶ Montefiore claimed he had been wronged not only on the basis of his employment contract, but also because of Tedesco's public and damaging accusations of "incompetence." Montefiore insisted vociferously on his capability; pointing to his experience managing "different commercial ventures with satisfaction." He asserted that "even without being an eminent banker," he was capable of managing a bank, and that Tedesco was the one with the "difficult character" for he was not the only employee dismissed only six months after the bank had been established.¹⁹⁷ Even though he was an employee of a bank and not an "eminent banker," Montefiore felt justified in using the courts as a forum for self-defense and refused to accept his adversary's dangerous characterizations.

As the arguments that had taken place in the bank were transposed into legal skirmishes in court, Tedesco also sought to wrest control of the case. He claimed that Montefiore had filled the accounting books with "errors on top of errors" that had endangered the future prospects of the firm. Consular court cases were adjudicated in courts of the defendant, and because Tedesco was a native of Trieste and an Austrian subject, the case initially appeared before the Austrian

¹⁹⁶ ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d'Egitto, b. 56 (1858).

¹⁹⁷ A broker in Egypt had vouched for Montefiore, and his appointment was confirmed by Tedesco's partners who "all recognized his capacity to manage any problem thing that might arise."

court.¹⁹⁸ The Austrian court examined the books and papers of the firm, but since they couldn't find enough errors to prove the incapability of Montefiore, they ultimately ruled (in Italian, one of the official languages of the Egyptian legal system) that Montefiore had a right to an indemnity for his dismissal but not for moral damages suffered. However, when Tedesco brought a countersuit against Montefiore in the Tuscan court, the Tuscan consulate ruled against him. From examining the consular court records, it seems that the court systems did not rule dramatically in favor of their own subjects, but were rather fairly equitable, since many defendants tended to lose.¹⁹⁹ After Tedesco lost his suit in the Tuscan courts, he attempted to use any other legal recourse available to him. He filed an appeal in front of a tribunal in Trieste, and said the ruling in the consular courts was invalid, since he was actually an "English subject and it is never said that a judgement of this consulate can condemn a subject belonging to another nation." As a native of Trieste who frequently brought made use of the Austrian consulate in Alexandria, his pretense to English subjecthood was dubious. After also losing this appeal, Tedesco claimed that the crux of the case was actually "libel and defamation," and filed a motion against Montefiore in a criminal tribunal. Perceiving his commercial practices to be attacked on all sides, Tedesco employed strategies of forum shopping made possible by the court system in the Mediterranean in order to defend his interests. Both Tedesco and Montefiore's legal arguments rested on the idea of reputation, and merchants used the court system with a frequency that was in tension to the court's potential to expose an individual to criticism or conflict. While it remains unclear from the sources what impact Tedesco's had on his relationships, they seem to be part of a larger bundle of unfortunate affairs; in 1859, he declared bankruptcy.

¹⁹⁸ Not only individuals, but also firms could be protected by the consular court. Tedesco had submitted the limited partnership agreement of his contract of partnership to the Austrian consulate, so that "this bank will be put under its jurisdictional protection."

¹⁹⁹ Hanley, *Identifying with Nationality: Europeans, Ottomans, and Egyptians in Alexandria* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 153.

The transnational connections that linked Livorno and Alexandria as nodes of migration also reinforced ties between the two port cities in commerce. In the consular courts, the legal and economic practices of Livornese Jewish merchants intersected. In Alexandria, the consular courts emerged as a place to negotiate commercial relationships and redefine, dissolve, and create trading networks. Examining Livornese Jewish merchants within this space allows the historian to capture the unstable nature of ethnic trading networks, as well as the self-representations of Jewish merchants in Alexandria. The consular court system and the way it was used by merchants was built on an understanding of access and status. The next chapter will untangle the complicated and overlapping political, legal, and economic systems in Egypt, and examine on the meaning of claiming citizenship and foreign status in the Egyptian context.

Chapter Four

Boundaries of Belonging: Livornese Jews and the Meaning of Italian Citizenship in Egypt

In 1892, the governor of Suez, Rashed Mohammed, issued a direct ultimatum to the local Italian vice-consul: produce documents within twenty-four hours that proved the Italian citizenship of Moise Scemess, or else “an Italian citizen will become a local subject.”¹ Moise Scemess, a small-time trader, first came to the attention of local authorities when he sold salted fish imported from Europe; local authorities disputed the amount of duties he paid because his status as a “foreigner” in Egypt was questionable. The governor of Suez argued that according to a decree issued in Egypt in December 1888, those “dependent on a foreign power did not ‘have the quality of a foreign protégé’” if they were not in possession of the right documentation. He then further insisted that “Scemess cannot be considered Italian because he is Jewish...it would be as illogical as it were wrong.”² The Italian vice-consul responded forcefully to both charges. For one, Scemess was not a protégé but an Italian citizen (*cittadino*), and as an Italian subject (*suddito*), he possessed a certificate of nationality and had been inscribed without issue in the consular registers, which ought to be proof enough of his status. Moreover, the vice-consul asserted, “if he is of the Jewish religion it is no reason to argue that he is not Italian. There have

¹ Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Ambasciata d’Italia in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 46 (1892), Rome, Italy.

² ASMAE, Ambasciata d’Italia in Egitto, b. 46 (1892).

been many Jews living here for many years who are Italian and never before have they had to prove their nationality with documents.”³

In this tug of war, local authorities and consular officials wrangled over the status of a single person, Moise Scemess, and struggled over who had the right to define Scemess and his legal identity. Classifying an individual as either “local” or “foreign” in Egypt had direct economic and legal implications, as did questions of the precise meaning of terms like protégé, citizen, and subject. In the debate, both sides mobilized Moise Scemess’ religion as evidence of his “status”; his Jewishness was either proof that he could be firmly declared Italian or a sign that his origins and attachments were indeterminable. Throughout the skirmishes over his status, Moise Scemess’ voice remains opaque, his life and experiences flattened into the legal language of authorities. The case of Moise Scemess was one of many such affairs of “contested nationality” involving Jews in nineteenth century Egypt. Individuals, communities, and political authorities repeatedly grappled with the social, economic, and legal significance of nationality and citizenship, while the flexibility of these categories allowed individuals to use them instrumentally and situationally in their everyday lives.

In nineteenth century Egypt, the boundaries among different groups of people were often fluid and ambiguous. Historian Shana Minkin argues that while studies of Egypt often place terms such as “foreign” and “local” in sharp dichotomy, in actuality the meaning of these terms changed constantly depending on an individual’s situations, circumstances, and choices.⁴ In some movements or activities around the city, individuals could be neither local nor foreign, while in others they could be both at the same time. Minkin posits that it is helpful to define

³ ASMAE, *Ambasciata d’Italia in Egitto*, b. 46 (1892).

⁴ Often Muslims were assumed to be “local” and religious minorities assumed “foreign.” Shana Minkin, “In Life as in Death: The Port, Foreign Charities, Hospitals and Cemeteries in Alexandria, Egypt, 1865-1915” (Ph.D. thesis, New York University, 2009), 4.

“local” beyond the categories of nationality, and rather understand it in terms of being economically or socially invested in Egypt.⁵ Robert Vitalis defines “local capital” as “investment originating inside Egypt whose relevant horizons are primarily the Egyptian market,” and asserts that individuals could be defined as “local” even though they many have carried difference kinds or passports or claimed a variety of national identities.⁶ Based on this definition, Italian Jews were “local” in their commitment to building a life in Egypt – to pursuing their businesses, work, property, and relationships within their surrounding environment. And yet foreign status was an undeniable thread in the fabric of the daily life of many Jews in Egypt and provided many advantages. If Jewish individuals or families could at times ignore or cast aside their “foreign” status, they could also parlay the status into action or rely on it indirectly as security or insurance.

Scholars of citizenship in Europe have often focused on understanding citizenship as the formal membership of an individual within a modern nation state, often deeply connected to both inclusionary and exclusionary impulses.⁷ Citizenship was not only a category defined by the state, but also a series of relationships between the state and individual citizens, individual citizens with each other, and citizens with outsiders. Citizenship could be “thin,” involving few rights and obligations, or “thick,” including a substantial amount of transactions, interactions, rights, and obligations.⁸ Scholars such as John Torpey and Gérard Noiriel have stressed the connection between identity, citizenship, and documentation with the rise of the “passport

⁵ Minkin, “In Life as in Death,” 9.

⁶ Robert Vitalis described “local capital” as Robert Vitalis, *When Capitalists Collide: Business Conflict and the End of Empire in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 13.

⁷ T.H. Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class and other essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950); Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Patrick Weil, *How to Be French: Nationality in the Making Since 1789* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Sallie A. Marston and Katharyne Mitchell, “Citizens and the State: Citizenship Formations in Space and Time,” in *Spaces of Democracy*, ed. Clive Barnett and Murray Low (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 93-112.

⁸ Chales Tilly, *Citizenship, Identity, and Social History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 8.

regime” in the years surrounding World War I, arguing that identities must be codified in order to become socially significant.⁹ As Noiriel writes of immigrants, “It is often overlooked that legal registration, identification documents, and laws are what, in the final analysis, determine [their] ‘identity.’”¹⁰ However, in their focus on Europe during the twentieth century, these scholars in fact overlook how the phenomenon of connecting citizenship to requisite documentation was occurring throughout the Mediterranean over the course of the nineteenth century. As many recent studies have pointed out, studying citizenship and nationality beyond the European context transforms our very understanding of these concepts.¹¹ In Egypt, Jews from Livorno were actively engaged with finding legitimate proof and documentation for their status, and in turn, using this status to create social identities and open up spaces of economic and legal belonging. For Livornese Jews, foreign nationality was an inherited quality, but it was latent, and had to be acted upon in order to have meaning. After unification in 1861, Livornese Jews became Italian and confronted even further the connections between status, documentation, and national identity in the era of the modern nation state.

In *Extraterritorial Dreams*, Sarah Stein contends that examinations of citizenship in Jewish history must be pushed beyond the context of Jewish emancipation, or the granting of political and civil rights by the modern state to Jewish men as individuals, and argues that focusing on Jews in the Mediterranean and their “extraterritoriality” illuminates the “discrepancy between nationality [as it was] defined by states and citizenship [as it took shape]

⁹ John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship and the State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 13.

¹⁰ Gérard Noiriel, *The French Melting Pot: Immigration, Citizenship, and National Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1996), 45.

¹¹ Will Hanley, “When did Egyptians Stop Being Ottomans? An Imperial Citizenship Case Study,” in *Multilevel Citizenship*, ed. Willem Maas (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 89-109.

through local relations and daily life.’”¹² Indeed, examining citizenship in the Mediterranean illustrates that “citizenship [was] a spectrum” rather than a singular identity.¹³ While Stein successfully examines the history of Jewish protégés when the systems of foreign protection and capitulations fell apart during the early twentieth century, she leaves an earlier story of the formation of Jewish citizenship in the Mediterranean not fully explored. This chapter will turn its focus on the mid to late nineteenth century in Egypt, when migration, economic development, the rise of the nation state, and the expansion of informal and formal empire, transformed the experience of extraterritorial citizenships for Jews.

In this chapter, I will use consular records from Egypt as a case study for examining how Jews living and working in the Mediterranean during the nineteenth and twentieth century made and mobilized claims of Italian citizenship. For Jews in Egypt, citizenship was a web of commercial pursuits and social and cultural assertions that could be navigated, redefined, or even ignored in everyday life. In registering or rejecting Jews in the consulate, state officials confronted their own understandings of the commercial and legal meanings of status. As historian Donna Gabaccia has suggested, ““We can write the story of nations from their borders”” and studying emigration can help us understand “how nations and states and identities are constructed, not just ideologically or linguistically, but socially, administratively, and juridically.”¹⁴ While some Jews left the Italian peninsula directly for Egypt during the nineteenth century, others traced more circuitous paths around the Mediterranean in movements that spanned generations. Jews in Egypt who sought Italian protection or subjecthood supported an understanding of citizenship and belonging that did not correlate to territorial boundaries nor

¹² Stein borrows this definition from Laura Tabili. Sarah Stein, *Extraterritorial Dreams: European Citizenship, Sephardi Jews, and the Ottoman Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 9.

¹³ Stein, *Extraterritorial Dreams*, 9.

¹⁴ Nancy Green and François Weil, ed. *Citizenship and Those Who Leave* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 8.

even necessarily to the unified Italian state. And yet their pursuit of status often connected Jews in Egypt to the imaginary space of Livorno, as many exploited historic ties between Alexandria and Livorno to legitimize claims that either they or their family had Tuscan origins.

The overlapping legal regimes and sources of political authority in Egypt meant that multiple ties and interactions were at the heart of understandings or misunderstandings of citizenship. Under the system of Ottoman capitulations in place, foreign protégés and subjects were exempt from most local taxation, protected from prosecution before the local government, and granted access to the consular court system. Protégé status was extended to non-nationals who offered service to the capitulatory state, such as employees of the consulate (translators, clerks, guards, dragomans, and servants), and functioned much like foreign status.¹⁵ Other categories of protection included subjects of states without representation, imperial subjects, or non-Muslim religious minorities. In practice, the legal lines around protégé status and subject status were often quite amorphous.

By undertaking the process of being declared a foreign protégé or subject, the Jews in Egypt had “access to a culture of legal pluralism—that is, to a culture of multiple, decentralized legal orders,” and could manipulate multiple jurisdictions to settle everyday conflict or use multiple sources as cultural and social influences.¹⁶ For Jews in Egypt, citizenship status could intersect or diverge with other elements of their identity, including their economic interests,

¹⁵ Foreign protection could also be purchased through a *berat* (patent of protection) that provided tax privileges as well as access to European law. Cihan Artunç, “The Price of Legal Institutions: The Beratli Merchants in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Empire,” *The Journal of Economic History* 75, 3 (2015): 720-748. Both Hanley and Stein point out that by the nineteenth century, protégés increasingly became object of concern out of proportion with their numbers. For example, in his study of Ottoman capitulations in the eighteenth century, Maurits van den Boogert estimates that there were only about 2,500 in the entire Ottoman Empire. Will Hanley, *Identifying with Nationality: Europeans Ottomans and Egyptians in Alexandria* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 201; Stein, *Extraterritorial Dreams*, 19; Maurits Van Den Boogert, “Consular Jurisdiction in the Ottoman Legal System in the Eighteenth Century,” *Oriente Moderno* 22, 3 (2003): 613-634.

¹⁶ Stein, *Extraterritorial Dreams*, 1.

gender, ethnicity, and religion. Alongside many others who were also navigating the mobility of the nineteenth century and the categories of protection and nationality, Jews in Egypt used the consular court system to validate a multifaceted and shifting set of cultural allegiances and economic pursuits; the interconnections between legal pluralism and commercial networks in Alexandria reveal a cosmopolitanism beyond cultural and linguistic diversity that existed in the city.

In Egypt, nationality functioned on two levels as both a legal category and a category of practice, sometimes ignored and sometimes brandished. As a category of analysis, nationality can be used to describe or characterize an individual in society, while as a category of practice, it also constituted part of the social world, used to make and remake an individual's experience in society.¹⁷ The significance of nationality was constantly being negotiated on all sides, from world powers trying to wield influence in the era of expanding empires to individuals struggling to get by and make a life for themselves. For Italian Jews in Egypt, status as an Italian citizen did not necessarily imply patriotic feelings or attachment. However, many Jews did find meaning in moving around Egyptian society as foreigners broadly and as Italians more specifically. In becoming Italian outside the new Italian nation state, Jews in Egypt had to construct a sense of citizenship that reconciled their experiences of transnational migration and their everyday local interactions, and many looked for opportunities to express their *italianità* through their commercial practices, linguistic choices, or cultural affinities. This chapter will explore the power and limits of foreign citizenship in the Egyptian context, and examine how Jews imbued their status with legal and economic meanings.

¹⁷ Rogers Brubaker, "Migration, Membership, and the Modern Nation-State: Internal and External Dimensions of the Politics of Belonging," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 41, 1 (2010): 62.

An Individual's Claim of Nationality: The Legal and Commercial Value of Status

In early to mid-nineteenth century Egypt, Jews were uniquely positioned to claim status as Tuscan subjects. For Jews from Livorno, the Tuscan privilege of *ballottazione* continued to be an important signifier well into the nineteenth century, allowing Jews the ability to move through the Mediterranean as Tuscans or more generally as “foreigners.”¹⁸ During the eighteenth century, Livornese Sephardi merchants trading in the Ottoman Empire had often pursued foreign protection, in particular from France, in a mutually beneficial “collaboration between a stateless diaspora and state commercial power.”¹⁹ As Tuscany began to station its own consuls in the region, some Livornese Jewish merchants who had been established in the Ottoman Empire for generations underwent “legal transformations” from French protégé to Tuscan subject “without ever leaving the Ottoman Empire.”²⁰ Although Tuscan Jews living abroad could potentially come under the protection of the Tuscan consulate without too much trouble or effort, at salient moments in their lives Tuscan Jews had to directly confront or contend with issues of their status.

In Egypt, subjecthood was not just a label that was conferred, but rather a position to be claimed, and individuals frequently entered the space of the consulate in order to pursue status or put it to instrumental use. Requests for Tuscan nationality poured in to the consulate, often framed by the language of “protection” and supported by somewhat tenuous connections to Livorno. In 1830, Joseph Salame embarked on a lengthy and difficult process of proving that he

¹⁸ Although *ballottazione* was technically contingent on domicile in Livorno, it acquired even more meaning abroad. The provision granting protection to subjects of states without diplomatic representation in the Ottoman Empire brought Jews from Livorno under French protection during the seventeenth and eighteenth century.

¹⁹ Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: the Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 103, 115.

²⁰ Stein, *Extraterritorial Dreams*, 6.

did indeed “enjoy Tuscan protection.”²¹ After a number of delays in compiling the relevant legal proof, Joseph Salame finally submitted to the consulate a notarized document from the leadership of the Jewish community of Livorno, attesting that: “Joseph Salame, living in Alexandria and established in commerce, is the son of Salomone Salame and from an ancient family of the Grand Duchy. His grandfather left Tuscany to make his way in the Levant where he established himself without losing his legitimate Tuscan nationality.” Therefore, Josef Salame should retain the rights to Tuscan nationality “as the living son of a true subject of His Royal Highness the Grand Duke of Tuscany, who always demonstrates and respects his European character even if he is far from his home country.” With these words, the witnesses suggest that Salame’s subjecthood was not only justified as a matter of birthright, but also because he possessed a rather amorphous, innate “European character.” In response, the consulate ruled that “even considering that Joseph Salame was born and living in Egypt, he has not lost his legitimate Tuscan nationality, for a son born of a Tuscan in a foreign land is still a Tuscan.”²² Emerging from Salame’s request for recognition was an expansive definition of nationality, for even though Salame’s family, like many other Livornese Jews, had lived for generations outside of Livorno, they could still be recognized as legitimate Tuscan subjects. And embedded within the debate over Salame’s true status was the sense that his commercial practices as well as his allegedly distinct behavior as “a European” served as additional evidence for his claim.

In Egypt, claiming nationality often functioned as a commercial endeavor, carrying particular weight in the pursuit of transnational trade. In 1837, all but one of the seventy-two

²¹ While he presented testimony from members of the Jewish community, Salame lacked official proof or documentation. The Tuscan consul therefore decided to grant the Salame family temporary citizenship in which they had six months to “legally justify” permanent citizenship, “considering if brothers were really of Tuscan origins, they should not have trouble getting legal documents that proved their assertions.” ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 4 (1830).

²² ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 4 (1830).

merchants engaged in foreign trade in Alexandria had foreign citizenship or protection.²³ In a legal move that was not uncommon, two Tuscan merchants, Tedeschi and Cammeo, flaunted their foreign status by using the Tuscan consulate to sue the local government for trying to charge them additional duties on imported liquor. They wrote, “the liberty of commerce which Europeans enjoy here cannot permit these vexations...we are supported by the justice of our inquiry and the certainty of the protection that the honorable Consul always grants in favor of his subjects.”²⁴ Flattering the consul in his role as the “protector” of their privileges, Tedeschi and Cammeo clearly linked their status as Europeans to the success of their commercial practices.

The Tuscan consular records of Egypt reveal many others who confronted the confluence of commercial opportunity and nationality. In 1843, Haim and Moise Aboros presented themselves in front of the consulate to assert that they had been recognized by the government of Livorno as Tuscan subjects in 1828. With some degree of urgency, the brothers “begged fervently” to be registered as Tuscan subjects, declaring, “Up until now we have not profited from this benefit because of our ignorance of this status...but we are now interested in enjoying the privileges and advantages granted by our citizenship.” However, scrawled across this request is a note from the consul general to reject the Aboros’ claim, for “the document they produced did not prove either their origin or their Tuscan naturalization.”²⁵ In the 1830s and 1840s, the consulates rejected petitions for protection unevenly, usually based on whether or not an individual was able to produce a witnessed document from Livorno of their family origins. While it remains uncertain how or why the Aboros brothers finally emerged from their

²³ Najat Abdalhaq, *Jewish and Greek Communities in Egypt: Entrepreneurship and Business before Nasser* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co, 2016), 56.

²⁴ ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 26 (1843).

²⁵ ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 25 (1843).

“ignorance,” it is clear that they were aware that being officially classified as a Tuscan served as a conduit for economic and social advantages.

The legal categories relied on in the European consulates did not necessarily have coherent or relevant meanings for individuals as they went about their daily lives. Some, such as the Aboros brothers, went years before trying to substantiate their claims of nationality legally. However, nationality could have ramifications in the streets of the rapidly expanding city as well. In “Foreignness and Localness in Alexandria,” Will Hanley describes the everyday and ordinary intermingling of life across Alexandria in markets, taverns, and apartment buildings, and argues that various categories such as wealth, culture, and nationality were “not constant...and could be misrecognized, forgotten or replaced.”²⁶ In the streets of Alexandria, nationality could be confused or disregarded, only to reappear in unexpected moments as a “common language for sorting, identifying, and making one’s way.”²⁷ When British subject, Francesco Abram, angrily stabbed Alfredo Petruskel in the streets during an argument, Petruskel shouted: “Be aware that you are dealing with an Austrian and not with a Maltese.” Abram replied: “What do you mean by saying you are an Austrian? You are not an Austrian, you are not recognized as such by your consulate. You are simply considered an Arab.”²⁸ While Petruskel performed his nationality in the streets by proclaiming himself an Austrian and pointed to the legal protection and security supposedly extending from this status, Abram punctured his claim with dismissive words and his

²⁶ Will Hanley, “Foreignness and Localness in Alexandria, 1880-1914” (Ph.D. thesis, Princeton University, 2007), 5.

²⁷ Julia Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans: North Africa and Europe in an Age of Migration c. 1800-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 243.

²⁸ The National Archives of the UK (TNA), FO 847/28, London, United Kingdom.

dagger.²⁹ This violent confrontation highlights the expression of everyday tensions in the rapidly growing port city.

Between the Port and The Consulate: Gateways of Movement and Status

Throughout the nineteenth century, Alexandria emerged as a dynamic and growing port city; in 1879, the *New York Times* described the “extraordinary prosperity of Alexandria, produced by the unusual fine crops of cotton, grain, sugar, and beans...the harbor is crowded with merchantmen, the railway is blocked with [loaded] trains.”³⁰ The city expanded rapidly due to migration from other parts of Egypt and abroad, and between 1825 to 1868, the population grew from about 16,000 to 200,000 people.³¹ Migration to Egypt included large numbers of Maltese, Greeks, Italians, and Syrians, and was comprised of not only merchants, shippers, and bankers, but also engineers, domestic servants, artisans, and unskilled laborers.³² Alexandria’s development as both a city and a port were inextricably linked; Alexandria attracted migrants because of its increasing importance in the global economy, and Alexandria became a central port because it was attached to a vital city where people lived and worked. As the city of Alexandria began to grow dramatically, the port represented “a space of interconnections between Alexandria the home and Alexandria the transit stop.”³³ The port stood as a locus of

²⁹ Petruskel later died of his wounds. In the case before the British consular court, Abram was found not guilty by the jury for his “willful murder.” TNA, FO 847/28.

³⁰ Juan Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 198; 22 December 1879, *New York Times*.

³¹ The city grew even more dramatically in the second half of the nineteenth century: between 1848 and 1897 the population of Alexandria tripled and between 1848 and 1927 it grew more than five times. Nancy Reynolds, *A City Consumed: Urban Commerce, the Cairo Fire, and the Politics of Decolonization in Egypt* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 24; Gabriel Baer, “Urbanization in Egypt, 1820-1907,” *Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East: Nineteenth Century*, ed. William Polk and Richard Chambers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 158; Michael Reimer, “Colonial Bridgehead: Social and Spatial Change in Alexandria, 1850-1882,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 20, 4 (1988): 532.

³² In many ways this parallels the case of nineteenth century Tunisia. Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans*.

³³ Minkin, “In Life as in Death,” 55.

entry and exit, of trade and commerce, of authority and disorderliness. It was a key site of encounters between people of diverse origins, religions, and nationalities, and a riot of different languages, attires, and activities.

While Alexandria's port functioned expressly as a space of mixing and intermingling, there were spaces in the city that implicitly or explicitly reified nationally oriented definitions and distinctions among individuals, such as the consulate. In 1847, *Murray's Handbook for Travellers in Egypt* explained that "the Frank quarter stands at the extremity of the town, farthest from the new port; which is in consequence of the European vessels having formerly been confined to the eastern harbor; and the consuls and merchants having built their houses in that direction. It has, within the last seven years, greatly increased in size by the addition of the large square."³⁴ The consulates in Alexandria were situated around the Place des Consuls, a square bustling with hotels, cafes, and stores, and people going about their daily lives in the city often spent time in the square or crossed through it as they passed from one neighborhood to the next.³⁵ And yet, on occasion, individuals found themselves within the four walls of a consulate, adapting to the particular processes and specific language governing each space. In his observations on Alexandria, one European traveler remarked on the sense of authority conveyed by the very buildings of the consulates: "when the flags of the respective nations are waving above the [consulates], the scene is somewhat imposing, especially when the sun is shining upon

³⁴ European neighborhoods extended out from Square of the Consuls. The English community was allocated land to the north, the French and Greeks to the south, and the Armenians and Italians to the west. Anthony Sattin, *Lifting the Veil: Two Centuries of Travellers, Traders and Tourists in Egypt* (London: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2011), 155.

³⁵ Despite the existence of distinct neighborhoods and zones within Alexandria, they were never fully discrete entities. In his studies of mid-nineteenth century Alexandria, Robert Ilbert falsely separates the port from the city of Alexandria and then divides the city into four zones. Beginning at the cotton market at Mina' al-Basal, a large area for bargaining, sorting, and storing. Adjacent to this commercial zone and extending south toward the Mahmudiyyah Canal, there was a quarter for Egyptian laborers, many of them recent immigrants to the city from rural areas. The center of the old city was gradually occupied by European laborers, particularly from Malta, Italy, and Greece, while the wealthy of various nationalities were concentrated in the neighborhood around the Square of the Consuls. Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution*, 198.

them from an Egyptian-blue sky.”³⁶ At various points in time, the consulate served as courtroom, bank, and shelter, and the consul could serve as judge, advocate, or diplomat. At their foundation, the consulates stood as a central nexus of representations and definitions of nationality. The lines of nationality, although oftentimes blurred, defined the purview of the consul’s actions and duties. The consul administered justice based on the laws of the state he represented and protected its nationals and protégés at all costs, and for Tuscans in Egypt, the consulate represented an important potential safeguard of their economic interests, legal privileges, and physical safety.³⁷

At the outset of the nineteenth century, Tuscan subjects and protégés in Egypt found themselves under the protection and jurisdiction of the Austrian consul. Both in Tuscany and abroad, Tuscan merchants fiercely advocated for separate Tuscan representation, for being under Austrian authority “was certainly not very favorable for Tuscan commerce and the Tuscan merchant marine, which could not possibly hope to obtain all the efficacious assistance and protection needed, which would certainly be given to them by their own consul.”³⁸ In 1828, separate Tuscan consulates were established in Alexandria and Cairo, and Carlo de Rossetti, a

³⁶ In the mid-nineteenth century, the countries with consulates in Alexandria included: Britain, France, United States, the Netherlands, Russia, Sweden, Greece, Prussia, Tuscany, Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, Sardinia, and Austria. John Gadsby, *My Wanderings: Being Travels in the East* (London: 1859), 150.

³⁷ There was a long history of European consuls operating in the Ottoman Empire. Their duties included: giving assistance to nationals, observing ordinances and statues regarding commerce and navigation, supervising payments of duties for ships and goods, supervising execution of treaties and how they are observed. With the growing number of Tuscan subjects settling in Egypt and establishing commercial firms, the duties of the consul seemed ever more necessary and important. Archivio di Stato di Livorno (ASL), Governo di Livorno b. 872 (1818). Feroz Ahmad, “Ottoman Perceptions of the Capitulations, 1800-1914,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 11, 1 (2000): 1-20; Maurits H. Van Den Boogert, “Consular Jurisdiction in the Ottoman Legal System in the Eighteenth Century,” *Oriente Moderno* 22, 83 (2003): 613-634.

³⁸ In March 1827, a letter from “prominent merchants” in Alexandria, many of whom were Livornese Jews, wrote to the Tuscan government to protest the appointment of Austrian consul and rather expressed support for merchant Carlo de Rossetti as Tuscan consul. This was part of a larger push by merchants, captains, and other residents for Tuscan consuls to be appointed in ports where Tuscans had commercial contacts. As quoted in David LoRomer, *Merchants and Reform in Livorno 1814-1868* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 147.

prominent merchant in Egypt, was named to the post of Tuscan consul.³⁹ Carlo de Rossetti characterized his role as such: “It is our duty to protect all who can legally prove themselves to be true and legitimate subjects of the Grand Duke.”⁴⁰ While de Rossetti’s responsibilities could be easily summarized, in reality they were not always easy endeavors, particularly the task of ascertaining who was or was not a “true and legitimate subject.” For example, in 1831, de Rossetti struggled to understand how to classify Hai Guetta since he held a passport that declared him to be a Tuscan protégé and another document that declared him to be a native of Livorno. The consul and those involved in the court case were troubled by the seeming contradiction of Guetta’s status as revealed by his official papers, for if he was born in Livorno than he ought to be defined as a subject rather than a protégé. Ultimately unable to unravel the puzzle, the consul concluded that the contradiction should be left as is.⁴¹

Throughout the nineteenth century, the Tuscan consulate became increasingly involved in issuing, verifying, and controlling documents that legitimized the legal identities of their nationals and protégés. In 1828, Jacob Politi presented himself before the Tuscan consulate in Alexandria with some measure of distress. On his recent voyage from Livorno to Alexandria, Jacob Politi found himself set upon by a group of Greeks and robbed of the documents of nationality he was carrying. As he arrived at the port with his wife and three young children, Politi did not need to show proper documentation to enter the city. However, their future was unknown, and Politi desperately wanted to establish himself and his family in the city on secure grounds. Documents were considered things of value, and the traumatic loss of his papers meant that he had to struggle with the consulate to recognize him as a Tuscan subject and reissue his

³⁹ De Rossetti was a “merchant consul” who had economic interests in the region.

⁴⁰ ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 4 (1830).

⁴¹ ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 5 (1831).

documents. As proof of his story, he presented sworn testimony from three prominent members of the Tuscan Jewish community in Alexandria, who confirmed that Jacob Politi was a thirty-six-year-old silk worker with connections in both Livorno and Alexandria.⁴² In his quest for documents of nationality, Jacob Politi presented proof of his character, ability to find work, and relationships with local subjects; grounding his identity in these elements allowed him, in an official way, to access belonging to the Tuscan community of Egypt.

The nineteenth century was a “veritable revolution of globalization” and with the widening scope of migration, governments became more concerned with finding ways to authorize and control population movements.⁴³ Egyptian authorities saw an ever-greater need to regulate the growing population of Egypt’s main cities, and sought ways to exclude those perceived as dangerous to the public order or public health of Egypt. In an 1849 circular, the Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Artin Bey, informed the European consuls that an individual could only establish residence in Egypt if he possessed a passport that had been approved by the Ottoman consul from the port of embarkation and if the nation’s consul in Alexandria assured local authorities of the individual’s good conduct and means of support.⁴⁴ In 1849, local authorities also established a passport office in Alexandria; an officer was stationed in the western harbor to go through the papers of all disembarking Europeans “in order to safeguard the country from every potential disturbance.”⁴⁵ In 1858, local authorities in Egypt once again put restrictions on movement in place; all foreigners needed to be issued passports of

⁴² ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 1 (1828).

⁴³ This is a summary of Aristide Zolberg’s argument in the edited volume: Green and Weil, *Citizenship and Those Who Leave*, 3. John Torpey links “state’s monopolization of the right to authorize and regulate movement” to the shift from mercantilism to capitalism and the rise of the modern nation state. Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport*, 6.

⁴⁴ AER, Consolato delle due Sicilie in Alessandria, cart. 135 (1849), as quoted in Ersilio Michel, *Esuli italiani in Egitto, 1815-1861* (Pisa: Domus mazziniana, 1958), 154.

⁴⁵ The Quarantine Board played a role in this. Khaled Fahmy, “Towards a Social History of Modern Alexandria,” *Alexandria: Real and Imagined*, ed. Anthony Hirst and Michael Silk (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2004), 297.

permit by European consuls and registered in the consulates, and they needed internal passports in order to move between Cairo and Alexandria.

Despite the growing number of regulations on migration and movement, there were many in Cairo and Alexandria who moved around without passports or proper documents. In 1843, two Jewish men, Levi and Tivoli, were arrested in Egypt. One lacked official consular protection and the other was “armed with a Tuscan passport that was judged to be irregular. The latter was not released, not even after the protests and justifications put forward on his behalf by the Tuscan vice-consul, Bruni.”⁴⁶ It remains unclear what caused local authorities to question and subsequently reject the legitimacy of Tivoli’s passport, yet Bruni sprang to his defense regardless of his ambiguous passport. Despite the fact that passports were “simply papers...requesting *laissez passer* for their bearer,” possessing a passport represented a certain security in legal personhood; in moving to and around Egypt and many such as Jacob Politi or Tivoli found value in carrying them.⁴⁷ In fact, passports were often used to validate less than clear claims to nationality.⁴⁸ As local authorities and consular officials sought ways to categorize and regulate the populations of Cairo and Alexandria, individuals embarked on a wide range of endeavors to claim or enact nationality.

A Community’s Claims: The Meaning of Foreign Status, Protection, and Belonging for Jews in Alexandria

⁴⁶ As quoted in Michel, *Esuli italiani*, 96.

⁴⁷ Fahmy, “Towards a Social History of Modern Alexandria,” 295.

⁴⁸ Will Hanley has shown the sheer variety of documents in circulation during the nineteenth century. Will Hanley, “Papers for Going, Papers for Staying: Identification and Subject Formation in the Eastern Mediterranean,” *A Global Middle East: Mobility, Materiality, and Culture in the Modern Age, 1880-1940*, ed. Liat Kozma, Avner Wishnitzer, and Cyrus Schayegh (I.B. Taurus, 2014), 177.

In Alexandria, Jews not only made their way in the world as individuals, but also as an ethno-religious community. The members of the Jewish community of Alexandria (or Jewish communities) sought to create a secure position for themselves in the Egyptian landscape, maneuvering within various zones of authority. For one, Tuscan Jews in Egypt thought of themselves as part of a Jewish community in Livorno that extended to other parts of the Mediterranean. Tuscan Jews, whether in Livorno or in Alexandria, believed in their legitimate right to appeal to Tuscan authorities for aid as Jews based on the principles of commercial utility and mutual benefit that undergirded their status as subjects. During the conflict between Egypt and the Ottoman Empire from 1839 to 1841, many Tuscan subjects living in Egypt left Alexandria for Livorno, and while the Tuscan consulate helped pay for the voyage for many poor subjects, it suggested that poor Jews leaving Egypt should be supported by the Jewish community of Livorno. In response, the Jewish community complained that it “goes against the tendency of our century and the benign provisions with which the government has treated us favorably, because it differentiates between us and other subjects...the Royal Treasury should provide for their expense, doing for Jews the same as it does for Catholics.”⁴⁹ The Jewish community of Livorno argued that Jews abroad should be entitled to the same treatment as other Tuscans abroad, and that Jews were the responsibility of the Tuscan state, rather than the Jewish community. This appeal of the Jewish community suggested an understanding of concentric circles of belonging for Jews as individuals, as members of an ethno-religious community, and as subjects of a state.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the Jewish community of Alexandria grew rapidly to include Jews of various origins, rites, languages of choice, nationalities, and occupations.

⁴⁹ The sum the Jewish community would have to pay would be 3,000 pounds. Archivio della comunità ebraica di Livorno (ACEL), Copialettere, 28 January 1841, Livorno, Italy.

Nineteenth century travelers to Egypt often divided the community into “native” and “foreign” Jews. This dichotomy, however, tended to oversimplify the diversity of the Jews in Egypt. On occasion, conflict amongst various subsections of the community boiled over. In 1839, two Jews from Algeria, the brothers Baruk, were pulled from services in synagogue and beaten up because they had been seen working in a warehouse on the Sabbath.⁵⁰ After this moment of violent intra-communal conflict, the main opponents retreated to their own consular authorities for protection; the Baruk brothers appealed to the French consulate while Behor Rosso brought a complaint before the Tuscan consulate.⁵¹ The French consulate observed that a large number of warehouse workers were Jews who were troubled by the obligations of their job to work on Saturday, but asserted that the Jewish community as a whole had to solve the religious and social conflict without insults, threats, and physical violence.

In their daily lives, Jews had occasion to participate in certain activities specifically framed by the bonds of religion, such as attending services or giving or receiving charity, and often their economic pursuits reinforced networks and connections with their coreligionists as Jews. Yet, at times, Jews in Egypt were also concerned with attaching identifying labels of nationality to their religious practices. In 1832, a case was brought to the Tuscan consulate to discuss intensifying divisions between “European” and “Levantine” Jewish communities in Alexandria.⁵² The European community wanted to establish a separate synagogue for European nationals; however, others protested that formalizing divisions would only hurt the Jewish community as a whole. However, the exact boundary lines between these two factions were

⁵⁰ ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 20 (1839).

⁵¹ Egyptian authorities called in and applied penal law because couldn’t prove French status. ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 20 (1839).

⁵² After the death of the chief rabbi, issues of custom between different factions of the Jewish community came to a head. The Europeans protested in particular the ways that honors in the service were sold for payment at the synagogue. ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 9 (1832).

unclear. All of the individuals involved had foreign subjecthood; the Levantine faction was led by Loria, Soares, and Morpurgo, while the European faction was led by Valensin, Azulay, and Fernandez.⁵³ Ultimately, the leader of the European faction stated that they “want to establish harmony between Jews regardless of their origin and did not have an interest in courting controversy,” and would therefore set up their own synagogue, but would set aside a certain amount of money to support the communal institutions and charities of the entire community, which suggests they were perhaps a wealthier subgroup of the community. Despite growing divisions, the Jewish community remained under a single communal structure throughout the mid-nineteenth century. In 1854, the Italian Jews of Alexandria attempted to form a separate communal structure; however, they failed to win the necessary support and rejoined the *Communauté Israélite d’Alexandrie* a year later. In the 1850s and 1860s, Ashkenazim in Egypt also tried to establish their own separate community, and, although these efforts initially met with limited success, in 1865 they succeeded in forming a separate community in Cairo. In 1872, the communal statutes of the Jewish community, written in Italian, proclaimed: “all Jews living and domiciled in Alexandria, without distinction of language or nationality or custom form one community.”⁵⁴

While many Jews in Egypt found it occasionally useful to gesture towards their foreign status as individuals, they also had to make claims of foreign status and protection as a community. In 1855, the Jewish community of Alexandria requested and was granted the protection of the Austrian consulate. But in 1872, a rift in the Jewish community of Alexandria brought tensions over communal protection to the surface. With the community dividing into two

⁵³ From the names of those involved, it seems that the European faction was comprised of families of Sephardi origin, however, the exact trajectory through the Mediterranean of the individuals involved is decidedly unclear.

⁵⁴ Jacob Landau, *Jews in Nineteenth Century Egypt* (New York: New York University Press, 1969), 183.

factions, the breakaway group tried to stay under Austrian protection, while the other part of the community sought protection from the Italian consulate. Segrè, business manager to the Italian consulate general and member of the Jewish community, reported to the Italian foreign minister that “the number of notable Italian Jews in Alexandria is growing much faster than notables of other nationalities... In the current communal committee, the president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer are all Italian, and nineteen out of thirty-six council members are Italian citizens.”⁵⁵ Segrè stressed that the Jewish community was “made up of people of all nationalities, including a majority of indigenous people,” yet it needed to have protection of a single European country.⁵⁶ For Italy, extending protection over the Jewish community of Alexandria could potentially help the country expand its influence in the region, especially at the expense of Austria. However, the appeal for Italian protection was never answered, and when the factions of the community reunited seven years later, the community remained under the protection of the Austrian consulate.

In particular, protection from European powers was vitally important for the security of the community. Although Jews often interacted with people of different faiths, languages, and nationalities in their daily lives, there were moments of tension and occasions of violence in Alexandria that brought distinctions of religion and nationality to the forefront. There were notable blood libel accusations in 1844, 1870, and 1882, and in 1881-1882, Greeks attacked Jews in what was virtually a pogrom.⁵⁷ At these times, the Jewish community’s ability to appeal to the power and influence of specific foreign authorities was particularly significant. In the blood libel case of 1870, Abram Sasson of Aleppo, “a poor old Jew of about sixty years,” was walking

⁵⁵ As quoted from Segrè’s August 13, 1872 letter to Venosta in Landau, *Jews in Nineteenth Century Egypt*, 194.

⁵⁶ As quoted from Segrè’s dispatch to Visconti Venosta from July 5, 1872 in Landau, *Jews in Nineteenth Century Egypt*, 192.

⁵⁷ Reimer, *Colonial Bridgehead*, 142.

through the streets of Alexandria when he was accused by a Maltese man of trying to kidnap his young daughter and subsequently imprisoned. However, the testimony of the Maltese was full of inconsistencies and contradictions, and from the first moments the evidence pointed to the total innocence of Sasson.⁵⁸ The heads of the Jewish community intervened quickly, not sparing any attention or cost, appealing for help from various consular authorities as well as support from broader networks of Jewish solidarity such as the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* in Paris. Meanwhile, “the Maltese fortified themselves with the assistance of the English dragoman sent with a special letter from the English court as the protecting authority of the Maltese.”⁵⁹ Although the Maltese community in Egypt fell under British protection, the leadership council of the Jewish community presented a petition to the British consul asking him to write a letter to local authorities to release Sasson from prison.⁶⁰ In navigating the occasionally precarious balance of ethnic, religious, and national communities in Egypt, the Jewish community consistently tried to present themselves as a diverse community nonetheless united, and they frequently appealed to foreign authorities to support this narrative and to protect them.

Navigating the Overlapping Legal Regimes of Egypt

Over the course of the nineteenth century, rapid economic expansion, increasing migration, and conflicting imperial rivalries led to a particularly complicated legal landscape in Egypt. In 1897, *The Times* of London published a series of articles advocating for judicial reform in Egypt,

⁵⁸ AIU, Egypte, I.B. 1, report of D. Robino, secretary of Alexandria committee of the AIU to AIU in Paris from May 29, 1870 in Landau, *Jews in Nineteenth Century Egypt*, 183.

⁵⁹ The letter was signed A. Robino, J.L. Menasce, G. Del Valle, G. Cereyod. AIU, Egypte, I.B. 1, report of D. Robino, secretary of Alexandria committee of the AIU to AIU in Paris from May 29, 1870 in Landau, *Jews in Nineteenth Century Egypt*, 183. Also see: Jacob Landau, “Ritual Murder Accusations in Nineteenth-Century Egypt,” in *Middle Eastern Themes: Papers in History and Politics* (London: Frank Cass, 1973), 99-142.

⁶⁰ The case would continue on in the court system, so at the time of the report, Sasson’s ultimate fate was still unclear.

contending that the system of Ottoman capitulations had “led to a multiplicity of jurisdictions, confusion of laws, endless delays, expense in appeal, and in short, to judicial anarchy.”⁶¹ In fact, this “judicial anarchy” created an environment of legal pluralism that presented legal, social, and economic opportunities. Jews, Christians, and Muslims could all bring suits before Islamic courts based on shari‘a law, while designations of “foreignness” or “localness” dictated access to the consular courts, mixed commercial courts, or after 1876, the Mixed Tribunals.⁶² Decisions to use the various court systems was typically not about making larger political or legal statements, but rather about pursuing the more personal interests of individuals, families, or small groups. For example, according to French law, a tenant could be expelled upon the lease’s expiration, but in Islamic law as practiced in Alexandria, the tenant could offer a ten-percent increase in rent and retain the dwelling as long as owners did not wish to occupy it. Therefore, tenants preferred to make use of Islamic courts, while the owners of buildings often brought their suits before foreign courts. In an act of legal strategy, foreign tenants facing eviction could temporarily transfer possession of the dwelling to someone of a different nationality, in turn forcing the owner to present another lawsuit in a different court system.⁶³ In Egypt, Tuscan Jews could move among a multiplicity of legal codes and courts, engaging with questions of law and status in order to exert their agency as individuals, and the choice to rely on the consular courts, religious courts, or Mixed Tribunals at salient moments in life could have a profound and lasting impact on an individual’s personal and economic future.

⁶¹ The consular courts were responsible for cases involving foreigners of the same nationality, different nationalities, and natives and foreigners. In cases where the foreigners were of two different nationalities, the defendant’s consul tried the case initially, and if there were two defendants each of different nationalities there had to be two distinct actions in each consulate. In cases of counter-claims, fresh actions needed to be brought to the consulates involved. “Mixed Tribunals,” *The Times of London*, April 17, 1897.

⁶² In her studies of Morocco, Jessica Marglin has proven Jewish merchants could successfully make use of Islamic courts. Marglin, *Across Legal Lines*.

⁶³ Reimer, *Colonial Bridgehead*, 146.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the consular court system was a crucial channel of political, legal, and economic support for transnational trade, particularly as the number of Europeans in the city expanded from the 1830s to 1870s.⁶⁴ This section will examine how the records of the consular court capture moments of social conflict in which individuals navigated the significance of legal or personal status in their daily lives. The language and procedures of the court systems could be at times incomprehensible, daunting, and confusing; however, they also had the potential to be powerful tools and shared modes of communication. Cases were often lengthy and spanned multiple consular courts; in cases between foreigners of different nationalities the consul of the defendant tried the case, and there had to be a fresh action brought before the courts for every counter claim.⁶⁵

In 1828, David Forte, an Austrian protégé and moneychanger in Cairo, brought a bitter case forward against Jacob Robas for the payment of a large debt; Forte claimed that Robas did not have proper documentation of his debt because he was planning on defrauding him.⁶⁶ At the heart of the legal arguments presented before the Tuscan and Austrian consular courts was whether or not Robas could be considered a Tuscan protégé at the time he contracted the debt and which legal standards were therefore applicable. The Italian consul insisted that Robas was a recognized Tuscan protégé and should be judged according to the laws of the Tuscan *patria* rather than Ottoman or Austrian law. However, Forte and his advocates did not consider the questions of legal jurisdiction to be answered quite so easily, asking somewhat sarcastically, “Does Tuscan protection get to be applied retroactively? And which state’s law should be used to

⁶⁴ Nathan Brown, “The Precarious life and Slow Death of the Mixed Courts of Egypt,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25, 1 (1993): 33-52.

⁶⁵ If there were two defendants that were of two different nationalities, there had to be two distinct actions presented at both consulates.

⁶⁶ In some examples of extra complications in the case, Forte was incarcerated for threatening Robas and Robas passed away while this case was going on. The large sum in question was 6,500 piasters. ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 1 (1828).

judge Tuscan subjects? With the history of Tuscany, Robas could just as well be judged by Austrian law.”⁶⁷ Forte repeatedly attributed Robas’ improper and allegedly deceptive commercial behavior to the fact that he was a “raya” or Ottoman subject and discounted the witness testimony in the case of other Jewish moneychangers who “didn’t enjoy the social class, credit, esteem, or purity of character required by testimony of this nature.” The conflict between Forte and Robas clearly linked commercial practices and legal positions, and in their appeals to the consular courts, Jews in Egypt often explored the multivalent bonds and fissures that existed between law and commerce. Brushing up against, passing through, or deploying the complicated legal mechanisms of the consular court system offered Italian Jewish merchants a chance to access foreign status, wrangle social standing and conflicts, and develop their economic networks.

As Egypt became a major Mediterranean node of trade, credit, and capital, an individual’s ability to access the consular court systems became ever more important. Historian Roger Owen contends that being able to rely on the consular court system helped Europeans feel more comfortable investing their money in the Egyptian economy during the nineteenth century.⁶⁸ Increasing European intervention across North Africa and the Middle East also validated the use of European consular courts as sources of authority and power.⁶⁹ In 1856, the British consul general described this desire to fall under the jurisdiction of the consular courts, whether as a subject or protégé:

Hitherto no merchant has been able to carry on extensive export transactions in the products of this country without some powerful foreign protection. Without it they cannot obtain justice in questions with the natives, and they are unable to secure their property from

⁶⁷ ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 1 (1828).

⁶⁸ Roger Owen, *Cotton and the Egyptian Economy, 1820-1914: A Study in Trade and Development* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969); Timur Kuran, “The Economic Ascent of the Middle East’s Religious Minorities: The Role of Islamic Legal Pluralism,” *Journal of Legal Studies* 33 (2004): 475-515.

⁶⁹ Will Hanley, “When did Egyptians Stop Being Ottomans?”, 104.

violence and arbitrary acts of the Government and of its provincial authorities. The consequence is that the Greeks, whether *rayas* [Ottoman subjects] or Greeks by birth, seek every opportunity of putting themselves under a foreign flag that is respected, and as their commercial relations are chiefly with England, they seek in the first instance English protection.⁷⁰

During the nineteenth century, competition amongst European and Egyptian authorities over establishing jurisdictions created layers of legal ambiguities, and small or seemingly inconsequential conflicts often “intersected with larger political, legal, economic, and demographic transformations that expanded the reach of European empires from below or from the margins.”⁷¹ Many Alexandrians acquired legal protection from multiple consulates, shifting their legal identities in attempts to advance their social and economic interests.⁷² Jews did not exclusively claim Tuscan nationality; they could also pursue subjecthood or protection from other European states such as France or Britain. Jews from Genoa sometimes moved to Gibraltar to build up claims for British protection, while Jews in Egypt with business connections to Liverpool or Manchester could also look to Britain for protection. Yet even though Tuscany had somewhat limited strength as a foreign power, many Jews in Egypt continued to seek Tuscan subjecthood and legal authority, consistently finding value and identity in using the Tuscan consular court system to protect and support their interests. Jews might have relied on the Tuscan consulate because they could more easily prove their claims of subjecthood through the history of Livorno. While the Tuscan and French consulates did not seem to be demanding for those claiming protection or subjecthood, the British consulate checked every claim thoroughly, particularly for those who said they were from Gibraltar, Malta, or another British possession.

⁷⁰ The British consul also noted the success of Greeks in becoming importers and exporters of products between England and Egypt. As quoted in Reimer, *Colonial Bridgehead*, 85.

⁷¹ Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans*, 201.

⁷² Ziad Fahmy, “Jurisdictional Borderlands: Extraterritoriality and ‘Legal Chameleons’ in Precolonial Alexandria, 1840-1870,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 55, 2 (2013): 305-329.

As consular officials struggled to define the legitimate boundaries of their jurisdiction in court cases in Egypt, they repeatedly validated the use of religious law as the basis of their judgments. The consulates frequently asked for the rabbis' expert opinion on Jewish law for cases involving questions of divorce, marriage, and patrimony.⁷³ And although religious courts retained power over personal status in Egypt, Jews often chose to turn to the consular courts to rule on these matters and enforce their judgments.⁷⁴ In 1844, after the sudden death of Fanny Cammeo less than a year after her wedding, her father, Salomone Cammeo, sued her husband, Graziadio Fernandez for the inheritance of her dowry.⁷⁵ The terms of the marriage were stipulated in the Jewish marriage contract, or ketubah, which explicitly stated that the "home should be governed by the laws of the Torah, the inheritance by the laws of here"; the ketubah served as a binding legal document, laying out which legal forum had jurisdiction over which issues. For his part, Fernandez argued that the case should be judged by an arbitration led by the rabbi, rather than the Tuscan consular courts, for if the inheritance was determined "according to the laws of here," then "why should it be regulated by Tuscan law?," adding sarcastically, "Perhaps Tuscan laws were created and spread in Syria?"⁷⁶ Cammeo indignantly insisted on his right to bring Jewish matters before the Tuscan court, pointedly asking, "Is he not Tuscan? Is the Tuscan consulate of Egypt not his civil tribunal?" and discounting the use of religious tribunals, because "whoever knows how to read Italian will see that in the translation of the ketubah, there is never any mention of rabbinical arbitration or religious tribunals."⁷⁷

⁷³ ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d'Egitto, b. 45 (1854).

⁷⁴ At times, Jews could use their foreign protection to prevent the Beit Din from enforcing judgement passed against them. Landau, *Jews in Nineteenth Century Egypt*, 23.

⁷⁵ The dowry was made up of 4,000 talleri -- 200 from her father, and 3,800 from her husband. ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d'Egitto, b. 27 (1844).

⁷⁶ ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d'Egitto, b. 27 (1844).

⁷⁷ ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d'Egitto, b. 27 (1844).

In her case study of Abraham Ankawa, Jessica Marglin describes a similar confluence of events in Algeria in 1861, as it became common for Algerian Jews to be married under both French civil law and Jewish law. In a rabbinical *responsa* over deciding inheritance in these cases, Ankawa ruled that French law should take precedence over Jewish law. This meant that the “colonial state’s preservation of Jewish personal-status law was effectively overruled.”⁷⁸ However, in 1861, Algeria was under French colonial rule, while in mid-nineteenth century Egypt, the sheer number of legal regimes and authorities added a layer of complexity to how consular courts and religious courts related to each other. In some cases, consular courts could assert their dominance over religious courts, while in other cases they deferred to them. In their final ruling in the Fernandez-Cammeo case, the assessors of the consular court cited an 1814 Tuscan decree abolishing the jurisdiction of Jewish tribunals in Tuscany proper – thereafter the “individuals of the Jewish nation were put absolutely and indistinctly under the laws and orders of the Grand Duchy” – and therefore asserted the legal authority of the Tuscan consular court in Egypt over all issues that could be considered religious matters.⁷⁹

Tuscan Jews often pursued a hybrid legal system between religious authorities and consular courts. Embarking on a business partnership, Isaac Curiel and the Castro brothers signed a private contract in Hebrew “as good Jews and with a deep respect for God.”⁸⁰ When the relationship soured, both sides turned to the consular court; Curiel insisted that although the contract was not registered at the consular courts, it was stipulated before the rabbi, who was “for both of us a competent authority,” and therefore it was legally binding, while the Castro brothers

⁷⁸ Jessica Marglin, “Mediterranean Modernity through Jewish Eyes: The Transimperial Life of Abraham Ankawa,” *Jewish Social Studies* 20, 2 (2014): 48.

⁷⁹ The assessors in the case, Rodolfo Raffaeli and Angelo Montecorboli, rejected Fernandez’s claim. ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 27 (1844).

⁸⁰ According to Curiel, the behavior of the Castro brothers had demonstrated that they had not kept the best interests of the firm in mind and had abused his faith. ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 10 (1833).

referenced the French Civil Code to dispute the validity of the contract. Jewish merchants with cases before the courts could appeal for “judgment from the religion they both belong to” even if the case did not deal with issues of personal status or religious matters.⁸¹ For example, in an 1847 disagreement between David Joel and Rahamin Cesana over money owed, the chief rabbi of Alexandria, Shlomo Hazzan, was named as the mediator of the case.⁸² Hazzan ordered the two men to deposit the sum in question for safekeeping at the consulate, examined the relevant documents, and listened to each man’s position. As part of his ruling on the case, Rabbi Hazzan made both Joel and Cesana acknowledge their responsibility in pursuing legal action; Joel formally forgave Cesana for the dishonor caused by originally bringing the claim before the consular court, while Cesana summarized the final compromise for the consulate.

In order to access the various court systems in Egypt, individuals first had to present their life experiences within a set of linguistic tropes that were intelligible to authorities; the perception or attribution of clear legal identities determined the boundaries of legal jurisdiction. The ability to make use of the various court systems varied considerably with age, social class, nationality, and gender.⁸³ While local subjects most often had access to Islamic courts or mixed commercial courts, they could occasionally bring suits before the consular court against foreign defendants, with the hope that the consular courts had the potential to issue a clearer judgment or stronger enforcement. In 1846, Hassan el-Medani found documents among his dead father’s belongings indicating that he had loaned a Jewish merchant, Giacomo Tilche, 8,210 piasters in 1836. After trying through “every friendly means to procure the repayment of the large sum,” he

⁸¹ ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 59 (1859).

⁸² ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 31 (1847).

⁸³ Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans*, 229.

appointed a Tuscan lawyer, Giolitti, and brought a suit before the Tuscan consulate.⁸⁴ Tilche defended himself by discounting the validity of el-Medani's claim, pointing out that the receipt lacked an expiration date and arguing that el-Medani had not come forward as a creditor during his 1836 bankruptcy proceedings but had rather waited until an uptick in his fortunes.⁸⁵ Both sides relied on broad and stereotypical understandings of the other's behavior; el-Medani's lawyer claimed that Tilche never planned on repaying him, because "he gave an Arab a ticket in Italian, without telling him on which value it depended and when it would expire," while Tilche responded by arguing that "everyone knows that Arabs, not only in negotiating economic affairs but in all circumstances, don't have faith in or friendship for Europeans."⁸⁶ After losing his case, Tilche appealed the decision, asserting that el-Medani was an Ottoman subject, therefore his representative was Ottoman too, and he should not, nor could not, directly advance his claims in the Tuscan consulate. While Europeans generally preferred consular courts as a legal venue, in his quest for a more favorable outcome, Tilche insisted that the judgment of the consular court should be nullified, and that the case should be retried before the mixed commercial courts.⁸⁷ Tuscan consular officials insisted on their jurisdiction over the case, for even though el-Medani was indisputably a local subject, the time for Tilche to object to the legal terms of the case and the legitimacy of el-Medani's suit had long passed. Indeed, consular courts did not always favor their own subjects, and European defendants certainly lost in their consular courts.⁸⁸

Throughout the nineteenth century, local authorities made multiple attempts to revise the admittedly confusing system of courts and legal jurisdictions in Egypt. With the economic

⁸⁴ ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d'Egitto, b. 31 (1847).

⁸⁵ Tilche had recently founded a new commercial firm, Tilche and Bismot. ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d'Egitto, b. 31 (1847).

⁸⁶ ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d'Egitto, b. 31 (1847).

⁸⁷ Reimer, *Colonial Bridgehead*, 81, 147, 218. Rudolph Peters, "Administrators and Magistrates," 378-397.

⁸⁸ Hanley notes that although foreigners could not expect preferential treatment in verdicts, they typically faced lenient sentencing in the consular courts. Hanley, *Identifying with Nationality*, 182-183.

transformation of Egypt during the 1860s and 1870s, there was a prolonged debate over how to reform the legal systems of Egypt.⁸⁹ The prime minister of Egypt, Nubar Pasha, proposed creating new Mixed Tribunals that would have jurisdiction over all civil, commercial, or criminal crimes whether they were committed by Egyptians or foreigners. However, the European powers fought hard to hold on to their legal privileges. Despite the divisions among various European communities in Egypt, they felt united in arguing that consular justice was considered not just a privilege, but a right.⁹⁰ Ultimately, the Mixed Tribunals were reserved for cases between Europeans and Egyptians or between Europeans of different nationalities, and the consular courts retained jurisdiction over civil and criminal cases between foreigners of the same nationality.⁹¹ The Mixed Tribunal relied on a mixed code that borrowed heavily from the *Code Napoléon*, with a majority of foreign judges. Although the Mixed Tribunals were created to simplify the legal order of Egypt, legal matters remained complicated and disputed.⁹² According to the Italian consul in 1892, the Mixed Tribunals of Egypt “always sought to further extend their jurisdiction”

⁸⁹ The increased foreign claims against the Egyptian government and mounting fiscal crisis made foreigners less trusting of the Egyptian system, and Egypt’s leaders felt they needed a system that would support the country’s financial interests, without alienating foreign bondholders. For European governments, while reluctant to cede any of their capitulatory privileges, the courts seemed like an opportunity to circumscribe the Egyptian government’s authority and protect their investments. For more on the Mixed Tribunals and their formation, see Byron Cannon, *Politics of Law and the Courts in Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1988); Brown, “The Precarious Life and Slow Death,” 33-52. An Egyptian Ministry of Justice memorandum of 1882 concluded that the Mixed Tribunals were unfair to those sued by European creditors, since they took place in a foreign language, had mainly European judges, and were based on a European conception of law; “the peasant thereby ‘becomes a foreigner in his own country.’” Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution*, 66.

⁹⁰ The British consul wrote in 1847 of the situation “a privilege which the local authorities tacitly recognize and which European residents here have been so long been accustomed to consider it a right.” Reimer, *Colonial Bridgehead*, 86.

⁹¹ Alexander Wood Renton, “The Revolt against the capitulatory system,” *Journal of Comparative Legislation and International Law* 15, 4 (1933): 216. The law administered by the Mixed Courts consisted of a Civil Code, a Code of Commerce, a Penal Code, a Maritime Code, and Codes of Civil and Commercial and of Criminal Procedures, all based on foreign models. The court was made up of judges from Great Britain, France, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, Italy, Holland, Portugal, Greece, Sweden, Norway and US, and French, Arabic, and Italian served as judicial languages.

⁹² The Mixed Tribunals were inaugurated in 1876, when Egypt was bankrupt, and the mixed courts began to rule favorably on many claims against the Egyptian government, aggravating the fiscal crisis. By the early 1880s, the courts seemed to aid rather than limit foreign penetration. Throughout their complicated history, the Mixed Tribunals were supported by shifting coalitions of political actors. Brown, “The Precarious Life and Slow Death,” 36.

however it was of “great importance, not only for us, but for all foreign states that have colonies in Egypt” to push back against any “grave damages to European interests and to the detriment of the prestige of foreign judges.”⁹³ Having recourse to the consular courts was a conspicuous line dividing “foreigners” from “locals,” however the line was not always clear. Jews with Tuscan nationality often operated in legal gray zones, relying on multiple forms of legal authority even as they insisted that their national status represented legal clarity.

From Tuscan Subject to Italian Citizen: Italian Unification, Migration, and Changing Meanings of Nationality

In 1860, a new flag was raised over the Tuscan consulate building in Alexandria – Tuscany was now part of the modern Italian nation state. However, just as the process of Italian unification proceeded unevenly on the Italian peninsula, so it did abroad, and raising a flag over the Tuscan consulate was not the simple conclusion to Italian unification in Egypt, but rather the beginning. Consular officials grappled with how to navigate the unification of separate consulates, consular courts, and legal identities. In a report from 1860, the Tuscan consul described the urgent need to alert the Tuscan colony through the press that claims and suits against Austrian subjects and protégés would subsequently be handled by the Sardinian consulate.⁹⁴ Yet, there initially also continued to be elements of an administrative separation between the Tuscan and Sardinian consular courts to prevent potential confusion or abuse.

⁹³ ASMAE, *Ambasciata d’Italia in Egitto*, b. 45 (1892). The case that brought this issue to the forefront involved an Italian citizen whose crime was tried by the Mixed Tribunals after it extended jurisdiction over cases that could disrupt the public order. However, the Italian citizen had committed her crime in a private place, and the Italian consul pushed other authorities to recognize ambiguity in how to interpret the law.

⁹⁴ ASMAE, *Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto*, b. 59 (1860).

Namely, appeals of the decisions made by the Tuscan consulate could not be submitted to the Sardinian consulate for new or revised judgments.⁹⁵

Alongside the shifting legal jurisdictions, Italian unification signaled a literal shift in definitions of nationality, for with one stroke Tuscan protégés or subjects were transformed into Italian protégés or subjects. After 1860, the drawn-out lawsuit against Giuseppe Coen moved from the Tuscan consulate to the Sardinian consulate, and he was officially labeled as “now a subject of His Royal Majesty, Vittorio Emanuele.”⁹⁶ However, since every region of the Italian peninsula had historically defined subjecthood and its requirements differently, the unification process involved creating new definitions of citizenship and nationality for the Italian state. Laws of nationality and citizenship were not applied uniformly until 1865. According to the 1865 civil code, Italian citizenship was based on a flexible interpretation of the *jus sanguinis* principle; citizenship was transmitted through “family links” and “the pater familias.”⁹⁷ This understanding meant that children of Italian nationals were born as Italians, whether they were born in Italy or abroad. After unification, Italians in Italy and abroad often used *sudditanza* (subjecthood) and *cittadinanza* (citizenship) interchangeably.⁹⁸ Historian Ester Capuzzo has noted a subtle distinction between the terms – *sudditanza* implies a sense of dependence while *cittadinanza* implies a sense of belonging – and argues that these slight differences in meaning became clearer

⁹⁵ The consulates of Italian states included The Kingdom of Two Sicilies, Sardinia, and Tuscany. Before unification they had the same relationship with each other as they had with other foreign consulates. ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 59 (1860).

⁹⁶ ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 61 (1860).

⁹⁷ As Sabina Donati has argued, the laws of the 1865 civil code were not exclusively based on the *jus sanguinis* principle, and incorporated some elements of territorial subjecthood (or *jus soli*). Birth in Italy combined with years of settlement and civil and military service were sufficient to transform foreigners into Italians. This made the nationality laws of Italy more inclusive and flexible than those in place in post-unification Germany. However, like most other countries at the time, there was no provision for dual citizenship, and a person who became a citizen of a foreign country automatically lost their Italian citizenship. Sabina Donati, *A Political History of National Citizenship and Identity in Italy, 1861-1950* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2013), 26-29.

⁹⁸ Donati, *A Political History of National Citizenship*, 29.

demarcations in Italian colonial contexts.⁹⁹ In their petitions to the Italian consulate, Jews often referred to themselves as both citizens and subjects in different parts of the same letter.

During the nineteenth century, men, women, and children moved to Egypt from all parts of the Italian peninsula and “became Italian.” Even before unification, emigration had the potential to link disparate people in new categories. As early as 1822, the minister of foreign affairs of Egypt, Jouseff Baghous, wrote of his concern over the disruptive potential of European migration to Egypt, explaining, “These people, who have been expelled by European governments because they are thought of as dangerous to the social order, are from the moment that they set foot in Egypt, considered to be transformed into good citizens.”¹⁰⁰ With these words, Baghous described the transformative process of migration. Whether a European left his or her homeland by choice or by force, to sojourn or to settle permanently, just by being in a new land they were converted into good subjects and the proud property of the state. During the 1830s and 1840s, many “Italians” who arrived in North Africa and the Levant were political exiles or patriots, motivated to leave by political turmoil and conflict on the peninsula.¹⁰¹ Once in Egypt, economic and political interests could intersect, for even while many Italian speakers focused their energies on making a living in their new surroundings, some also continued to be involved in a network of political activities abroad, such as supporting Mazzini or joining a masonic lodge.¹⁰² Giacomo di Castelnuovo was one notable example, having been forced to flee Livorno for Egypt in 1841 after becoming involved in patriotic causes. He moved between Egypt

⁹⁹ Ester Capuzzo, “Sudditanza e cittadinanza nell’esperienza colonial italiana dell’età liberale,” *Clio* 31 (1995): 66.

¹⁰⁰ ASL, Governo di Livorno b. 876 (7 September 1822).

¹⁰¹ The revolutions of 1848 and the subsequent occupation of Tuscany by Austria and occupation of Rome by France led many more to flee to the Mediterranean.

¹⁰² The Masonic lodge in Alexandria was connected with the Masonic Lodge in Livorno. Active members and leadership of the Masonic lodge in Egypt disproportionately included Jews from Livorno. Barbara De Poli, “Il mito dell’Oriente e la espansione massonica italiana nel Levante,” *Storia d’Italia, Annali 21, La Massoneria*, ed. Gian Mario Cazzaniga (Torino: Einaudi, 2006), 634-655.

and Tunisia, serving as a doctor for the bey of Tunis and the viceroy of Egypt, yet he also founded the first Italian newspaper in Egypt, *Lo Spettatore Egiziano*, and participated in the Italian wars of independence by organizing volunteers and donations from Egypt.¹⁰³ Italian anarchists and political dissidents also formed part of the stream of Italian immigrants to Egypt in the late nineteenth century, creating local and international networks based on their personal connections and shared vision.¹⁰⁴

Beyond individual patriots or anarchists, an Italian “crowd” could assemble in the streets and assert forceful, and sometimes violent, forms of Italian belonging. Part of the fabric of dynamic urban environments, the “collective action and collective violence on the part of workers and crowds manifested a competition for resources and for relative status,” and crowds became formidable actors in the streets of Cairo and Alexandria.¹⁰⁵ In 1849, “amidst the frenetic spirit of turbulence and political rancor,” Tuscan sailors in the port of Alexandria protested against Austria and its occupation of Italian cities.¹⁰⁶ Abandoning their ships, the sailors and their captains marched in the city waving flags and brandishing pistols, skirmishing violently with Austrians in the streets. In 1859 and 1860, fierce protests in Alexandria and Cairo again broke out in support of unification and the annexation of Tuscany to Piedmont.¹⁰⁷ In fact, street demonstrations of nationality were not always politically motivated; common drunken brawls and street conflicts often had the effect of binding together groups of people and cementing

¹⁰³ In his chronicles in his participation in the war of 1866, the last seven pages is a Hebrew prayer. Castelnuovo became very involved with connecting the new state of Italy to Italian communities in Tunisia and Egypt. Bruno di Porto, “Giacomo di Castelnuovo e il suo diario di guerra del 1866,” *Rassegna Storica del Risorgimento* (1973): 376-418; Leonida Balestreri, “Patrioti del Risorgimento nella storia del giornalismo di paesi stranieri,” in *Miscellanea di storia ligure in onore di Giorgio Falco* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1962), 409-420.

¹⁰⁴ Lucia Carminati, “Alexandria, 1898: Nodes, Networks, and Scales in Nineteenth Century Egypt and the Mediterranean,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 59, 1 (2017): 133.

¹⁰⁵ Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution*, 192.

¹⁰⁶ ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 35 (1849).

¹⁰⁷ ASMAE, Consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 59 (1860).

definitions that were otherwise not clear. For example, in May 1865, several drunken Italian sailors beat up several Egyptian donkey drivers, and a large crowd of Arabs and Europeans became involved in the fight. The local police took the side of the Egyptians, seizing the sailors and wounding several Italians. Even after the Italian consul demanded reparations for these actions from Egyptian authorities, four hundred working class Italians surrounded and broke into the consul's house, calling for "a stronger satisfaction" for the insults against them.¹⁰⁸ With numbers and forceful actions, Italians abroad could demand that their voices be heard and their interests safeguarded. Whether or not they were associated with current political events, the "crowds" of Alexandria, defined as Italian or Greek or Maltese and acting together, had the potential to express or reinforce nationality.

Being Italian or becoming Italian was a distinct process for Italians abroad, where the surrounding environment and local relationships were decidedly different than the national context. As Julia Clancy-Smith has pointed out, the Mediterranean was a "borderland" in flux, and movement between Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East created "new social formations arising from constantly improvised communities forged by successive dislocations, settlement, and assimilation to varying degrees."¹⁰⁹ In 1882, there were somewhere between 50,000 and 60,000 foreigners living in Alexandria, making up thirty-four percent of the overall population of the city. Among them were 18,800 Italians.¹¹⁰ The growing Italian community of Egypt was by no means monolithic, but rather extremely "textured," varying by region of origin,

¹⁰⁸ Will Hanley, "Cosmopolitan Cursing in Late Nineteenth Century Alexandria," in *Cosmopolitanisms in Muslim Contexts: Perspectives from the Past*, eds. Derryl MacLean and Sikeena Karmali Ahmed (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 92-104; Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution*, 198; Reimer, *Colonial Bridgehead*, 142-143.

¹⁰⁹ Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans*, 343.

¹¹⁰ In 1881, there may have been 90,000 to 100,000 Europeans in Egypt. Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution*, 44; Stein, *Extraterritorial Dreams*, 19.

gender, age, employment, skills, politics, time of departure, and community.¹¹¹ It included increasing numbers of artisans, laborers, clerks, domestic servants, shopkeepers, small traders, and professionals who were attracted by expanding economic opportunities in Egypt after the cotton boom; Jews with origins in Livorno formed an early and distinct part of the Italian-speaking community in Egypt.¹¹² The identities of Italians in Egypt were transformed by pursuit of economic stability, their decisions to return to Italy or settle abroad permanently, and their daily interactions with others. While outward migration from Italy had certainly begun well before unification, it became a subject of intense national debate and concern as it accelerated between 1876 and 1914, creating lingering questions about where Italy began and ended and who was Italian consistently relevant.¹¹³ Understanding Italian emigrants and their place in the national community was at the heart of “larger process of defining citizens (and their obligations), national character, as well as the notion of a cultural nation.”¹¹⁴

In late nineteenth-century Egypt, the existence of “multiple, overlapping sovereignties,” particularly through the expansion of empire, created an environment of “multi-level citizenship”

¹¹¹ Donna Gabaccia as quoted in R.J.B. Bosworth, *Italy the Least of the Great Powers: Italian Foreign Policy Before the First World War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 136. Ann Stoler has argued for the “need to understand the diversity of and conflicts between various European communities in colonial societies...the differences between policy makers in the metropole and the expatriates, as well as of the conflicts among the colonial Europeans themselves.” Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution*, 44.

¹¹² The difference in wages earned in Egypt for Italian laborers provided a strong motivation for migration. Bent Hanson, “Wage Differentials in Italy and Egypt: The Incentive to Migrate before World War I,” *Journal of European Economic History* 14 (1985): 351.

¹¹³ Historian Caroline Douki argues that emigration helped develop the modern Italian administrative state, and efforts to track the emigrant population conveyed “it did not consider this group secondary or lost.” One of the first acts of the unified state was to take a census, and notably, the 1861 census counted not only those in Italy, but also the *popolazione fuori di regno* (population outside the realm) numbering 400,000. In 1871, census takers counted a million Italians ‘not present’ and in 1876, Italy instituted an annual statistical report on Italian emigration, which focused on tracking departures and requests for passports. Caroline Douki, “The Liberal State and Mass Emigration, 1860-1914,” in *Citizenship and Those Who Leave*, eds. Nancy Green and François Weil (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 93, 94. For more information on the history of statistics in Italy, see: Silvana Patriarca, *Numbers and Nationhood: Writing Statistics in Nineteenth Century Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Carl Ipsen, *Dictating Demography: The Problem of Population in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

¹¹⁴ Green and Weil, *Citizenship and Those Who Leave*, 3.

in which conventional understandings of citizenship based on European and American models founder.¹¹⁵ In the 1870s, Egypt defaulted on the repayment of several European loans, and Europeans took financial control over Egyptian debt in 1876. In 1882, Britain responded to financial uncertainty and upheaval in Alexandria by occupying Egypt with a military force and establishing a “veiled protectorate.”¹¹⁶ While historians have long viewed the establishment of British imperial rule in Egypt as a dramatic “rupture,” more recent historical studies have instead understood this period as an acceleration of long-term economic and political trends.¹¹⁷ Indeed, throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Egypt was drawn even further into the world economy, particularly through the export of agricultural products such as cotton and the import of manufactured goods from Europe, and there was an overall “intensification of colonial pressures” among the European powers in Egypt.¹¹⁸

After 1882, Egypt’s position between the Ottoman Empire and the British Empire was characterized by two key fictions, for “public discourse pretended that the Ottomans retained a measure of control over Egypt and that Egypt retained a measure of independence from Britain.”¹¹⁹ Egyptian nationalist historiography has characterized Egypt as independent throughout the nineteenth century, and the British occupation of Egypt ironically reinforced ideas of Egypt’s national independence. In Egypt, the British avoided direct intervention in

¹¹⁵ Hanley, “When did Egyptians Stop Being Ottomans?,” 95

¹¹⁶ The direct catalyst for the British occupation was the ‘Urabi revolt. Juan Cole has argued that the British were not “drawn into” Egypt by turbulence, and rather invaded “to ensure that a process of state formation did not succeed in creating a new sort of stable order that would end European privileges and threatened the security of European property and investments.” Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East*, 17.

¹¹⁷ Minkin, “In Life as in Death,” 4 and Ehud R Toledano, “Forgetting Egypt’s Ottoman Past,” in *Cultural Horizons: A Festschrift in Honor of Talat S Halman*, vol. I, ed. Jayne L Warner (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2001), 150-167.

¹¹⁸ Leila Tarazi Fawaz and C.A. Bayly, ed., *Modernity and Culture: From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 20. Faruk Tabak, “Imperial Rivalry and Port-Cities: A View from Above,” *Mediterranean Historical Review* 24, 2 (2009): 79-94.

¹¹⁹ The 1869 Ottoman nationality code determined citizenship, but it was a focused on acquiring nationality rather than the rights that went with it. Hanley, “When did Egyptians Stop being Ottomans?,” 92.

political and legal structures of the country, leaving intact the Khedive, the yearly tribute to the Ottoman Sultan, the capitulations (including the consular courts), the *Caisse de la dette*, and the Mixed Tribunals.¹²⁰ In political affairs, an Egyptian council of ministers remained responsible in theory to the Khedive, although in reality, Lord Cromer chose appointments to many principle ministries and British policy suggestions were more like orders. The Ottoman Empire also continued to play a role in determining the political culture of Egypt, and even as Egyptian nationalist feeling grew in the 1880s and 1890s, local Egyptians remained legally defined as Ottoman citizens.¹²¹ Historian Eve Troutt Powell has also shown Egypt was itself an imperial power in Sudan, contributing to the complex struggles for authority and power between Egyptian, Ottoman, and British authorities in Egypt.¹²²

Even in the shadow of increasing British dominance in Egypt, because of the geopolitical importance of Egypt, both Italy and France also continued to try to expand the realms of their authority and spheres of influence. After Tunisia became a French Protectorate in 1881, France withdrew protection from foreign protégés, suspended the capitulations, and pressured Italy and Britain to close their consular courts.¹²³ In contrast, the British assured the other European powers that they would keep the capitulations in place in Egypt. The endurance of the capitulations as a legal framework in Egypt meant that the consulate and consular officials

¹²⁰ The British had two contradictory purposes in Egypt: to reform the country and to leave it. The British conceived the British occupation of Egypt as only temporary (but with the privilege of judging when they would withdraw from the country). Egypt was not fully incorporated into the British empire as a “protectorate” until 1914. Maurus Reinkoski, “Uncommunicative Communication: Competing Egyptian, Ottoman and British Notions of Imperial Order in Late Nineteenth Century Egypt,” *Die Welt des Islams* 54, 3-4 (2014): 399-422; M.W. Daly, “The British Occupation of Egypt 1882-1922,” *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, vol. 2, ed. M.W. Daly (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 230-251.

¹²¹ Egyptians who traveled abroad, used law courts or responded to census questions could represent themselves only as Ottoman citizens. There were not any rules on specifically “Egyptian” nationality until 1900 and 1926. Hanley, “When did Egyptians Stop Being Ottomans?,” 95.

¹²² Eve Troutt Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain, and the Mastery of the Sudan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

¹²³ Stein, *Extraterritorial Dreams*, 27.

exercised a form of sovereignty that was “jurisdictional (applying to persons) rather than territorial (applying to places).”¹²⁴ In the consular records, it was common to refer to individuals with a combination of territorial and proprietary terms, for example: “at the time of Shalom Gaon’s death he had his fixed place of residence in Alexandria within the jurisdiction of this court.”¹²⁵ This refrain did not reveal anything specific about where Gaon lived in Alexandria, but rather defined his position in the city in terms of belonging under the umbrella of the consular court and its zone of authority. On the first day of Ramadan in 1892, a fire broke out in Alexandria, and Michele Levi was “dragged like a dog and pig” from the area.¹²⁶ While Levi furiously insisted “that he is an Italian subject, with all rights that that this status implies,” the policeman shouted back at him “your consul is one of geese, of ducks, of maccheronis,” bragging that only a few days before he had beat up a Greek, and he was not afraid of any Italian or the Italian consulate.¹²⁷ In their insults, the policeman clearly targeted the power and effectiveness of the consul to protect his subjects. The consul was incensed, for it was not just the ill-treatment of Levi that was at stake, but rather the whole foundation of Italian influence and the significance of claiming Italian nationality in Egypt.¹²⁸

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, European authorities and local officials became more concerned than ever before with clarifying the blurry lines between foreign protégés, foreign subjects, and local Egyptians. The process of registering protégés became more formalized and the number of protégés was limited. In 1863, a new Law of Protection eliminated the hereditary nature of protégé status and specified that only persons currently serving in

¹²⁴ Mary Dewhurst Lewis, *Divided Rule: Sovereignty and Empire in French Tunisia, 1881-1938* (Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2014), 804.

¹²⁵ TNA, FO 847/10.

¹²⁶ ASMAE, Ambasciata d’Italia in Egitto, b. 45 (1892).

¹²⁷ ASMAE, Ambasciata d’Italia in Egitto, b. 45 (1892).

¹²⁸ Despite conflicting reports, the Egyptian government ultimately apologized to Levi and paid for any lost income during the recovery period of his injuries. ASMAE, Ambasciata d’Italia in Egitto, b. 45 (1892).

specific posts under consuls and ambassadors were eligible for protection. In 1891, the Egyptian government proposed distinguishing between families of protégés that inherited their protection and those that enjoyed protection because of their current service; the Italian consul protested that while the distinction between “old” and “new” protégés seemed legal, they could not only follow written law, but also tradition, and Italy should maintain the “prestige and power” of naming protégés.¹²⁹ While access to protégé status seemed to be constricting, for European states, such as Italy, protégés continued to represent an opportunity to express and expand their interests in Egypt.¹³⁰

Throughout the nineteenth century, citizenship in Egypt was the combination of many minor demands or assertions, and claiming a foreign nationality was reserved for “occasional use” such as passports, consular courts, and census classification.¹³¹ Having a “definite identity” gave those classified as foreigners advantages, such as “relief from some taxes and tolls, paperwork that eased intra and extra regional travel, a measure of legal protection, and a more amorphous but still vital sense of political security.”¹³² Even if foreign status was temporary or limited, the perception of it could be extremely important.¹³³ Charles Hale, who served as the consul of the United States in Egypt from 1864 to 1870, recalled of the role of the consulate:

It is of the utmost importance for every Frank who wishes the benefit of this privilege to register himself at his consulate... He desires that the consulate should take notice of almost every act in his life: he goes there to be married and to record the births of his children; and ‘after life’s fitful fever,’ it is through the consulate that a permit is obtained for the burial of his body, and there his worldly estate must be settled. All formal communications between

¹²⁹ ASMAE, *Ambasciata d’Italia in Egitto*, b. 41 (1891).

¹³⁰ As Stein notes, Jewish protégés in the Ottoman Empire were always also in relationship with other relationships of protection. A large number of the British residents in Egypt were Maltese, who either had British citizenship or were under British protection and many of the “French” residents in Egypt were Levantines, Algerian, or Tunisian (after 1881) who had either acquired French protégé status or French citizenship. Stein, *Extraterritorial Dreams*, 6.

¹³¹ Will Hanley, “When did Egyptians Stop Being Ottomans?”, 102.

¹³² Sarah Abrevaya Stein, “Protected Persons? The Baghdadi Jewish Diaspora, the British State, and the Creation of the Jewish Colonial,” *American Historical Review* 116, 1 (2011): 93, 88.

¹³³ Stein, *Extraterritorial Dreams*, 36.

subjects of different nationalities are made by their respective consulates, and their intervention is invoked in many matters of ordinary business.”¹³⁴

Will Hanley points out that while scholarship has disproportionately focused on the history of the passport, there was a range of identification documents in circulation by the early twentieth century, including travel passes, registration certificates, and protection certificates.¹³⁵ In 1887, the British consul presented Isaac Bensilum with a document registering him as a British subject, which stated: “Note – this certificate of registration must be carefully kept by the party in whose favour it is issued, if he would avoid delay and inconvenience while resident or travelling in the Ottoman Empire.”¹³⁶ In the document were both a clear warning against misplacing official papers and a sense of the privileges they bestowed. Foreign status marked people in certain ways in Egyptian society, and possessing nationality could shift, whether dramatically or ever so slightly, lived experiences in Alexandria.

Occasional assertions of foreign status had far-reaching implications both for individuals and their daily lives and for Italy’s national project. Every Italian male citizen who arrived in Egypt was supposed to inscribe himself in the consular registries as a national living abroad within six months. The Italian state guaranteed that emigrants and their descendants could keep their nationality without restrictions or limitations. However, in 1903, only 12,818 Italians were officially inscribed in the consular registers, despite the fact that in 1897, the Egyptian census

¹³⁴ Charles Hale, “Consular Service and Society in Egypt,” *Atlantic Monthly* 40, 203 (1877): 286.

¹³⁵ Hanley notes that papers for mobility and papers for residence had different functions and status. Hanley, “Papers for Going, Papers for Staying,” 179.

¹³⁶ TNA, FO 847/16. As the Baedeker travel guide noted in 1898, “passports are usually asked for at the port” in Egypt, bankers “frequently require strangers to establish their identity by some document” and the help of the consulate “also must depend on the proof of nationality.” At the port, the guide notes that without a passport a visitor was “liable to detention and great inconvenience.” Karl Baedeker, *Egypt; handbook for travellers* (Leipsic, 1898), xix. A version of the guide from 1914 revises this position, stating that “passports are not absolutely necessary,” before continuing on with the same information about the importance of documentation in banks and the consulate. Baedeker, *Egypt; handbook for travellers*, (Leipsic, 1914), xv.

recorded 24,400 Italians in the country.¹³⁷ Giacomo de Martino, the Italian consul, noted that a full half of Italians did not feel obligated to register upon arrival, but rather entered the consulate only later and on occasion. Moreover, the registers were only for heads of families, to the exclusion of the many women, children, and youth in the Italian community of Egypt. Since the legal status of women and children was recorded on the passports and document of the men in their family, they were especially vulnerable to shifts and uncertainty in their legal status.¹³⁸ In 1908, Lord Cromer wrote in *Modern Egypt*:

The classification by nationalities, though important in many respects is misleading to the extent, that when it said that there are 24,000 Italians, 14,000 Frenchmen, 7,000 Austrians and so on in Egypt, it is not to be supposed that there are that number of Italians, Frenchmen or Austrians in the country possessing the special national characteristics which are generally held to belong to the inhabitants of Italy, France or Austria. Apart from the fact that there are a large number of protected subjects, who are often Orientals, it is to be observed that in many cases the Frenchman resident in Egypt is only technically a Frenchman.¹³⁹

Contemporary observers and historians alike have noted that nationality mattered in Egypt, but not necessarily nationalism.¹⁴⁰

Jews in Egypt often pursued evidence and support for assertions that they were “foreign” rather than local. Documents such as passports bestowed individuals with singular identities and supported the illusion of a legible citizen abroad. However, reality was more opaque. For Jews in Egypt, it was not unheard of for family members as close as brothers and sons, sisters and mothers to have different nationalities. For example, in the case of Rachel Bagdadhi’s inheritance, all of her siblings were represented by different countries – two were British

¹³⁷ Ministero degli Affari Esteri, *Emigrazione e colonie. Raccolta di rapporti degli Agenti diplomatici e consolare*, vol. II (Rome, 1903).

¹³⁸ Stein, *Extraterritorial Dreams*, 104.

¹³⁹ Abdalhaq, *Jewish and Greek Communities in Egypt*, 62.

¹⁴⁰ Minkin, “In Life as in Death,” 38.

subjects, one was French, and two were Italian.¹⁴¹ In their lifetimes, individuals could also shift between various identities, choosing to emphasize one aspect of their experiences or another. This phenomenon was common across the Mediterranean and the Adriatic, as individuals claimed one nationality after another without ever moving. In 1851, Moise Valensin, a Jewish banker living in Alexandria, demanded the rights attached to Algerian nationality from the French consulate. Valensin contended that although he and his father were longtime residents of Livorno, they had never officially claimed Tuscan citizenship, and therefore could not be considered as having “lost his quality as an Algerian” and could be registered as a French protégé.¹⁴² While Valensin distanced himself from his decades spent in Livorno in order to make his argument to the French consulate, other Jews in Egypt emphasized any fleeting or long-term connection with Livorno in the strongest terms possible to link themselves with Italy. Livorno became a real and imagined division between “foreign” and “local”; a narrative source of foreign status.

During the last decades of the nineteenth century, debates over Italian nationality intensified in Egypt. Increasing numbers of files regarding Jewish individuals and families were labeled issues of “contested nationality,” to be wrangled over by local authorities, consular officials, and individuals. In 1884, there was an inquest in Tanta of numerous and fraudulent inscriptions of Italian protégés and nationals, and investigations were carried out in the years following to verify the status of individuals and register them properly and officially.¹⁴³ For Egyptian authorities, Jewish claims of foreign status were often suspect and seemingly opportunistic. Italian consular officials tended to support Jewish claims of Italian nationality, but also found it extremely

¹⁴¹ The case passed through British and Italian consular courts, as well as the Mixed Tribunals and “copies have been duly served through the respective consular authorities.” TNA, FO 847/13 and FO 847/30.

¹⁴² Valensin was also “a strongly honorable man and commands a certain respect in Alexandria as a banker.” Landau, *Jews in Nineteenth Century Egypt*, 161.

¹⁴³ ASMAE, *Ambasciata d’Italia in Egitto*, b. 37 (1884).

difficult to unravel how to validate subject or protégé status that had been passed down through the generations. For example, it came to the attention of the ministry of foreign affairs that Abramo Coen and Ezekiel and Giacomo Farag had been granted nationality when they had only requested protection.¹⁴⁴ The possibility that this was a widespread occurrence, with others able to parlay protégé status into nationality, was a subject of great concern.¹⁴⁵ In 1893, Elia Mallul came to the attention of consular authorities. He was inscribed in the registers of the Tuscan consulate in 1853, and then registered in the Italian consulate in 1876 and 1892, but without presenting justification for his inscription.¹⁴⁶ He had not satisfied his obligation of the draft, but Mallul insisted it was not for lack of patriotism, but because he thought as an only son he would be considered exempt. Italian officials also struggled to determine what counted as proof of nationality; while one individual was educated in Italy, he had no proof of being a national and was stricken from the registers.¹⁴⁷

Italians in Egypt continuously asserted that belonging to the Italian nation state endured despite separation from the *patria*, using various forms of documentation, standards of conduct, or signals of Italian identity to substantiate their claims. Even if an individual's origin story or documentation lacked clarity, the gaps in clarity opened up spaces for Jews to prove and assert their status. In 1891, the Egyptian foreign minister accused Jacob Levi Acobes of "pretending" to have Italian nationality, for he and his family were alternately recognized as French protégés from Tunisia or as local subjects. As proof, Jacob Levi Acobes traced his nationality back to his grandfather, born in 1810 in Livorno, and submitted documents from the Jewish community in Livorno as proof. Even though the exact trajectory of the Acobes family through the

¹⁴⁴ It is unclear why they would have requested protection, rather than nationality, but it is probably due to their family origins and what status they were able to claim in the past.

¹⁴⁵ ASMAE, *Ambasciata d'Italia in Egitto*, b. 37 (1884).

¹⁴⁶ ASMAE, *Ambasciata d'Italia in Egitto*, b. 41 (1891-1892).

¹⁴⁷ ASMAE, *Ambasciata d'Italia in Egitto*, b. 38 (1890).

Mediterranean remained unclear, Acobes was successful in attaching his family history to a broader history of Jewish merchants from Livorno. For Ibrahim Schinazi, showing that his family in Izmir was originally from Livorno during the era of the Grand Duchy and inscription in consular registries, was enough to show he was Italian even if he “even if his origins seem to indicate that he is a local subject.”¹⁴⁸ Although labels of national identity on passports were at times unimportant, they were also instruments for giving and solidifying identities; inscribing themselves as Italians and carrying Italian papers gave Jews from Livorno the potential to “become Italian.”¹⁴⁹

In 1911-1912, hostility between Italy and the Ottoman Empire over Libya had a ripple effect throughout the Mediterranean and led to heightened tensions for Italian citizens living in the Ottoman Empire.¹⁵⁰ During the Italo-Turkish war, many Italian subjects and protégés, including many Jews, were expelled or fled from parts of the Ottoman Empire. Status as an Italian national or protégé, once a privilege, was now a vulnerability.¹⁵¹ Some *italiani levantini* expelled from Beirut and Aleppo likely made their way to the Dodecanese Islands, while others made their way to Egypt, where they could still hope for protection through the capitulations and Italian consular system.¹⁵² For example, in a panicked telegram to the consul of Alexandria, Ezra Pinto begged for help and intervention on his behalf. Local authorities had sequestered his property and placed a huge tax on it, and as an individual caught in the crosshairs of international conflicts, he was

¹⁴⁸ ASMAE, Ambasciata d'Italia in Egitto, b. 46 (1892).

¹⁴⁹ Will Hanley, “Papers for Going, Papers for Staying,” 177.

¹⁵⁰ Italy’s quest for empire was deeply linked to concern over emigration. The Italian defeat in 1896 to Ethiopian troops dashed the hopes of those that thought African colonies could absorb emigrants from southern Italy. Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport*, 104.

¹⁵¹ In 1938, Italian Jews living in Italy who stressed their utility and devotion to the nation found their strategy did not protect them from the Racial Laws. In *Benevolence and Betrayal*, Alexander Stille has shown how fiercely some families, like the Ovazza family, clung to their certificates of service or membership in the Fascist party. Such families and their faith in the power of documents were caught completely unaware by the destruction of the Shoah. Alexander Stille, *Benevolence and Betrayal: Five Italian Jewish Families under Fascism* (New York: Picador, 2003).

¹⁵² Stein, *Extraterritorial Dreams*, 104.

desperate. He tried to present himself before the consulate in a sympathetic light as a productive subject connected by deep feelings of patriotism to Italy. He wrote, “I am an Italian subject, a merchant, and property owner who was living in Aleppo when I was compelled by my feelings [of] *italianità* to take refuge in Egypt with my family. I beg for the protection and support of my native government against the arbitrary acts and damages they want to perpetrate against me.”¹⁵³ The Italian consulate in Egypt did its best to help those fleeing the Ottoman Empire. They paid for passage for the poor who wanted to come to Egypt or repatriate, even if they couldn’t pay an individual’s creditors or taxes.¹⁵⁴

Continued mass migration in the early twentieth century consistently provoked questions about who could claim Italian nationality and what its economic, political, and cultural value was. In 1912, a new nationality law modified policies that concerned Italian citizens living outside of Italy, emphasizing the importance of both “juridical citizenship” and “cultural nationality” in creating a national community that existed well beyond the borders of Italy.¹⁵⁵ According to the law of 1912, nationality could be revoked only by a willful act of a mature citizen, and children born abroad could revoke their Italian nationality only when they achieved the age of majority.¹⁵⁶ The law of 1912 also facilitated the rapid resumption of citizenship by expatriates, establishing that even those who revoked their citizenship while abroad could easily reclaim it if they returned to live in Italy for two years. In response to the widening population movements and turbulence, in 1913 the Italian government also proposed changing the format of the Italian passport that would require a photograph to be attached. The Italian consul in Egypt

¹⁵³ ASMAE, *Ambasciata d’Italia in Egitto*, b. 138 (1913).

¹⁵⁴ ASMAE, *Ambasciata d’Italia in Egitto*, b. 138 (1913).

¹⁵⁵ Donati, *A Political History of National Citizenship*, 98, 116.

¹⁵⁶ Donna R. Gabaccia, Dirk Hoerder, and Adam Walaszek, “Emigration and Nation Building during the Mass Migrations from Europe,” in *Citizenship and Those Who Leave*, ed. Nancy Green and François Weil (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 74.

responded ambivalently, for while it would be smart to move towards a passport that was hard to counterfeit, it was “inevitable that the photography would feel like a police fiche” and it was critical that “citizens (*cittadini*) abroad should feel protected, not watched.”¹⁵⁷ The consul’s position reflects both the importance that documentation of status had acquired over the course of the nineteenth century in the Mediterranean, and his understanding of those documents a framework for protection as well as surveillance.

By the late nineteenth century, Jews in Egypt were adept at claiming origins and experiences that validated their claims of Italian subjecthood or protection. This chapter shows the spectrum of instrumental and situational meanings of Italian citizenship abroad, particularly in the words and actions of individuals and the space of the consular court. Livornese Jews, strategically employing their status, extended the boundaries of Italian belonging beyond the borders of the nation. Yet beyond an official legal identity, what did being an Italian Jew in Egypt mean? Claiming citizenship for instrumental and commercial purposes could leave deeper traces as identity, citizenship, and communal belonging repeatedly converged and diverged. The next chapter will focus on exploring how Italian Jews living in Egypt during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries created multiple cultural networks and built emotional ties that transcended boundaries.

¹⁵⁷ ASMAE, *Ambasciata d’Italia in Egitto*, b. 138 (1913).

Chapter Five
Mediterranean Networks of Culture, Influence, and Solidarity: The Case of Italian and Jewish Communities in Early Twentieth Century Egypt

In his memoir, *Out of Egypt*, Andre Aciman recalled the chance encounter in a marketplace in Alexandria during the early 1940s that brought his two grandmothers from acquaintances to friends:

‘But why didn’t you ever speak to me?’ [...]
‘I used to think you were French’ [...]
‘French? And whatever made you think I was *French? Je suis italienne*, madame’ [...]
‘As am I!’
‘Yes? Are you? But we are from Leghorn.’
‘But so are we!’¹

Aciman’s re-creation of this first conversation between his grandmothers, while seemingly simple, in fact reveals the complicated confluences and divergences of culture, nationality, and identity in everyday life in Alexandria. For both of Aciman’s grandmothers, being Italian was a point of pride, a matter that clearly distinguished them both from “native” Egyptians and other foreigners in the city even as they were also forced to recognize that each had misperceived and mis-categorized the other for years. Throwing her statement into high relief, one woman noted that she was Italian by speaking in French, capturing the multilingualism common to Alexandria and breaking apart pat associations of language and nationality. Both women traced their roots directly to the city of Livorno, imbuing it with a sense of superiority and an association with a glorious past and place in Jewish history. Livorno continued to be an important cultural

¹ Andre Aciman, *Out of Egypt: A Memoir* (New York: Picador, 1994), 44.

touchstone for many Jewish families in Egypt, even for those who had remarkably loose or uncertain ties to Livorno or those who had left the city generations before. Embedded in the encounter between Aciman's grandmothers is the sense that nationality in Alexandria did not have a single or coherent meaning; rather, the significance of "being Italian" often shifted and multiplied depending on context.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Alexandria was a dynamic port city, fulfilling a central role in the flows of goods, people, and information around the Mediterranean Sea. History, art, and literature have often depicted Alexandria during this period as a quintessential cosmopolitan city. According to historian Kenneth McPherson, a cosmopolitan city either signifies a place where people "adopt and adapt cultural forms drawn from other confessional and national groups" or simply suggests "the presence of a variety of confessional, cultural, and racial groups within a single urban setting."² The struggle to define or qualify cosmopolitanism has become a central feature of the historiography of the modern Mediterranean. Deborah Starr points out that cosmopolitanism in Egypt was a "by-product of colonialism" and should be analyzed within this framework, while Khaled Fahmy argues that descriptions of Alexandria as open and cosmopolitan are "essentially predicated on ignoring and silencing the city's Arabic speaking population," which always made up the majority.³ Fahmy suggests that studying the cafes, taverns, and marketplaces of Alexandria would reveal a "highly integrated society in the process of rapid change" full of common, every day, and individual interactions, but not devoid

² Will Hanley, "Grieving Cosmopolitanism in Middle East Studies," *History Compass* 6, 5 (2008): 1351.

³ Hanley points out that descriptions of Alexandria as cosmopolitan are often colored by nostalgia for a long-gone period of tolerance, projecting an era that lacked ethnic or national tensions that was destroyed by the grips of virulent nationalism over the course of the twentieth century; this nostalgia obscures the complexities of daily life in Alexandria more than it describes it. Hanley, "Grieving Cosmopolitanism," 1346; Deborah Starr, *Remembering Cosmopolitan Egypt: Literature, Culture, and Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2009); Khaled Fahmy, "Towards a Social History of Modern Alexandria," in *Alexandria, Real and Imagined*, ed. Anthony Hirst and Michael Silk (London: Ashgate, 2004), 281.

of tensions between ethnic, national, and religious communities.⁴ Recently, Will Hanley has proposed the term “vulgar cosmopolitanism” as a counter-argument to cosmopolitanism; he asserts that cosmopolitanism problematically tends to focus attention only on elites, and relying on the term to understand cities means that class differences become less important than ethnic or religious differences.⁵ Within this framework, Jewish dockworkers belonged to the same category as Jewish bankers, and separate from lower class workers of other communities, which obscures some points of connection or division in order to privilege others.⁶

Even as recent historical studies have questioned the reliance on “cosmopolitanism” as a category of analysis or as a descriptive tool used by historical actors to represent themselves and others, historians are reluctant to abandon it. Dario Miccoli has suggested that cosmopolitanism can be understood as an “imaginary category” used by Jews in Egypt to describe themselves, and acknowledges that it “did not necessarily reflect the everyday lives of Jews.”⁷ However, even in framing cosmopolitanism as an interior process of imagination, it is unclear how this mapped onto the everyday experiences of Jews in Egypt. Without using the language of “cosmopolitanism,” with all of its attending qualifications, this chapter builds off of an understanding that Alexandria was a multilingual city of religious, economic, and ethnic diversity, where individuals of different cultures and communities certainly interacted, but not necessarily without discord or stress.⁸ Much of the historiography of the Middle East takes identities as singular and fixed, however in examining just a few of the many layers of the social

⁴ Fahmy, “Towards a Social History of Modern Alexandria,” 300.

⁵ Hanley, “Grieving Cosmopolitanism,” 1351.

⁶ Hanley, “Grieving Cosmopolitanism,” 1351.

⁷ Dario Miccoli, *Histories of the Jews of Egypt: An Imagined Bourgeoisie, 1880s-1950s* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 83.

⁸ Henk Driessen, “Mediterranean Port Cities: Cosmopolitanism Reconsidered.” *History and Anthropology* 16, 1 (2005): 135.

and cultural landscape of Alexandria, this chapter demonstrates how the situational, fragmented identities of “Italian” Jews of Egypt cannot actually be boiled down to a cultural essence or easy categorization.

While individuals in Egypt often perceived foreign nationality in terms of its utility, “being Italian” also had the power to influence and frame personal and communal experiences. In business dealings and everyday affairs, boundaries of nationality or religion were frequently crossed, ignored, or misperceived. However, foreign nationality also had the potential to mark individuals with status as part of a particular community. As communities established their own schools, religious organizations, and charities in Egypt, often labeled by nationality, religion, or origin, they used these structures to signal a clear identity for themselves and for others. And although these identities were anything but clear, participating in organizations and voluntary associations offered individuals distinct spaces with which to affiliate and find meaning. Citizenship in Egypt emerged as a linguistic and cultural affinity, associated not only with economic or charitable endeavors, but with an emotional and affective force that is often overlooked in historical studies. As Italian Jews navigated the complicated political and cultural landscape of Egypt, particularly after the advent of the British protectorate, they were not only shaped by their legal status as Italian citizens, but also the architects of different cultural and social meanings behind this citizenship.

Although modern Jewish history tends to conceptualize national identity and ethno-religious identity as distinct entities, the Jews of Egypt demonstrate how categories of belonging, nationality, and identity were multilayered and contextual. The ways that nationality converged with identity and the emotional weight this carried was by no means static or shared across individuals. As historian Mary Dewhurst Lewis notes in the case of colonial Tunisia, “the

fluidity of social identity made it possible for a single individual to belong to more than one group in his or her lifetime or to invoke different identities in different circumstances.”⁹ The broader Italian and Jewish communities were incredibly diverse in terms of origins, period and experience of migration, social class, religion, and gender. During the early twentieth century, the Jewish community experienced notable upward economic mobility with an expanding middle class. In his recent study of the Jews of Egypt during the twentieth century, Dario Miccoli argues that bourgeois social practices and perspectives formed a fundamental part of the identity of Jews in Egypt. Yet he mostly ignores issues of nationality that existed alongside religion and class and the ways they were often bound together.¹⁰ Italian policy makers and state officials often perceived the Jewish community in terms of their bourgeois status, and hoped to harness their social and economic position for Italian interests. In turn, Italian Jews often presented themselves as distinct elements of both the Italian and Jewish communities, a notable vanguard in supporting communal associations and demonstrating their national and religious commitments. In their cultural choices and activities, Italian Jews created local communities that were rooted in the Egyptian context while simultaneously framed by the idea of solidarity and buttressed by transnational bonds.

This chapter refers to “Italian” Jews not as an absolute label, but rather to distinguish certain, though by no means all, constitutive elements of a multidimensional identity. This chapter focuses on how “Italianness” and “Jewishness” acquired meaning in specific moments and spaces, and explores the ways in which Italian Jews of Egypt were “made of” multiple interactions and contextual engagements. The first two sections of the chapter examine the social

⁹ Mary Dewhurst Lewis, *Divided Rule: Sovereignty and Empire in French Tunisia, 1881-1938* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 47.

¹⁰ Dario Miccoli, *Histories of the Jews of Egypt*.

and cultural roles of “Italian” Jews of Egypt within the broader context of Italians in Egypt and the articulations of the Italian state abroad. The following sections of the chapter explore the culture of “Italian” Jews of Egypt and the social and cultural arenas in which they practiced their Jewishness, both in the context of the broader Jewish community in Egypt and Jewish communities Jews elsewhere in the Mediterranean, including Italy. The Italian Jews of Egypt and their layered histories shed light on the emergence of contradictory and complex social identities in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, when consolidating nation states, colonial rivalries, and new social movements created an increasingly complex political and cultural landscape. Italian Jews in Egypt relied on this complexity to build their cultural lives, but they also responded to and were influenced by the projections that other groups exerted on them, including the other Italians of Egypt, other Jews elsewhere, and European imperial states.

Modern Italy and Mediterranean Power: The Search for Influence and the Quest for Community in Egypt

In 1910, British author and traveler Douglas Sladen recounted his observations of Alexandria: the western port “is a busy commercial port after the style of Genoa, with hardly more Eastern life on its waters than an Italian port would have,” while along the Mahmoudiya Canal “the decaying villas give the effect of one of those delightful back-canals of Venice, which have palaces with gardens, if only Venice had mosques.”¹¹ Sladen ultimately concluded: “Alexandria is an Italian city: its vegetation is almost Italian; it has wild flowers. Its climate is almost Italian; it has wind and rain as well as fierce blue skies. Its streets are almost entirely

¹¹ Sladen described the city rebuilt after the riots and British bombardment of 1882. Douglas Sladen, *Queer Things about Egypt* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1911), 153-155.

Italian; and Italian is its staple language.”¹² Throughout his guide to Alexandria, Sladen seemed to have a sort of double vision, superimposing images of Italy on his observations of his surroundings. Indeed, Sladen was one of many European travelers during the early twentieth century that portrayed Alexandria with an Orientalist lens, depicting the city as a unique blend of “European life” and “Oriental life” where “nothing is foreign.”¹³ Through his consistent comparisons between Italy and Egypt, Sladen attempted to grant his European audience access to a certain version of Egypt; however, the juxtapositions obscure more than they explain about life in Egypt. Each of Sladen’s comparisons is tempered with distinctions, “if only” and “almost,” as he erased the Arabic-speaking, Muslim population and surroundings from his midst. Although Sladen’s blurred lines between Egypt and Italy were incongruous with everyday life in Alexandria, his narration created a perception of a shared Mediterranean space for Italy and Egypt to simultaneously inhabit. Like Sladen, many Italians believed that Egypt represented a unique opportunity to create cultural connections and inroads of influence in the Mediterranean.

For Italian nationalists, creating a modern empire that spanned the Mediterranean Sea, or “mare nostrum,” represented not only regaining the glory of the Roman era, but also forging a path forward for Italy as a European power.¹⁴ However, Italy’s imperialist hopes of creating a “fourth shore” in North Africa and the Levant were dashed after the French declared a protectorate in Tunisia in 1881 and the British seized control of Egypt in 1882. Italian nationalists and policymakers subsequently focused their efforts on creating “zones of influence”

¹² Sladen, *Queer Things about Egypt*, 153-155.

¹³ From the travelogue of G.W. Stevens as quoted in Lucia Carminati, “Alexandria, 1898: Nodes, Networks, and Scales in Nineteenth Century Egypt and the Mediterranean,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 59 (2017): 130; Anthony Sattin, *Lifting the Veil: Two Centuries of Travellers, Traders and Tourists in Egypt* (London: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2011); Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

¹⁴ Count Antonio Cippico, *Italy: The Central Problem of the Mediterranean* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926).

in the Mediterranean world, rather than gaining political or territorial control.¹⁵ In studying the activities of Italian banks in Egypt, historian Saho Matsumoto-Best concludes that the imperial rivalry between Italy and Britain in Egypt was essentially the “maneuvers of private enterprise more than formal state diplomacy,” with uncoordinated actions led by a variety of public and private Italian institutions and groups.¹⁶ Although Italian groups in Egypt were motivated by multiple driving forces, the ambition to expand Italian power in the Mediterranean emerged as an important shared tenet.¹⁷

Italians both at home and abroad believed that the ever-expanding Italian population of Egypt, as individuals and as a community, represented a concrete channel to spread Italian political, cultural, and economic influence. Even before Italian unification, Italians used the term *colonie* to describe Italian communities outside the Italian peninsula, and linked Italians abroad (*italiani all'estero*) to a larger project of empire building.¹⁸ Italians abroad became the builders of an informal Italian empire merely by living and working in a foreign territory. After Italian unification and the rise in Italian outward migration, the role that *italiani all'estero* played in

¹⁵ After the disappointment of losing Tunisia, Italy felt desperate to gain an African colony. In 1889, Italy declared a protectorate in Somalia and claimed Eritrea as a colony soon after. In 1896, Italy's defeat to Ethiopian troops at Adowa destroyed the hopes of Italian imperialists until 1911-1912, when Italy went to war with the Ottoman Empire and subsequently gained Libya and the Dodecanese Islands. R.J.B. Bosworth, *Italy and the Wider World: 1860-1960* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 95, 97-99.

¹⁶ Matsumoto-Best focuses her study on the activities of Banco di Roma, a Catholic investment bank, in Egypt. Saho Matsumoto-Best, “British and Italian Imperial Rivalry in the Mediterranean, 1912-1914: The Case of Egypt,” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 18, 2 (2007): 298.

¹⁷ Matsumoto-Best, “British and Italian Imperial Rivalry,” 311.

¹⁸ In his 1874 work, *Delle colonie e dell'emigrazione d'italiani all'estero*, political economist Leone Carpi described Italians outside Italy as “our *connazionali* (co-nationals)” and portrayed them as attached to their homeland through multivalent bonds of descent, culture, and commerce. Carpi included among the *italiani all'estero* Italian speakers in the eastern Mediterranean who were descendants of Venetian or Genoese traders, and thought of Venice and Genoa as models for Italian empire building. Donna R. Gabaccia, Dirk Hoerder, and Adam Walaszek, “Emigration and Nation Building during the Mass Migrations from Europe,” in *Citizenship and Those Who Leave*, ed. Nancy Green and François Weil (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 71.

Historian Mark Choate notes that often Italians [collapsed] the traditional categories of emigrant, exile and expatriate into a single group of “Italians abroad” (*italiani all'estero*.)” Mark Choate, “The Tunisia Paradox: Italy's Strategic Aims, French Imperial Rule, and Migration in the Mediterranean Basin,” *California Italian Studies* 1 (2010): 12.

determining Italy's fortune acquired even more weight.¹⁹ Despite the diversity of Italians in Egypt, Italian nationalists and policymakers projected the fantasy of a single national community and believed national identity could survive migration, continuously seeking ways to bond the growing number of emigrants to the Italian nation, so that they would not be "lost" and absorbed into their surrounding environment.²⁰

In particular, Italian nationalists wanted to foster economic connections between migrants abroad and the Italian peninsula. Economist, author, and future president of the Italian Republic, Luigi Einaudi stated firmly in his 1900 work, *A Merchant Prince*, that "trade follows the footsteps of the emigrant, but not all emigrants, only those who even after many generations preserve relations of affection and interests and social customs with the land in which they or their ancestors were born."²¹ In 1884, an Italian Chamber of Commerce was founded in Egypt in order to "cultivate with Italian merchants a fruitful connection with brothers of the *madre patria*; to give both sides all necessary information for trade; to indicate to merchants the goods of the marketplace that have the most probability of selling; and in general to awaken the commercial interests of Italy in the region."²² Built on a foundation of a long history of commercial relations between Italy and Egypt, the Chamber of Commerce sought to mobilize Italians in Egypt to be

¹⁹ After 1900, demands for state support of the *italiani all'estero* mounted. However, demands for political representation for Italians abroad mainly came from within Italy. In October 1908 and again in June 1911 (and without significant representation of emigrants from abroad), the first and second congresses of *italiani all'estero* met and discussed important issues such as military service and political representation. Gabaccia, Hoerder, and Walaszek, "Emigration and Nation Building," 70, 73-74.

²⁰ Pamela Ballinger, "Borders of the Nation, Borders of Citizenship: Italian Repatriation and the Redefinition of National Identity after World War I," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49, 3 (2007): 725.

²¹ Luigi Einaudi, *A Merchant Prince*, p.10, as quoted in Mark Choate, "Sending States' Transnational Interventions in Politics, Culture, and Economics: The Historical Example of Italy," *International Migration Review* 41, 3 (2007): 743. Leone Carpi also presented emigrants as playing an important economic role, as "without any state intervention, the Italian flag would follow businessmen, ships, and Italian consumers." Gabaccia, Hoerder, and Walaszek, "Emigration and Nation Building," 73-74.

²² The first chamber of commerce abroad was established in 1883. Luigi Balboni, *Gli Italiani nella civiltà egiziana del secolo XIX* (Alexandria: Società Dante Alighieri, 1906), 390. The Italian Chambers of Commerce abroad became sites of acting out nationality and imperial rivalries. In Tunisia, the French government tried to set up a French Chamber of Commerce to rival the Italian Chamber of Commerce. Raffaello Moreno to Consul General of Italy, undated 1898, Archivio della famiglia Moreno, box 3, Archivio di Stato di Livorno (ASL), Livorno, Italy.

the architects of economic growth and vitality through their local connections and international networks.²³ Promoting commerce as a cultural tool, Italian nationalists believed that shared material interests would be the foundation for forming a cultural community.²⁴ Jews actively participated in the Chamber of Commerce, receptive to its mission connecting economic success, commercial networks, and patriotic sentiment.²⁵ In 1906, Luigi Balboni reported that efforts to expand trade had been productive. In first decade of the twentieth century, Italian imports in Egypt had tripled; Egypt had emerged as an important market for pharmaceutical products, liquors, dairy products, paper from Northern Italy, wine and olive oil from Tuscany, and bread, fruits and other food products from the South of Italy, while Italy imported sugar, cotton, oil, and tobacco from Egypt.

Within their mission of informal empire building, Italian officials perceived Jews as potentially useful participants in the Italian national project abroad. In 1903, the Italian consul general in Egypt reported that Jews from Livorno, a distinct part of the Italian colony in Egypt, were not at the forefront of creating an Italian national culture in Egypt. However, his full description belied that pat characterization, for Jewish Italians in Egypt were “an element of order that represents notable force especially for their financial importance and for the vigilant protection that they have always found under our flag, eliciting a devoted and affection worship

²³ This was part of a long history of encouraging commercial traffic between Italy and Egypt. In May 1860, the consul general of Sardinia received two articles tracing the growth of commerce of the Red Sea and the Orient, which made him hopeful that they would “succeed in the beautiful mission of the development of prosperity of the colony, of its commerce, of its influence and dignity.” Romain Rainero, “La colonia italiana d’Egitto: presenza e vitalità,” in *L’Italia e l’Egitto – dalla rivolta di Arabi Pascià all’avvento del fascismo: 1882-1922*, ed. Romain Rainero and Luigi Serra (Milan: Marzorati Editore, 1991), 127. The Italian consulate in Egypt consistently tracked commercial exchanges between Italy and Egypt, reporting in 1903 on the need to reduce tariffs in order to encourage direct exchanges between Genoa and Alexandria and to create policy driven by the “the spirit that supports transactions between our country and abroad.” Genoa was competing with the shipping lines of Antwerp-Hamburg and Venice, and was being hamstrung by the level of tariffs. Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Ambasciata d’Italia in Alessandria d’Egitto, b. 94 (1903), Rome, Italy.

²⁴ Mark Choate, *Emigrant Nation: The Making of Italy Abroad* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 115.

²⁵ In Tunisia, Jews of Italian descent were at the forefront of the chamber of commerce; in 1903, there were 61 Jewish members of the chamber of commerce out of a total of 110.

towards the homeland and its institutions.”²⁶ The consul characterized Italian Jews as a community that was not only important for their commercial activities, but also because they were sincere in their attachment to Italy. In fact, Italian consular officials often viewed individual Jews as instrumental potential subjects. In 1910, Rodolfo Mizrahi, a French protégé and administrator of the Salonica Cigarette Company, presented himself before the consulate to acquire Italian citizenship. The consul advised that “he would be a practical person to grant Italian citizenship, because he is valued and appreciated and a part of one of the best families of [the Jewish] colony.”²⁷ In another case, the consulate discussed how to handle the case of G. Aghion, who although originally from Livorno, had not “opted for Italian citizenship” in time to complete his military service. The consul eventually concluded that this oversight was not due to malintent, and reasoned that because Aghion belonged to a notable and wealthy Jewish family, “it was in our interest to acquire him for the Italian cause, especially with the various rivalries fighting for the field of moral influence in this country.”²⁸

Jewish petitions for citizenship from the early twentieth century reveal how Jews maneuvered within this perception of their utility for the Italian nation state. In 1913, an Italian Jewish man working in the Sudan sent a letter of recommendation supporting the citizenship request of David Frances, and opened his letter with “the spirit and assurance of doing something good for our country.”²⁹ The letter writer explained that David Frances was born in Salonica and worked for an Italian firm in Sudan, and had expressed a “vital desire to acquire Italian nationality.” The letter of recommendation outlined several important reasons the consul should support this request: his mother was Italian and educated him in “our language”; he has shown

²⁶ Ministero degli Affari Esteri, *Emigrazione e colonie. Raccolta di rapporti degli Agenti diplomatici e consolare*, vol. II (Rome, 1903).

²⁷ ASMAE, Ambasciata d’Italia in Egitto, b. 138 (1913).

²⁸ ASMAE, Ambasciata d’Italia in Egitto, b. 138 (1913).

²⁹ ASMAE, Ambasciata d’Italia in Egitto, b. 138 (1913).

affection for “our country”; he is part of the Italian community in the Sudan; he will aid in introducing Italian goods into Sudan. While David Frances did not have concrete ties to Italy, his recommendation built up his profile as a potential citizen in terms of both deeply held feelings of affection for Italy and more tangible economic benefits. For many who claimed Italian citizenship in Egypt during this time, using the Italian language could represent an important marker of Italian identity. Italian officials and nationalists often moved to interpret an individual’s reliance on Italian for practical reasons as a “*lingua d’uso*” as an expression of internal attachments or national identity as a “*lingua del cuore*.”³⁰ While use of Italian language was generally not sufficient to prove Italian nationality, it was perceived as an important element of these petitions, and the consul was inclined to grant Frances Italian nationality if he was able and willing to renounce his Ottoman nationality.

Over the course of the second half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, migration to Egypt from Italy accelerated and the growing Italian community of Egypt became an increasing object of concern for the Italian state.³¹ In the 1880s and 1890s, earlier waves of migrants comprised of political exiles and merchants were joined by large numbers of skilled and unskilled workers.³² Despite the economic promise of Egypt, many Italian migrants to Egypt faced enormous difficulties, namely poverty. In 1890, the Italian consul reported that “the economic conditions of the Italian colony are, in some years getting worse” and described how many working class migrants, particularly carpenters, masons, and other artisans, were not able

³⁰ This was common in Istria and elsewhere as well. Ballinger, “Borders of the Nation, Borders of Citizenship,” 728.

³¹ In 1901, a new Italian emigration law attempted to help protect emigrants and provide aid, recognizing their right to emigrate and redefining them not only in terms of their departure, but as nationals and citizens. Green and Weil, *Citizenship and Those Who Leave*, 3; Douki, “The Liberal State and Mass Emigration,” 102; Mark Choate, “The Tunisia Paradox,” 23.

³² Hanson has found that wage differentials and economic opportunity provided strong incentives for Italian working- class migration. Bent Hanson, “Wage Differentials in Italy and Egypt: The Incentive to Migrate before World War I,” *Journal of European Economic History* 14 (1985): 351.

to find work and were in a difficult position of competing with local workers who undercut their wages.³³ In 1899, the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of the Interior jointly decided to no longer release passports for Egypt to those who did not have assured work or those who could not demonstrate that they could provide for their eventual repatriation if necessary.³⁴ Despite this provision, the Italian community in Egypt continued to grow. In 1897, the Italian community of Egypt numbered 24,454 individuals, and by 1907, it had reached 34,926.³⁵ In 1905, consul general Giuseppe Salvago Raggi described the economic makeup of the Italian colony: half of the Italians in Egypt are workers, clerks of banks, employees of private administrations, and shop assistants...a quarter of Italians in Egypt are merchants, construction managers, lawyers, engineers, they earn quite a bit.”³⁶

The Italian state was actively involved in efforts to unite Italians at home and abroad in a “Greater Italy,” a transnational project that concurrently sought to reify the power of the Italian nation state.³⁷ Italians appealed time and again to the consulate and Italian authorities for assistance in their daily lives, and the budget of the consulate devoted increasing amounts to supporting impoverished Italians.³⁸ The *Società di Beneficenza*, subsidized by the government, always struggled with lacking enough funds to support the large numbers of indigent Italians in the city.³⁹ In order for Italians to access assistance from the consulate, they first had to prove their Italian nationality. In turn, support from the consulate or Italian charities, whether it was aid for repatriation or subsidized treatment at the hospital, gave the amorphous status of “being

³³ Rainero, “La colonia italiana d’Egitto,” 137.

³⁴ This provision officially lasted for five years. Rainero, “La colonia italiana d’Egitto,” 142.

³⁵ Rainero, “La colonia italiana d’Egitto,” 143.

³⁶ Ministero degli Affari Esteri, *Servizio storico e documentazione: La colonia Italiana in Egitto*, 4 June 1905, 71.

³⁷ Choate, “The Tunisia Paradox,” 13.

³⁸ ASMAE, Ambasciata d’Italia in Egitto, b. 90 (1902-1903).

³⁹ Rainero, “La colonia italiana d’Egitto,” 142.

Italian” tangible weight, and carried the potential to create and solidify bonds among individuals, their surrounding national community, and the faraway nation state.

Historian Shana Minkin argues that although charities in Alexandria were typically labeled as “foreign,” such as “the Jewish hospital” or the *Società Italiana di Beneficenza*, in practice, these charities often served to deeply embed these communities within the local environment. Indeed, the “process by which these institutions bought land, built institutions, negotiated tax breaks, and helped sustain and were sustained by Alexandrians, was a means by which these same organizations redefined who belonged to the city, broadening the definition of local to include their community and themselves.”⁴⁰ Jews from notable Italian families made up close to half of the leadership council of the *Società Italiana di Beneficenza*.⁴¹ In 1904, Augusto Bismot, a Jewish merchant who traced his family’s past to Livorno, donated part of his property to the Italian *Società di Beneficenza* to construct a health clinic for his neighborhood, expressing through his charitable donation a desire to have an impact on his specific community and on the broader fabric of the city.⁴² In 1911, the Italian consulate reported that the Italian community in Egypt supported three charitable societies, twelve mutual aid societies, one organization for sanitary assistance, six educational organizations, two recreation societies, as well as a number of political and commercial groups.⁴³

In this environment, Italian educational, cultural, and economic organizations sought to create and maintain an Italian communal identity, even in the face of deep class, regional, and religious tensions within the colony. By labeling themselves “Italian” and using the Italian

⁴⁰ Shana Minkin, “In Life as in Death: The Port, Foreign Charities, Hospitals and Cemeteries in Alexandria, Egypt, 1865-1915” (Ph.D. thesis, New York University, 2009), 120.

⁴¹ Jews from notable families made up 5 out of 12 counselors. Balboni, *Gli Italiani nella civiltà egiziana*, 268.

⁴² ASMAE, Ambasciata d’Italia in Egitto, b. 94 (1904); Minkin, “In Life as in Death,” 151.

⁴³ ASMAE, Ambasciata d’Italia in Egitto, b. 134 (1911).

language, these clubs, associations, and organizations helped create a sense of collective Italian identity.⁴⁴ However, as historian Anthony Gorman has pointed out, Italian organizations were certainly not uniform or singular, but rather often “served as a forum for internal conflicts that reflected class visions, different social networks and varying commitments of loyalty to the formal Italian state within the broader community.”⁴⁵ Often groups were organized around particular interests or occupational status; there were a number of Italian workers’ organizations active in Egypt, including the *Fratellanza Artigiana Italiana* in Alexandria (established in 1881) and the *Circolo Operaio Italiano* in Cairo (established in 1896).⁴⁶ Above all, charities and associations were spaces for sociability, designated arenas for building relationships with other Italians. Even in groups as philosophically divergent as Masonic lodges or anarchist circles, individuals could find themselves discussing “the international” in a room full of Italians.⁴⁷

The “Italian colony” often defined itself as a singular entity set apart from the various other foreign communities in Alexandria, even when the boundaries were often blurry or overlapping. In 1900, an article in *Il Mattino* castigated Cesare Romano, consul and head of the *Società di Beneficenza*, for abandoning efforts to open an Italian hospital in Alexandria and for suggesting that Italians could be treated at any of the local hospitals. They protested that they did not want impoverished Italians to be sent to the Greek, German, and English hospitals, and

⁴⁴ Anthony Gorman, “The Italians of Egypt: Return to Diaspora,” in *Diasporas of Modern Middle East: Contextualising Community*, eds. Anthony Gorman and Sossie Kasbarian (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 143.

⁴⁵ Gorman, “The Italians of Egypt,” 146.

⁴⁶ Gorman, “The Italians of Egypt,” 146.

⁴⁷ Masonic lodges were very influential in Egypt, and between 1861 and 1914 there were thirty-two masonic lodges, several of which were directly connected with lodges in Italy. Aldo Mola, “Le logge ‘italiane’ in Egitto dall’Unità al Fascismo,” in *L’Italia e l’Egitto – dalla rivolta di Arabi Pascià all’avvento del fascismo: 1882-1922*, ed. Romain Rainero and Luigi Serra (Milan: Marzorati Editore, 1991), 188; Gorman, “The Italians of Egypt,” 163. Masonic lodges were places for social and religious minorities to come together, including Jews, who were very active in the freemason movement. Barbara De Poli, “Il mito dell’Oriente e la espansione massonica italiana nel Levante,” *Storia d’Italia, Annali 21, La Massoneria*, ed. Gian Mario Cazzaniga (Torino: Einaudi, 2006), 634-655. For more on Italian anarchists in Egypt, see Carminati, “Alexandria, 1898.”

particularly refused to allow Italians to be sent to the indigenous hospitals or the Jewish hospital; poor Italians should be allowed the dignity of recovering “where they would recognize the habits, customs, languages.”⁴⁸ The article posits supposedly clear boundaries of behavior – of habits, customs, languages - for Italians in Alexandria, and suggests that these boundaries were internally and externally intelligible and needed to be preserved by Italian leaders. Despite the article’s strong opinion on the matter, Italians in Egypt continued to wrestle with how to actually form an Italian community and the most beneficial ways to support its wellbeing.

In 1917, the Egyptian census reported: “The large Greek and Italian populations are colonies of settlers, who, for long periods of years look upon Egypt as their home, whereas the British...regard Egypt as a foreign country in which, by force of circumstances, they are destined to spend a part of their lives, but do not, as a rule, look forward to the prospect of their children establishing themselves in the country.”⁴⁹ Although generalized, this description highlights a key element of the Italian community in Egypt as it developed during the nineteenth and twentieth century – permanent. Certainly, there were individuals, including seasonal workers, who moved back and forth between Italy and Egypt or who returned to Italy after time in Egypt. However, both Italians and other observers described the Italian community as a fixture in the landscape of Egypt, and Italian officials and nationalists sought to develop the “Italianness” of this community rooted in Egypt.

Once again, the Jewish community of Egypt became a powerful target audience for creating Italians abroad. In 1909, the position of chief rabbi of Alexandria came open, and prominent members of the Italian community in both Egypt and in Italy hoped to bring an Italian rabbi to Alexandria who would “bring honor to our country and prove useful in spreading our

⁴⁸ Balboni, *Gli Italiani nella civiltà egiziana*, vol. 3, 488.

⁴⁹ Lanver Mak, *The British in Egypt: Community, Crime and Crises, 1822-1922* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 23.

influence in Egypt.”⁵⁰ While there were several strong candidates for the post, Professor Raffaele della Pergola emerged as the frontrunner.⁵¹ Consular reports described him favorably as a “man of fine appearance, dignified, a good speaker, cultured and of exquisite education,” who would serve as an able guide for the Jewish community of Egypt towards progress. The reports emphasized the idea that an Italian rabbi must be able to represent, both in name and in spirit, the cultural achievements of Italy from his leadership position in Egypt. The report noted, “He loves the *patria italiana*, however, for his current post in Gorizia he acquired Austrian citizenship. He would certainly be delighted to retake Italian citizenship before becoming chief rabbi of Alexandria.”⁵² These details from the consular investigation reveal the ambiguities of connecting nationality and citizenship, for even though della Pergola was no longer an Italian citizen, he maintained his deep love for Italy, suggesting nationality could be somewhat disregarded; however, if he were to become Chief Rabbi he would need to regain his Italian citizenship in order to expressly formalize his ties to Italy. Indeed, after becoming the chief rabbi of Alexandria, della Pergola was recognized as an Italian and a European in his role as the leader of the Jewish community.⁵³ He gave his sermons in Italian and demonstrated his connection to Italy, frequently returning to Italy for an extended period over the summer.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People (CHAJP), IT Colonie-9, 7 July 1909, Jerusalem, Israel.

⁵¹ S.H. Margolies, the chief rabbi of Florence, was another contender; he was a “master of languages, including Italian, French, German, Latin, Hebrew and Arabic” and “perfectly orthodox in practice” who although not Italian by nationality, “could acquire Italian subjecthood easily enough, and would do so willingly, since he had lived for years in Italy and was very attached to Italian culture and the Italian Jewish community.” The consul also inquired after Dr. Sacerdoti, for not only was he already an Italian citizen, but would have “necessary guarantees of character, talent, culture, respectability and patriotism.” CHAJP, IT Colonie-9, 12 July 1909.

⁵² He was from Florence and 34 years old, and had received a degree not only from the Italian rabbinical college but also a degree in letters and philosophy from an Italian university.

⁵³ “The Alexandrian Jewish Community: Special Interview for the Jewish Chronicle with the Chief Rabbi,” *Jewish Chronicle*, September 30, 1910.

⁵⁴ The newspaper commented that della Pergola’s visit was “too short for him and too long for us.” “Les Retours,” *Revue Israélite d’Égypte*, September 1, 1912.

In the context of imperial rivalries in Egypt, France, Britain, and Italy all looked to the Jewish community in attempts to expand their cultural influence.⁵⁵ In 1909, the Italian government and Dante Alighieri Society embarked on a prolonged endeavor to support Italian education in Jewish schools in Egypt. Italian had served as the principle language of instruction in the Jewish community schools of Alexandria until 1905, when it was switched to French. In a 1909 letter, the Italian Consul De Martino chronicled his efforts to bring Italian language instruction back into the Jewish communal schools of Cairo and Alexandria, asserting that “this will be valuable work of Italian affirmation in this country and advantageous to increasing our moral influence.”⁵⁶ For De Martino, reaching a Jewish audience had specific value, pointing out their prominent place within the Italian community in Egypt as Italian citizens and in wider Egyptian commercial, social, and political circles. Particularly with the dramatic growth of working class Italians in Egypt, the largely middle-class makeup of the Jewish community became more appealing for Italian officials. De Martino stated firmly that “Jews of Italian citizenship constitute a precious element of moral and material prosperity in our colony,” before offering further support for his conclusions in the form of a hypothetical scenario: “Without a doubt, removing Jewish Italians from our colony in Cairo and Alexandria would offer a much smaller base of wealth and economic activity.”⁵⁷ De Martino came to the idea of supporting Italian lessons in Jewish schools after a walk in a cemetery in the desert, where he observed that the inscriptions on the tombstones were mostly written in Hebrew and Italian. He felt determined to prove that this long connection between Italy and the Jewish community of Egypt was not only consigned to the dead and the distant past, but rather continued to have relevance, for “by

⁵⁵ In 1911, the French press published harsh criticism of efforts to teach Italian in the Jewish community, and the British watched carefully as an English teacher was proposed for the communal schools, but was not hired due to lack of funding.

⁵⁶ ASMAE, *Ambasciata d’Italia in Egitto*, b. 118 (1909).

⁵⁷ ASMAE, *Ambasciata d’Italia in Egitto*, b. 118 (1909).

ancient tradition, and enforced by the enlightened policies of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, Italy enjoys to this day the vivid and sincere sympathies of the Jews of the Levant.”⁵⁸ As proper instruction cultivated Italian speakers, they would subsequently develop Italian sentiment on an individual level and support Italian culture and power on an international level.

Soon after, De Martino met with Moise Cattaoui, the leader of the Jewish community, and discussed provisions for choosing and subsidizing an Italian instructor for the Jewish schools.⁵⁹ De Martino’s believed that Italian financial support of the position would be a positive factor because it was “a reason for interference in the school and we can monitor and make sure that the teacher is teaching with a ‘true spirit of *italianità*.’”⁶⁰ On the heels of subsidizing Italian instruction at the Jewish school for boys, De Martino planned to also introduce Italian instruction in the Jewish girls’ schools both in Cairo and Alexandria. De Martino argued that reaching the 380 students in the “flourishing and well-organized school” was an opportunity that ought not to be missed. As justification for his efforts, he again referenced the importance of the Jewish “element” in Egypt, before musing that “many students in the schools are also of Italian nationality.”⁶¹ Underpinning De Martino’s strategy was the hope of giving meaning and attachment to more instrumental notions of nationality. Even if not all the students in the Jewish schools were Italian citizens, which in fact they weren’t, their endeavors would still be worthwhile. There continued to be efforts to promote Italian courses in the curriculum of Jewish schools, including Italian literature courses; the move to support literature classes was a clear indication of an attempt to move from teaching a language for its utility to also teaching it for its

⁵⁸ ASMAE, Ambasciata d’Italia in Egitto, b. 118 (1909).

⁵⁹ De Martino explained this would follow the same pattern as for French and English teachers that were subsidized for a few years by each government before the cost was taken over by the Jewish community. ASMAE, Ambasciata d’Italia in Egitto, b. 118 (1909).

⁶⁰ ASMAE, Ambasciata d’Italia in Egitto, b. 118 (1909).

⁶¹ ASMAE, Ambasciata d’Italia in Egitto, b. 128 (1911).

cultural relevance.⁶² In 1911, Breccia reported that the Dante Alighieri society had sent funding, books, scholastic material, and maps of Italy to the schools of the Jewish community, including the schools of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU), even though the AIU was associated with a specifically French “civilizing mission.”⁶³ The leaders of the Italian and Jewish community perceived Italian investment in Jewish schools as a positive development, although with some subtle differences. Moise de Cattaoui was an Austrian subject, yet he rejected the offer of the Austrian consul to subsidize German language instruction in Jewish schools and threw his weight behind supporting the Italian curriculum. While De Martino conceptualized teaching language in terms of nationalist sentiment and imperial influence, de Cattaoui’s actions suggest that he saw Italian in terms of its usefulness for the Jewish community.

The Dante Alighieri Society in Egypt: The Fear of Decline and The Promise of Culture

In 1905, the Consul General of Italy in Cairo, Giuseppe Salvago Raggi, reported that a number of the Italians in Egypt “are Italian in name only.”⁶⁴ In this context, the leadership of the Italian community needed to find ways to bring depth and texture to Italian life in Egypt. The following section will closely examine the activities and concerns of the Dante Alighieri Society in order to highlight important elements of the layered cultural landscape of Italians in Egypt. In the early twentieth century, the *Società Dante Alighieri* became a particularly prominent advocate of mobilizing Italian language and culture to forge a path forward for Italians abroad. The Dante Alighieri Society was founded in Rome in 1889 with an explicit purpose to “protect

⁶² ASMAE, Ambasciata d’Italia in Egitto, b. 128 (1911).

⁶³ The Dante Alighieri Society also sponsored a first aid class in Italian at the AIU school. Letter from Breccia to Avv. Zaccagnini, 6 January 1911, Archivio Storico della Società Dante Alighieri (ASDA), f. 18A, Alessandria d’Egitto (1896-1918), Rome, Italy.

⁶⁴ Ministero degli Affari Esteri, *Servizio storico e documentazione, La colonia Italiana in Egitto*, 4 June 1905, 71.

and spread Italian language and culture outside of the Kingdom of Italy.”⁶⁵ In 1895, Dante Alighieri committees were established in Alexandria, Suez, and Port Said, and in 1898, a committee formed in Cairo. The mission of the Dante Alighieri Society fundamentally connected Italians in Egypt to Italy itself as well as to a wide network of Italian diaspora communities worldwide. The Dante Alighieri committee in Alexandria was in regular communication with the central committee in Rome, and was deeply concerned about the treatment of Italians around the world.⁶⁶ The Dante Alighieri Society operated on intersecting geographic scales as a local, national, and transnational organization, developing a notion of Italian identity in Egypt that formed the framework of a diaspora community.

In the early twentieth century, a chorus of Italian voices in Egypt despaired about the declining influence of the Italian language, and therefore, Italian culture and influence writ large. During the nineteenth century, Italian functioned as a *lingua franca* throughout the Mediterranean world, serving as an official language of the Egyptian court system, consulate offices, merchant firms, and even the postal service until it was switched to French in 1876.⁶⁷ However, by the end of the nineteenth century, Italian observers repeatedly noted with concern that the Italian language was losing ground to French and English in the city. In 1901, the Italian consul in Cairo, Salvatore Tugini, wrote with some measure of dismay that “following the British occupation, in spite of the decline of French political influence in Egypt, the French

⁶⁵ The Dante Alighieri Society was most active in North Africa and the Middle East (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Greece), in Latin America (Argentina, Brazil) and in Europe (Switzerland). Beatrice Pisa, *Nazione e politica nella Società ‘Dante Alighieri’* (Rome: Bonacci Editore, 1995), 17. In Egypt, it was a “necessity to maintain cordial relations with all the foreign colonies” and to maintain the “eminently apolitical character of Dante, in order to conserve the benevolence of local authorities that would be alienated by a demonstration even in the slightest way hostile to other colonies.” Report of meeting of committee by Anselmo Morpurgo, 3 December 1908, ASDA, f. 18A, Alessandria d’Egitto (1896-1918).

⁶⁶ The Central Council of the Dante Alighieri, headquartered in Rome, received government subsidies and provided the branches in Egypt with thousands of francs annually for operation expenses.

⁶⁷ Balboni, *Gli Italiani nella civiltà egiziana*, vol. 3, 480.

language remains the most used in administrative offices...the English language is also beginning to be more in use.”⁶⁸ And explorer Federico Bonola-Bey recalled:

those who arrived in those times in Egypt [mid nineteenth century] found that the language of government, family, market, uses, customs, and pleasures all gave the impression that new Egypt was a son of Italy. But times change: new events, new combinations created new influences, and Italy, absorbed with the work of national reconstruction, did not give the colony any direction for its internal life, and it could not retain the post.⁶⁹

According to Bonola-Bey, Italy had turned inward as a new nation state, rather than outward, and its dominant place in the Mediterranean world seemed to be slipping away. However, Bonola-Bey concluded that this pessimistic report ultimately “did not mean that Italians don’t individually feel proud of their past” and “uphold their feelings with actions when they can.”⁷⁰

In spite of the difficulties facing the Italian colony, or perhaps because of them, the Dante Alighieri society in Egypt seized for itself the mantle of defending Italian interests and promoting *italianità*, asserting that if the modern Italian state could not use military power to win battles abroad, it should endow its people with the knowledge and culture that would subsequently garner the sympathy and respect of others.⁷¹ The letters of the Dante Alighieri committee often alternate between viewing the Italian colony with a sense of decline from the primacy of the past and viewing the colony as a yet-powerful conduit for expanding Italian influence. In 1900, Francesco Fera, secretary of the local committee, lamented the stalled progress of the Dante Alighieri Society in Alexandria, writing “these are sad days for Italian

⁶⁸ Rainero, “La colonia italiana d’Egitto,” 134.

⁶⁹ As one observer noted in 1863, “the Italian language is, after Arabic, the most generalized in Egypt. All Levantines and Greeks speak it well enough and the Arabs that deal frequently or trade with Europeans speak broken Italian by necessity.” Gorman, “The Italians of Egypt,” 145. Balboni, *Gli Italiani nella civiltà egiziana*, vol. 3, 478.

⁷⁰ Balboni, *Gli Italiani nella civiltà egiziana*, vol. 3, 478.

⁷¹ Patrizia Salvetti, *Immagine nazionale ed emigrazione nella Società ‘Dante Alighieri’* (Rome: Bonacci Editore, 1995), 54.

souls...particularly in comparison to past vitality.”⁷² Yet, in 1904, local president Luigi Biagini sent a report to the central committee in Rome that confidently characterized the Italian colony as ready and waiting for the work of the Dante Society, explaining, “Italians [almost 60 thousand] even after many generations here, remain Italian by nationality, by language, and by feeling, and they don’t run any risk of being assimilated or absorbed.”⁷³ Inflected with exaggeration, Biagini’s report nonetheless reveals a conception of the interconnected areas of nationality, language, and feeling, and their key importance for creating the hearts and minds of Italians in Egypt. The Dante Alighieri committee promoted *italianità* through concerts, conferences, libraries, publications, and schools; concerts and theater performances were considered particularly valuable because of their broad appeal to different members of the community, including women and families.⁷⁴

In Egypt, the members of the Dante Alighieri committee saw themselves as being on the front lines of the struggle to establish the framework and foundations of the larger Italian community. The leadership of the Dante Alighieri committee was largely comprised of well-educated men of high social standing.⁷⁵ They invoked a type of bourgeois “civilizing mission,” fearing that new generations of Italians abroad, particularly the working classes, would lose their cultural patrimony without their intervention. The Dante Alighieri Society focused their attentions on using Italian language and literacy as the tools to establishing a national community abroad and breaking down regional loyalties. Many Italian Jewish men were active in the Dante

⁷² Letter from Francesco Fera, 8 August 1900, ASDA, f. 18A, Alessandria d’Egitto (1896-1918).

⁷³ Salvetti, *Immagine nazionale ed emigrazione*, 54.

⁷⁴ In 1899, Gabriele Pereira donated the volumes of his personal library to the Italian colony to form the basis of a new national library. Reports on social meetings of Dante Alighieri, 32 December 1911, ASDA, f. 18A, Alessandria d’Egitto (1896-1918).

⁷⁵ The first committee was made up of Luigi Biagini, Dott. Giuseppe Botti, Prof. Francesca Fera and Raffaele Loria (president of national society). For more descriptions of the makeup of the early committees, see: Balboni, *Gli Italiani nella civiltà egiziana*, vol. 3, 231.

Alighieri Society and felt connected to its goal of spreading Italian culture; for example, at the association's 1910 congress in Perugia, five of the eight delegates were from prominent Italian Jewish families. In Egypt, there were thirty-seven Jewish members out of 218 (or sixteen percent), and in Tunisia, the proportion of Jewish participants in the Dante Alighieri society was even higher. Jewish participation in Italian organizations such as the Dante Alighieri can at least be partially explained by their generally higher socio-economic status in relation to the larger Italian community in Egypt. Being part of an Italian civilizing mission in Egypt both for working class Italians and local Egyptians was a message that resonated with a subset of the Jewish community that was bourgeois and had longstanding familial and commercial connections to Italy. For example, in 1912, G. Valensin, described by the president of the Dante Alighieri as "one of the most well-established and notable co-nationals in Alexandria," instituted an annual prize for the best student of Italian among local Egyptian students.⁷⁶

Jews framed their participation in the Dante Alighieri society and other Italian cultural organizations in terms of being Italian, and not as Italian Jews. In general, the Dante Alighieri Society did not comment on whether or not another member was Jewish, except perhaps in coded references, largely positive, to being "well-established and notable." However, in at least one instance, a leader of the Dante Alighieri committee demonstrated some ambivalence towards Jewish participation in Italian causes. In 1902, Francesco Fera reported to the central committee in Rome that the Dante Alighieri committee was struggling to find its footing and assert its preeminence in decisions about Italian education in Egypt. He reported that G. Valensin, then head of the Pro-Schola association, wanted a monopoly over all scholastic questions, and the consul was currently "surrounded by a Jewish current" and inclined to support Pro-Schola's

⁷⁶ Letter from Breccia, 16 November 1912, ASDA, f. 18A, Alessandria d'Egitto (1896-1918).

positions.⁷⁷ Fera's concern over the power and influence of Jews in the Italian consulate had an undercurrent of antisemitism. However, the archives leave this episode unresolved. Certainly, Italian organizations abroad were often marked in general by internal conflict and tension among different positions. Francesco Fera continue to be active in the Dante Alighieri committee and to work closely alongside Jews in this capacity; in 1909, Anselmo Morpurgo, an Italian Jew serving as the committee's president, proposed honoring Fera and spent three pages enumerating his many deeds of service to the Italian cause.⁷⁸

The Dante Alighieri centered its actions on developing Italian educational initiatives and strengthening the network of Italian schools in Egypt. Nationalists in Italy and abroad had long focused on schools as the fundamental training grounds of new generations of Italians. The first "Italian schools" in Egypt were established by religious orders, a secular school was set up by the masonic lodges in 1858, and another Italian secular school was founded in 1862.⁷⁹ However, it was not until 1889 under the Crispi government that the first true network of Italian state schools abroad was established. Crispi connected Italy's imperial mission with its efforts to maintain ties with Italians abroad, particularly through building Italian schools, and considered Italian educators "as new apostles of civilization," who through their examples and sacrifice would "honor the moral greatness of their nation" and "conquer the hearts of the coming

⁷⁷ Letter from Francesco Fera to Villari, 1902, ASDA, f. 18A, Alessandria d'Egitto (1896-1918).

⁷⁸ Letter from Anselmo Morpurgo to Conte Samminiatielli, 25 July 1909, ASDA, f. 18A, Alessandria d'Egitto (1896-1918).

⁷⁹ In 1869, an Italian government commission noted with despair the rising influence of France in the Middle East, especially through French support of Catholic mission schools abroad, and suggested that the Italian government set aside money to open an Italian high school "in an area central to the colonies" with "which could become a great school for commerce and for eastern civilization, a training ground for consulates and interpreters, and a complement to the education of all Italians, who want to learn languages and special knowledge of Orient"; Egypt emerged as a strong potential location due to the growing Italian population and developing commercial opportunities. Balboni, *Gli Italiani nella civiltà egiziana*, vol. 3, 168-169.

generation.”⁸⁰ Following Crispi’s focus on the Mediterranean, in 1901 only 1.10 percent of the state subsidies for foreign schools went to Italian schools in the Americas while 9/10 (900,000 lire) went to Tunisia, Tripolitania, Egypt, Greece, and Ottoman Empire.⁸¹

Although Italian schools abroad, and particularly in the Mediterranean, had long been a focus of national attention, at the turn of the twentieth century, the Dante Alighieri Society despaired over the state of the Italian education system in Egypt. Reports to the central committee consistently complained that Italian schools in Egypt were suffering from a lack of funding, educational materials, qualified teachers, and adequate buildings.⁸² The letters of the local committee often present stark images of Italian parents forced by the conditions in Italian schools to send their children to foreign schools. It is important to note that school choice did not necessarily reveal feelings and attachments of Italians; for even if elite Italians sent their children to the *Lycée Française*, where they were taught in French, they could spend summers in Italy, speak Italian at home, or develop other ties to Italy.⁸³ However, in the minds of the leadership of the Dante Alighieri, education was the surest path to inculcating the idea of *italianità* in new generations of Italians, despite the difficulties they faced. In 1901, Dott. Mauri, serving on a committee for the reordering of Italian schools in Alexandria, noted that while foreign schools

⁸⁰ Balboni, *Gli Italiani nella civiltà egiziana*, vol. 3, 191. Other Italian administrations did not focus as much attention or resources on schools abroad. However, by the mid-1930s, there were 64 elementary, secondary, evening and technical schools sponsored by the Italian state in Egypt. Gorman, “The Italians of Egypt,” 144.

⁸¹ In 1902, the Dante committee of Tunisia opposed reductions in state funding for Italian schools in the Mediterranean, arguing that support should be determined “not so much by the number of local Italians who would probably attend the schools, as much as by the stature and importance of Italy’s traditional interests in these countries.” Choate, *Emigrant Nation*, 113.

⁸² In order to fulfill their mission in Egypt, educators needed not only to be able to teach their students pride in Italian civilization and achievements, but also needed to have a “special knowledge of the local environment and of local attitudes and customs, languages,” so that they could effectively relate to their students in their lives as “faraway connationals.” The Dante Alighieri repeatedly called for support provided by Foreign Ministry and Ministry of Instruction to train teachers abroad. Report on Instruction, 1911, ASDA, f. 18A, Alessandria d’Egitto (1896-1918).

⁸³ Anouchka Lazarev, “La colonia italiana: una identità ambigua,” in *L’Italia e l’Egitto – dalla rivolta di Arabi Pascià all’avvento del fascismo: 1882-1922*, ed. Romain Rainero and Luigi Serra (Milan: Marzorati Editore, 1991), 181.

had made improvements to their buildings and course offerings in order to “attract the best elements in Alexandria,” producing students who went on to attend French universities or become doctors and lawyers, Italian schools remained “schools for the children of the people” producing “modest employees and small clerks.”⁸⁴ Italian schools were growing, but only numerically, Mauri lamented, “because the poor part of our colony is growing, growing because of the 500 foreigners that attend, it is only poor foreigners because they are free... our schools are considered the schools of the poor!”⁸⁵ The Dante Alighieri committee was concerned that Italian schools were not appealing to the “best elements,” constraining their cultural influence with alarming implications for the future of the Italian colony.

On the other hand, educating working class Italians in Egypt was central to the expansive mission of the Dante Alighieri. The bourgeois leaders of the Dante Alighieri were increasingly aware of the need to educate the working classes in order to harness their social and political power.⁸⁶ They felt that working-class men, women, and children had less opportunity to pursue learning and culture, and thus were more vulnerable to adopting other languages in use in Alexandria or retaining regional Italian dialects. The growing numbers of the working class in the city meant that their needs could not be ignored. Unlike French cultural institutions abroad that only focused on elites, the Dante Alighieri Society was particularly committed to sponsoring night classes for working class adults that would be “effective in promoting national propaganda

⁸⁴ In his report, Mauri dramatically insisted how disappointed Francesco Crispi would be in the distance between his dreams and reality. Letter from M. Mauri to Pasquale Villari, November 1901, Balboni, *Gli Italiani nella civiltà egiziana*, vol. 3, 172.

⁸⁵ Letter from M. Mauri to Pasquale Villari, November 1901, Balboni, *Gli Italiani nella civiltà egiziana*, vol. 3, 172.

⁸⁶ Worried that the French were trying to take over the Free Popular University in Egypt, created as a form of free education for the working classes, the Dante Alighieri Society supported courses of Italian literature and sociology and planned for history courses on the medieval era, ancient Rome, and the Risorgimento. Letter from M. Mauri to G. Marcotti, 12 January 1903, ASDA, f. 18A, Alessandria d’Egitto (1896-1918). Anthony Gorman, “Anarchists in Education: The Free Popular University in Egypt (1901),” *Middle Eastern Studies* 41, 3 (2005): 306.

and culture in general,” with a special focus on expanding literacy.⁸⁷ The Dante Alighieri also sought to reach the working classes by funding classes on technical skills and practical subjects, such as training in artisanship, draftsmanship, and accounting. In 1902, committee member Mondolfo reported to the President of the Dante Alighieri in Rome about the free school of applied art and industry, Leonardo da Vinci, founded by *Società Operaia* in Cairo in 1890, where they taught in Italian. A prominent Italian Jewish lawyer, Ugo Lusena Bey, served as president of the local committee and director of the school.⁸⁸ In 1908, the night courses enrolled 252 students of all nationalities; however, many of the students were not Italian, but native Egyptians with some basic knowledge of Italian hoping to improve their skills. The committee concluded that even if not all the students were Italian, it was still worth the investment of time and money for both the “sympathy that slowly grows amongst native Egyptians for Italy” and the potential possibilities of furthering the education of working-class Italians.⁸⁹

A recurring matter of debate for the local leaders was whether or not they ought to support schools under religious sponsorship; as an organization, Dante Alighieri Society promoted laicism and secular education, but in Alexandria, this presented a logistical dilemma. In April 1898, G. Verità, a representative of the National Italian Association for the Aid of Catholic Missionaries, sent a message to the President of Dante Alighieri in Rome, Pasquale Villari, acknowledging that Dante Alighieri was a secular organization, but asserting that it did not necessarily have to be anticlerical. Casting the debate in the terms of imperial rivalries, he pointed to French governmental support of schools led by religious orders as the reason the influence of France had risen in comparison to Italy’s decline; these schools were widely

⁸⁷ Letter from M. Mauri to A. Jona, 21 October 1903, ASDA, f. 18A, Alessandria d’Egitto (1896-1918).

⁸⁸ In 1901, the Dante Alighieri Society assumed direction of the school. ASDA, f. 18A, Alessandria d’Egitto (1896-1918).

⁸⁹ Report of 1908, ASDA, f. 18A, Alessandria d’Egitto (1896-1918).

recognized as “good schools” and therefore enrolled many Italian students, by some counts over five hundred.⁹⁰ The local leadership in Alexandria was extremely divided on how to approach religious schools.⁹¹ In 1902, the committee decided to give financial support to the school of the Roman Catholic Salesians. This first move opened the door to support for further religious institutions, and the committee suggested also thinking about giving aid to the schools of the Franciscans and the Jewish community since they were “institutions that are just as worthy of benevolent consideration.”⁹² As we have seen, the Italian state and Dante Alighieri did eventually give subsidies and support to Jewish schools in the city.

However, this continued to be a subject of intense debate, concern, and reflection as the Dante Alighieri struggled to determine what characterized worthy educational ventures and the kinds of Italians that would emerge from religious schools. In 1905, delegates from Alexandria at the Dante Alighieri Society’s annual congress reflected on the necessity of modern, efficient, and completely secular schools in Egypt, “above all to reclaim for Italians in Egypt the liberty of thought for their own children.”⁹³ Fera envisioned “absolutely lay schools... relying on texts that are in use in Italy, and with the animating spirit of teaching sincerely Italian memory, history, and geography; never to return to clerical style.”⁹⁴ For Fera, the religion of the *patria* and patriotic feeling ought to be the dominant force in Italian education abroad, with all of the

⁹⁰ Salvetti, *Immagine nazionale ed emigrazione*, 50.

⁹¹ This was also complicated by longstanding tension between the Catholic church and the modern Italian state. The committee noted that some elements of the colony were liberal exiles of the Risorgimento and not inclined to sympathize with religious orders.

⁹² Letter from M. Mauri to G. Marcotti, 22 July 1902, ASDA, f. 18A, Alessandria d’Egitto (1896-1918).

⁹³ Salvetti, *Immagine nazionale ed emigrazione*, 55; Balboni, *Gli Italiani nella civiltà egiziana*, vol. 3, 244.

⁹⁴ Letter from Francesco Fera, 8 August 1900, ASDA, f. 18A, Alessandria d’Egitto (1896-1918).

concomitant political, cultural, and economic implications of focusing on this type of knowledge.⁹⁵

The Dante Alighieri Society, while focused on reaching students of Italian nationality, also believed in expanding the reach of Italy outward to others, to exporting *italianità* broadly. Improving Italian education in Egypt would have a positive impact by also “attract[ing] foreign workers, with the advantage that *italianità* will create more understanding for the Italian government.”⁹⁶ The committee noted that just as Italian students attended religious or foreign schools, French, Austrians, Greeks, and Arabs also attended Italian schools.⁹⁷ In 1908, the council reported that the budget allocated for next year had sums sufficient for introducing Italian language courses in foreign schools. However, the Greek and German schools refused this offer, since they already taught two or three languages in the curriculum and thought it would be hard to fit Italian in the schedule; the offer was ultimately accepted by an Egyptian school serving “local students.”⁹⁸ The Italian community was always one among many groups living and working in Egypt, and various attempts to advance the influence of Italian language and culture served not only to potentially connect Italians in Egypt to Italy, but also to inform how they perceived their neighbors and interacted with their surroundings.

The leadership of the Dante Alighieri society consistently felt frustrated that years of efforts to improve Italian education in Egypt had not yet brought enough positive outcomes.⁹⁹ In

⁹⁵ At the 1905 national congress, delegates from Alexandria expressed the desire that all Italians in Egypt would be educated in Italian schools and outlined the following program: schools would teach patriotism, stories of Italian heroes and martyrs, modern scientific and literary studies, classical studies, and practical courses in accounting, modern languages, and commerce.

⁹⁶ Letter from M. Mauri to Italian Consul in Alexandria, 21 October 1903, ASDA, f. 18A, Alessandria d’Egitto (1896-1918).

⁹⁷ Salvetti, *Immagine nazionale ed emigrazione*, 51.

⁹⁸ Report of 1908, ASDA, f. 18A, Alessandria d’Egitto (1896-1918).

⁹⁹ In a misguided effort in 1908, the committee spent most of the 10,000 franks it earned by fundraising on a statue of Dante Alighieri to be gifted to the city. However, not only did the statue take away any option of improving night

1910, an examination of Italian schools in Alexandria revealed that: “the ways that our schools are now organized barely fulfill the purpose for which they were created. They don’t have courses necessary for students to be admitted to universities in Italy, they don’t attract the native poor or foreigners of other colonies, and they also force many Italians to send their kids to foreign schools that have complete secondary courses... and only one free elementary school doesn’t satisfy the needs of all the colony.”¹⁰⁰ The committee suggested the following reforms: to institute a fee-based elementary school; to complete a secondary school with courses necessary for university and make diplomas issued in Egypt valid for entry; to implement Italian language and literature courses in secondary schools for native Egyptians; to start an Italian school for girls. Examining these daunting propositions, the local President Evaristo Breccia, stated “The Italian colony of Alexandria, roused recently from its long lethargy, shows interest today in all the questions regarding the influence of Italian culture and language in Egypt, and never has there been more propitious moment to take action with this demonstrated interest in the associations.”¹⁰¹ However, a month later, the committee of Alexandria expressed its concern that the Italian parliament had not yet taken up the issue of reform of schools abroad, a “scholastic betrayal,” for although the Dante Alighieri Society intervened energetically, they were in danger not only because of the “continuation of current deplorable conditions, but also because it signaled a loss of faith in the government and the associations that assumed the protection of the schools.”¹⁰² In 1913, the local Alexandria branch of the *Istituto Coloniale*

courses and distributing prizes in schools, but the statue was also damaged in a fire, and there was an anti-Italian protest in the city about erection of the monument. Report, 11 July 1908, ASDA, f. 18A, Alessandria d’Egitto (1896-1918).

¹⁰⁰ Report, 14 March 1910, ASDA, f. 18A, Alessandria d’Egitto (1896-1918). The Italian high school was currently attached to a commercial school, and the committee wanted to create a separate high school with the courses and teachers that could attract Italian and foreign students who were currently drawn to other schools. Report, 23 September 1910, ASDA, f. 18A, Alessandria d’Egitto (1896-1918).

¹⁰¹ Letter from E. Breccia to D. Samminiattelli, 15 March 1910, ASDA, f. 18A, Alessandria d’Egitto (1896-1918).

¹⁰² Letter from E. Breccia to D. Samminiattelli, 26 May 1910, ASDA, f. 18A, Alessandria d’Egitto (1896-1918).

Italiano, led by Italian Jews R. Lusena and A. Ambron, worked alongside the Dante Alighieri Society and issued an official statement of purpose that proclaimed its disappointment in the Italian government and reaffirmed the role of Italian schools abroad as the agents and symbols of “political renewal, civil force, and renewal of national fortunes.”¹⁰³

Participating in the Dante Alighieri and other Italian cultural organizations offered Jews entrée into a national community in a way that did not seem incongruous with their life in Egypt. Unlike other Italian migrants to Egypt who often preferred to speak in regional dialects, Italian Jews spoke Italian and often made use of Italian schools.¹⁰⁴ Many of the Jewish families involved in Italian organizations were not new arrivals, but had lived in Egypt for centuries. In some ways, being rooted and familiar with the Egyptian context allowed Italian Jews to act out their Italian nationality. In a 1910 letter to Rome, Anselmo Morpurgo expressed his concerns over the harmful divisions he saw in the Italian community in Egypt. He wrote, “I was born in Alexandria and I have lived here forty years of my life,” before crossing it out to say “I was born in Alexandria and I have lived here almost always.”¹⁰⁵ Positioning himself as a “local,” Morpurgo also spoke as an Italian patriot, weighing in on the debates racking the community over where to locate the new Italian school.¹⁰⁶ In proving how ambiguous or ambivalent national categories were in Alexandria, historians such as Will Hanley often discount the affective dimension of this status and the potential for these sentiments to have force in the lives of individuals. However, in salient moments and spaces, Italian Jews experienced genuine

¹⁰³ ASMAE, *Ambasciata d’Italia in Egitto*, b. 138 (1913).

¹⁰⁴ The standard form of Italian has its origins in the regional dialect of Tuscany.

¹⁰⁵ Morpurgo left Alexandria to live in Florence for health reasons in 1909. Letter from A. Morpurgo, 21 February 1910, ASDA, f. 18A, *Alessandria d’Egitto* (1896-1918).

¹⁰⁶ The building was set to be in a neighborhood near a cemetery. While some were concerned about issues of health and disease, Morpurgo assured the leadership that in his expertise, the neighborhood was airy and the proximity to the cemetery would not cause disease. The location was advantageous because it was “near students we want to attract.”

connections to cultural and social meanings of “being Italian,” even as “being Italian” often coexisted with other social and cultural allegiances.

The Social Spaces and Activities of the Jewish Community of Egypt

In the early twentieth century, Jews in Egypt navigated a rapidly changing economic, political, and social context, renewing a commitment to communal institutions as spaces to construct themselves as individuals and as a community. This next section will examine specific expressions and practices of Jewishness in early twentieth Alexandria, adding to our understanding of individual’s overlapping and multilayered understandings of religious, national, and cultural belonging. In 1904, a teacher at the AIU school described the dynamic Jewish community of Alexandria: “In Alexandria, where the mounting flood of immigrants becomes more noticeable every day. A cosmopolitan environment par excellence, our city hosts a most heterogenous population, where individuals of the most diverse origins cross paths... our institutions [i.e. the Alliance schools] thus offer the spectacle of a little world of the strangest diversity. The indigenous Arab and Syrian element has been joined by the European element, made up largely of Spaniards, Italians, and Rumanians. Each group has a character of its own, special features that make it easily distinguishable from the rest.”¹⁰⁷ Writing about the Jewish community of Alexandria with a large degree of ambivalence and stereotyping, the Alliance teacher nonetheless captured the diversity of social class, language, rituals, and origins encapsulated in the Jewish community.¹⁰⁸ In response to an interview question about the difference between “native Jews and Europeans” in Alexandria, chief rabbi Raffaele della

¹⁰⁷ The writer reduced the common interests of the Jewish community to the love and pursuit of money. Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt*, 75.

¹⁰⁸ At multiple points in time, the Ashkenazi tried to split off from the Sephardi community and form their own communal structure, in which they could practice their own rites and operate with a separate budget and leadership. Jacob Landau, *Jews in Nineteenth Century Egypt* (New York: New York University Press, 1969), 26-28. Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt*, 9.

Pergola answered confidently but inconclusively that there was “hardly” any differences between the two groups, “but in certain cases the difference is quite remarkable.”¹⁰⁹ The Jewish communities of Egypt expanded dramatically in the early twentieth century, growing from 25,000 in 1897 to over 60,000 in 1920. Although Jews in Alexandria often framed themselves and their identity within a single, local Jewish community, it was in fact much more complex beneath the surface, often converging or diverging with ideas of citizenship and social class.

In a 1912 interview with the *Jewish Chronicle*, the headmaster of the Jewish Free Schools, N. Carsenti was asked if the school limited admission to Sephardi Jews and responded with dismay and outrage, “Oh no! We have a good number of Russian Jewish children, and we make absolutely no distinction between German and Portuguese Jews.”¹¹⁰ His mission was larger than these divisions, to educate young Jews and “to kindle an ardent Jewish feeling in their hearts.”¹¹¹ The community schools included free kindergarten and primary schools for the lower classes of both sexes and the Ecole Fondation de Menasce, a school for poor Jewish boys founded in 1885 by Baron de Menasce. In the interview, Carsenti emphasized that the community chose to situate the new free school founded in 1907 in the European quarter, even if it was farther from the students’ homes, because it allowed students to breathe healthy air and observe the sights of higher classes, which would offer them improvement.¹¹² Students were taught in French, Arabic, Hebrew, and Italian, and while Carsenti acknowledged that teaching

¹⁰⁹ “The Alexandrian Jewish Community: Special Interview for the *Jewish Chronicle* with the Chief Rabbi,” *Jewish Chronicle*, September 30, 1910.

¹¹⁰ “Jewish Education in Alexandria. Interview for the *Jewish Chronicle* with the Headmaster of the Jewish Free School,” *Jewish Chronicle*, September 8, 1912.

¹¹¹ “Jewish Education in Alexandria. Interview for the *Jewish Chronicle* with the Headmaster of the Jewish Free School,” *Jewish Chronicle*, September 8, 1912.

¹¹² By selling real estate owned by the community in 1904, the Jewish community was able to build and open a new school in 1907. But when the economic crisis of 1907 hit, the treasury was empty and poverty on the increase. Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt*, 80. This concern over a “healthy environment,” as also seen in Morpurgo’s discussion of the location for the Italian school, tied into a common theme in public discourse surrounding public health in the city. For more, see: Minkin, “In Life as in Death” and Michael Reimer, “Reorganizing Alexandria: The Origins and History of Conseil de l’Ornato,” *Journal of Urban History* 19, 3 (1993): 55-83.

English would be a good idea, he recognized that most of his students wouldn't be able to pursue the upper level or administrative jobs that required English.¹¹³ Carsenti highlighted the importance of giving his poor Jewish students a practical education, while also opening their eyes to ideas of self-improvement and "kindling an ardent Jewish feeling." In 1912, the Jewish press in Egypt reported that the free schools of the community enrolled 1,950 students, and although the school committee tried to accept highest numbers of students possible, it had to turn away 250 students.¹¹⁴

Alongside the free schools administrated by the Jewish community, the schools of the Alliance Israélite Universelle were also part of the educational network of Jewish schools in Egypt. The Alliance founded its first school in Egypt in 1897. A report of the 1909 exam of students, described the "educational equipment" given to students, which "fully enables them to make their way in the world."¹¹⁵ The curriculum included English, French, Arabic, Hebrew, bookkeeping, and commercial correspondence. When the French consul examined the students in arithmetic and sciences, they succeeded admirably. Because attending the Alliance Schools required paying school fees, the students were mostly drawn from middle and lower middle class families who could afford to pay the tuition.¹¹⁶ While the AIU notably defined its mission in terms of a complete transformation of the Jewish communities of the East in the image of the French Jewish community, the Egyptian Jewish community was not solely a passive audience in

¹¹³ On the other hand, Italian was taught because the Italian government has "kindly offered to give the more intelligent of our boys a commercial training in its technical school. A knowledge of Italian is absolutely necessary to secure admission to this school." "Jewish Education in Alexandria," *Jewish Chronicle*, September 8, 1912.

¹¹⁴ "La Quinzaine a Alexandrie: Les écoles" *Revue Israélite d'Égypte*, October 15, 1912.

¹¹⁵ "The Schools of the Alliance Israélite," *Jewish Chronicle*, August 13, 1909.

¹¹⁶ Dario Miccoli, "Moving Histories: The Jews and Modernity in Alexandria, 1881-1919," *Quest: Issues in Contemporary Jewish History* (2011): 6. While it initially enrolled three hundred students, the number of students fluctuated, and by 1900 there were 134 students. In 1900, an AIU school for girls was inaugurated with 56 girls; in 1903, there were 158 students and the following year about 130 students.

this process; parents issued demands for the school to introduce improvements and specific courses.¹¹⁷

In 1909-1910, the very existence of the AIU schools became a subject of heated debate over who was responsible for education in the Jewish community. Frustrated that the schools were operating with deficits and the broader Jewish community was not doing more to support the schools, the central committee of the AIU threatened to shut down its network of schools in Egypt. For their part, the community argued that they already spent about 4,500 pounds for the 1,500 boys and girls attending community schools, and did not have enough resources to contribute to the schools of the AIU.¹¹⁸ Ultimately, the Alliance decided to maintain its schools in Egypt to wide relief. The *Jewish Chronicle* claimed that if the schools had been shut down, “it would have strongly affected Jewish sentiments among a good number of the younger generation here. The Alexandrian better-class father would by no means suffer the degradation of sending his children to the community’s free school, nor is the private tuition of the *Lycée Française* within the reach of all.”¹¹⁹ This statement is revealing of both the limits and possibilities of Jewish schools in Egypt, and the ways that social class, even sometimes more than religious or ethnic identity, played a role in educational choices.

Jewish families from the upper and upper-middle classes often financially supported Jewish schools. However, they often chose to educate their children in foreign schools or with private tutors. Jewish students in Egypt frequently attended British, French, and Italian secular

¹¹⁷ Miccoli, “Moving Histories,” 5. In a community debate about schooling, M. Hazan, a chemist, complained that the lack of a good laboratory in the Alliance School had induced him to send his children to the Missionary Schools, while a former student of the Alliance pointed out that although he might have lacked materials, he had made as many scientific experiments as any pupil of the French missionary schools. Hazan then questioned the ability for students to take the baccalaureate examination, M. Soares informed him that “though the pupils of the Alliance were not prepared for that examination, their teachers had prepared several pupils who passed successfully.” “Intended Closing of the Alliance Schools,” *Jewish Chronicle*, August 27, 1909.

¹¹⁸ “The Schools in Alexandria,” *Jewish Chronicle*, August 12, 1910.

¹¹⁹ “The Schools in Alexandria,” *Jewish Chronicle*, August 12, 1910.

schools, as well as explicitly Catholic missionary schools. They based their school choices on the higher educational standards in many of these institutions, and being in a Jewish educational space was not a priority for many families. In the 1890s, Meir Zebulon Levi wrote to the central committee of the Alliance in Paris to ask them to start a school in Egypt, and offered as persuasive data the statistics of Jewish students in foreign schools; the Collège des Frères enrolled 250 Jewish students, the Italian school had 250, the Swiss school had 150, and the Scottish school had 100, for a total of 750 Jewish students in foreign schools. The worrisome impact of this education was more than just alarming numbers. In November 1891, the *Jewish Chronicle* reported that the group of Jewish boys enrolled in the Jesuit school in Alexandria had been refused time off to observe the Yom Kippur holiday, and after the Jewish students did not come to school any way, the school administrators and teachers punished the students severely.¹²⁰ The *Jewish Chronicle* reported that ultimately, the traumatic incident had re-inspired a commitment to Jewish education, stating, “we must however, be thankful to them, for our coreligionists who did not until now understand the gravity of entrusting their boys to such persons, and education, have been aroused.”¹²¹ Despite efforts to increase options and standards of Jewish education in the city, Jewish students were still enrolled in a whole host of school ventures. In the early twentieth century, Jews came to be particularly associated with the Victoria College, especially because it espoused a secular and British education. In a 1906 list of graduates of Italian schools who had gone on to have careers in the professions, six out of nine lawyers (66%), one out of two doctors (50%), and ten out of nineteen businessmen (52%) were

¹²⁰ “Alexandria,” *Jewish Chronicle*, November 5, 1891.

¹²¹ Following the incident, “a school has been at once projected and organized, and has been opened in a spacious building” and “the committee of G. Castro, G. Aghion, and M. Tilche have taken the matter earnestly in hand, and are doing their utmost to place the school on a level, not only with the Egyptian but with the best European establishments.” “Alexandria,” *Jewish Chronicle*, November 27, 1891.

Jewish.¹²² Many upper-class Jews attended university or completed higher levels of education in Europe. In 1907-8, 80.3 percent of all Jewish students in Alexandria attended foreign schools, while, in 1912-3, their numbers declined slightly to 77.2 percent.¹²³

For Jews in Egypt, the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century was above all characterized by “a process of sociocultural differentiation,” and social class became entangled with choices in social activities and expressions of culture.¹²⁴ In the early twentieth century, the majority of Egyptian Jews, or about 65 percent, belonged to the middle and lower middle class, 20-25 percent belonged to the lower class, while 10 percent of individuals belonged to the elite.¹²⁵ The gap between the rich and the poor was very wide, while the emergence of such a large middle and lower middle class was a defining feature of the community. In the twentieth century, families who had arrived in Egypt by 1800, such as the Mosseri, Soares, de Menasces, often became international bankers, and invested in transportation, infrastructure, and large-scale agricultural ventures. Jews who arrived from Italy or the Ottoman Empire in the mid-nineteenth century and had focused on importing European manufactured goods and exporting Egyptian goods, were involved in the twentieth century with manufacturing concerns, urban development, and commercial ventures, including department stores.¹²⁶ Jews in Egypt were also well-represented in the professions. And alongside the merchants, bankers, and professionals, there

¹²² Balboni, *Gli Italiani nella civiltà egiziana*, vol. 2, 203.

¹²³ Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt*, 80.

¹²⁴ Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt*, 12.

¹²⁵ Miccoli, *Histories of the Jews of Egypt*, 7. In 1901, Albert Najar, an agricultural engineer, wrote to the President of the AIU in Paris describing the economic situation of the Jews of Egypt in detail. Of the estimated 25,000 Jews in Egypt, 10 percent worked in banking, money changing, and moneylending (3% large banks, 7% medium and small banks or exchange offices), 25 percent worked in commerce (5% wholesale and 20% retail trade); 36 percent were employees (7% managers and senior civil servants earning over 6,000 francs per year, 10% medium and 19% small employees), 4 percent craftsman and 5 percent workers, especially cigarette rollers. Najar classified 8 percent as “very rich,” 38 percent as “well off,” 14 percent as “relatively well-off,” 24 percent as “poor,” and 16 percent as “very poor.” Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt*, 40, 50-51.

¹²⁶ Almost all the department stores in twentieth century Egypt, such as Cicurel, Chemla, and Gattegno, were owned by Jewish families.

were also many in the middle, lower middle, and lower classes, including: small shop owners, brokers, or commercial agents, clerks in firms or retail shops, administrators in banks, workers in the cigarette and tobacco industry.

Historian Dario Miccoli points out that even though a large number of Jews were poor, “‘it was [the] affluent, educated, and cosmopolitan middle and upper class [...], that shaped the image of Egyptian Jewry as a whole,’ both from an external and internal perspective.”¹²⁷

Egyptian Jews both identified themselves with a bourgeois socio-economic milieu and came to be identified as such by others; this milieu determined dress, languages, educational choices, dress, sociability patterns, and leisure activities. In private life, most middle and upper-class families spoke Italian or French, and reserved English for business or official contacts, although often individuals were comfortable speaking multiple languages depending on the context.¹²⁸ In a portrait of the extended de Picciotto family from the early twentieth century, every single family member, from male and female, young to old, wore European clothes – the grandfather holding a baby in his lap wore a fez with his suit.¹²⁹ Jews moved into newly developed suburbs in both Cairo and Alexandria where they lived alongside “foreigners” of similar class standing. The new middle class often defined themselves in opposition to the older families of notables in whom power and influence had been concentrated in the Jewish community for generations, such as the Cattaouis or de Menasces. However, in fact, “the boundaries between these two groups

¹²⁷ Miccoli, *Histories of the Jews of Egypt*, 7.

¹²⁸ Interestingly, it was the women who in most middle and upper-class families adopted Italian and French rather than Arabic and Hebrew, which, they often either did not know well or all. Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt*, 27. Reflecting on his youth in early twentieth century Alexandria, Isadore Salvatore Saltiel noted: “We spoke French and English in school, Italian at home, Arabic in the street, and cursed in Turkish.”¹²⁸ Saltiel was from a Sephardic Jewish family that had immigrated to Alexandria from Anatolia over the course of the nineteenth century, and he held Italian citizenship. Interview with Isadore Salvatore Saltiel (May 1986) as quoted in Joel Beinin, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics, and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 5.

¹²⁹ A fez was often considered a mark of prestige, and it was not unusual to wear a fez with otherwise Western clothing. Undated family photograph, Silvera-Picciotto family papers, Private Collection of Helen and Maurice Douek, Los Angeles, California.

were much more porous and at times barely visible”; and the struggles between new and old elites did not expose diametrically opposed visions or identities, but rather revealed “a complex and multilayered social arena within which the Mixed Courts, early Zionist ferments, Egyptian politics, and bourgeois-like philanthropy managed to coexist.”¹³⁰

Beginning in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the Jewish social landscape was characterized by a growing number of Jewish social and charitable associations. Upon arriving in Alexandria, Raffaello della Pergola found the “numerous members [of the community] are proud that they are Jews” with “several well-organized institutions.”¹³¹ In 1911, the Benevolent Society reported that in the past year it expended about 75,000 francs, receiving a grant of 15,000 francs from the community and one of 1,250 francs from the municipality, as well as donations at holidays and occasions of rejoicing or mourning.¹³² The mission of the Benevolent Society was “comprehensive” for “among other things, it makes regular allowances to poor families, provides midwives for maternity cases, grants dowries to worthy young women, distributes solid and liquid food, pays the travelling expenses of persons who wish to be repatriated, and grants subventions to orphans and provides temporary shelter for new arrivals.”¹³³ New charitable associations were also formed to help Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe; although community leaders were generous in providing refugees with food, shelter, clothing, and aid, they were also concerned about the financial burdens and potential problems of

¹³⁰ Miccoli, *Histories of the Jews of Egypt*, 32.

¹³¹ “The Alexandrian Jewish Community: Special Interview for the Jewish Chronicle with the Chief Rabbi,” *Jewish Chronicle*, September 30, 1910.

¹³² Many of the donors were not Jewish. “Société Israélite de Bienfaisance,” *Revue Israélite d’Égypte*, September 1, 1912.

¹³³ “Société Israélite de Bienfaisance,” *Revue Israélite d’Égypte*, September 1, 1912. The charitable institutions supported by the community included a Maidens’ Dowry society (founded in 1863), Hospitality Society for Needy Travelers (founded in 1882), Brotherly Help Society for Beggars, Amele Torah Talmud for poor school children students (1894), and the de Menasce Hospital (1890). There was consistent concern about people not paying the ‘arikha’ or community taxes to fund the charities, and the increase in poverty. Landau, *Jews in Nineteenth Century Egypt*, 64; Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt*, 80; “Société Israélite de Bienfaisance,” *Revue Israélite d’Égypte*, September 1, 1912.

this massive influx, and attempted several times to divert the settlement of refugees to Palestine.¹³⁴ While Jewish charities were often organized on the basis of the entire Jewish community, disregarding differences in origins, at other times, associations emphasized particular regional backgrounds for their members, such as the *Società Israelitico-Corcirese di Mutuo Soccorso*, founded in Alexandria in 1913 and *Association des Juifs Orientaux* founded in 1916.¹³⁵ Jewish mutual aid societies provided a safety net for those who were struggling, while also creating spaces for bourgeois sociability within the community. Charities and groups held regular meetings and fundraising events; in one gathering, a costume ball was thrown with everyone in “marvelous Oriental costumes” and “dancing in the light with exquisite grace... a cinematographic dreamscape.”¹³⁶

Jewish communal spaces and events were distinct arenas for the Jewish community to gather together as Jews, and yet they often became marked spaces of cultural interaction where overlapping ties of nationality and religion could be displayed and performed. Every year, consular officials and notables attended major events in the Jewish community.¹³⁷ The 1912 confirmation of fifty-six girls, all dressed in white, took place before a reported audience of 3,000 inside the synagogue and 2,000 in the courtyard.¹³⁸ In 1908, attendees of the award ceremony for the free communal school at the end of the school year included the consuls of France, England, Italy, and Belgium, a representative of Austria-Hungary, the governor of Alexandria, the mayor, the commander of police, Chief Rabbi Hazan, and leaders of the Jewish community. As school students received prizes and demonstrated their talents, reciting poems

¹³⁴ After the devastating Kishinev pogrom in 1905, the stream of refugees from Russia, Rumania, and Poland moving to Egypt accelerates. The number of refugees from Eastern Europe in Egypt also increased dramatically during World War I. Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt*, 11.

¹³⁵ Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt*, 18.

¹³⁶ “Une fête exceptionnelle,” *Revue Israélite d’Égypte*, April 15, 1912.

¹³⁷ “Notes from Egypt,” *Jewish Chronicle*, May 31, 1912.

¹³⁸ “Notes from Egypt,” *Jewish Chronicle*, May 31, 1912.

and singing songs in French, Italian, and Hebrew, they presented a vision of progress and culture that would have been appealing to their audience. For example, at the school ceremony of the Ecole de la Comunaute Israélite du Caire in 1909-1910, two of the readings were heartfelt poems written by students dedicated to “Italia” or the “Patria Italiana,” and the Italian consulate sponsored annual prizes for students in the Jewish schools that exemplified *italianità*.¹³⁹ The synagogue became a key venue for Italian Jews in Egypt to express patriotic feelings. The Italian national holiday, the *Festa dello Statuto*, was celebrated with great enthusiasm in synagogues every year and when the Italian king, Umberto I, was assassinated in 1900, Jewish synagogues throughout Egypt held ceremonies honoring him. Observing these expressions of mourning, the consul contended that “because Jews weren’t exposed to hate in Italy as they are in other countries, they honor and bring honor to homeland.”¹⁴⁰ This simple declaration actually suggests complex extended loops of continuity between the treatment of Jews on the Italian peninsula, the sentiments of Jews abroad, and the honor they then brought to Italy.

Encounters across ethnic, national, and religious communities, both deep and shallow, occurred in all areas of everyday life in the bustling city. Khaled Fahmy argues that “instead of stressing the infrequency of intermarriage to highlight the segregation of ethnic communities,” historical studies must take into account “the all too frequent cases of illicit sex between members of different ethnicities” and examine “how members of different communities ate, drank and smoked together, and how recipes were exchanged and shared between different communities.”¹⁴¹ In 1893, Eliyahu Hazan, then chief rabbi of Alexandria, published a book entitled *Neveh Shalom* (Abode of Peace) detailing the Jewish customs of marriage and divorce as

¹³⁹ ASMAE, *Ambasciata d’Italia in Egitto*, b. 128 (1911).

¹⁴⁰ ASMAE, *Ambasciata d’Italia in Egitto*, b. 49 (1900).

¹⁴¹ Fahmy, “Towards a Social History of Modern Alexandria,” 281.

they were practiced in Alexandria.¹⁴² As Alexandria grew as a center of Mediterranean Jewish life, so did the close interactions and intermarriages between Jews of different origins, and Hazan suggested that Jewish traditions needed to be adapted and clarified in order to remain relevant in the rapidly changing context of Alexandria. Almost every issue of the *Revue Israélite d'Égypte* contained lists of Jewish couples getting married that fortnight. Marriages seemed to generally develop within the parameters of the Jewish community with little to no regard for place of origin, and were influenced, but not determined, by social class.¹⁴³

However, relationships of friendship or lust could happen beyond religious or national boundaries; often Jews, Greeks, Italians, and other Europeans attended the same schools and lived in the same neighborhoods. In 1911, Bruno de Bonnici, a cabman and Italian subject, was charged with the attempted abduction of Anna Morgenstern, a Jewish British subject born in Palestine, after a long illicit flirtation.¹⁴⁴ They exchanged amorous letters in Italian through conduits, and arranged secret meetings. After her parents refused to consent to their marriage because of their religious differences, Anna tried to run away. By the time Anna's case was tried before the British consul, Bruno was engaged to another woman, leaving her to cry out in despair: "I am a poor girl, removed from my job, who has lost her honor, disobeyed her parents, etc. and now sees the error of her ways."¹⁴⁵ Certainly, Anna Morgenstern's broken heart and desperate circumstances were not representative of all cross-cultural interactions in Alexandria; however, her case does suggest both how easy and how difficult these relationships could be.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² Miccoli, *Histories of the Jews of Egypt*, 93-102.

¹⁴³ "Mariages de la quinzaine" and "Mariages qui auront lieu avant Pâques," *Revue Israélite d'Égypte*, April 1, 1912.

¹⁴⁴ The National Archives of the UK (TNA), FO 847/47 (1911), London, United Kingdom.

¹⁴⁵ TNA, FO 847/47 (1911).

¹⁴⁶ According to Egyptian censuses, between the 1920s and 1950s, there were around 30 marriages between a Jew and a Muslim per year. Quantifying the number of marriages between Jews and Christians with any precision is impossible. However, it does appear as a theme periodically in newspapers and memoirs which suggests that it did

Many of the elite of the Jewish community did not find it incongruous to participate actively in the communal structures of both Italian and Jewish organizations. Notably, Jews with Italian citizenship, played a prominent role as jurors and assessors in the Italian consular courts and Mixed Tribunals.¹⁴⁷ In these positions, they were visible as influential members of the Italian community and recognized as able representatives. Ugo Lusena Bey served as a judge for the Italian consular tribunal in Cairo and as a professor of law and civil procedure at the Khedival law school, as well as a president of the Dante Alighieri Society, and one of two European council members for the Egyptian University.¹⁴⁸ His brother, Enrico Lusena, served as president of *Gioventù Italiana*, an association that shared its mission with Dante Alighieri to “spread the Italian language” among youth, and his nephew taught at an Italian school. The Lusena family also captures the familial element of cultural allegiances and bonds for Jews in Egypt. In 1910, the Italian government nominated several prominent leaders of the Jewish community, Baron de Menasce, Moise Cattaoui Bey, and Edgardo Soares to be granted honorary titles for their work in introducing Italian courses into the Jewish schools. The decision to grant Jewish leaders honorary Italian titles was not unusual, yet examining this particular instance reveals the dynamics of forging intercommunal and transnational connections through and beyond the boundaries of citizenship.¹⁴⁹ Of the three men awarded, only Edgardo Soares was actually an Italian citizen. In order to grant him the title, the consul had to verify his status as an Italian citizen, writing to the prefecture of Livorno to inquire about Soares’ true origins and whether or not he had fulfilled his military duties. Initially they had trouble locating his records, for he was

occur. The vast majority of marriages took place within the Jewish community. Miccoli, *Histories of the Jews of Egypt*, 113-114.

¹⁴⁷ Of the five newly appointed commercial assessors in the Mixed Tribunals, three were Jewish, while three out of eleven jurors in Alexandria were Jewish, and four out of eleven in Cairo. Typically, those serving in these positions were merchants, lawyers, or bankers. In the interwar period, fourteen percent of the lawyers registered with the Mixed Tribunals were Jewish. ASMAE, *Ambasciata d’Italia in Egitto*, b. 128 (1911).

¹⁴⁸ Anna Baldinetti, “Gli italiani nella cultura egiziana (1900-1930), *Levante* 49 (2002): 50

¹⁴⁹ ASMAE, *Ambasciata d’Italia in Egitto*, b. 128 (1911).

registered and fulfilled his duties as Abramo Soares, leading the consul to comment that it was a common Jewish tradition to use multiple names and switch between them depending on the context. As for De Menasce and Cattaoui Bey, they were notables whose families had long been a part of the leadership of the Jewish community. The Italian consulate noted especially Cattoiui's support of Italian instruction over German in the Jewish schools, even though he was an Austrian subject. For De Martino, the honorifics were not about recognizing "good Italians," but rather about recognizing Jewish leaders as Jews and bringing them under an Italian umbrella as such.¹⁵⁰

Although by their nature biographical summaries and obituaries of the elite are often hagiographic in their praise and admiration, they can also shed light on the multivalent ways individuals chose to spend their time, energies, and resources. For example, Abramino Tilche, a banker whose family originated in Livorno and moved to Egypt around 1780, was very involved in the Italian *Società di Beneficenza*, served as president of the Italian Chamber of Commerce, supported Italian schools, and gave large sums for the construction of affordable housing for Italian workers and clerks. He was also elected to various posts in the Jewish community and understood as "one of the community's most generous protectors."¹⁵¹ Raffaello Soares, born in Cairo in 1845, was described as a "man of deeply Italian feelings, he is rightly considered one of the true benefactors of our colony, he has carried deep enthusiasm for the land where his

¹⁵⁰ In a meeting with Giuseppe Mosseri about the Italian courses, De Martino casually noted that he "has already demonstrated that he is a good Italian." The Italian state did not give Mosseri an award that year, despite his years of service to Italian causes. ASMAE, *Ambasciata d'Italia in Egitto*, b. 128 (1911).

¹⁵¹ Balboni, *Gli Italiani nella civiltà egiziana*, vol. 2, 333. Giacomo Soares was advisor of the Italian Charitable society, Treasurer of the Italian Chamber of Commerce, judge of the Italian consular tribunal, vice-consul of Portugal in Alexandria, advisor to the Italian Red Cross, secretary of the Society for Italian Workers, and judge of the Tuscan consular tribunal. ASMAE, *Ambasciata d'Italia in Egitto*, b. 91 (1902); In his obituary, Cavaliere Angelo Valle Bey, was described as "belong[ing] to one of the best Tuscan families long settled in Egypt where he was widely known and esteemed." He fulfilled his military duties in Italy honorably and held numerous honorary offices, chiefly in connection with the Italian colony and with Freemasonry. "Cavaliere Angelo Valle Bey," *Jewish Chronicle*, March 31, 1911.

ancestors lived for many years, which he has by now visited.”¹⁵² In his obituary in the *Jewish Chronicle*, the newspaper noted, “M. Soares, your name... is closely associated with every enterprise useful to the country”; flags were flying half-mast throughout Cairo on the day of the funeral, and many financial institutions were closed for the day out of respect.¹⁵³ Implicit in his biographical sketch is the sense that even before Soares had ever set foot on Italy, he was filled with “deep Italian feelings,” and both the biographical sketch and the obituary imply Soares’ financial position and pursuits became a way for him to “honor” both Italy and Egypt.

While these examples highlight Jewish individuals acting upon feelings of connection to Italy in an Egyptian context, this was certainly not the only response of individuals to the complicated social, political, and cultural landscape of Egypt. Egyptian nationalist playwright Yac’ub Sanu’ was a compelling figure in this regard. Born in Cairo in 1839 to an Italian Jewish family, Sanu’ was sent to Livorno as a youth to finish his education.¹⁵⁴ He published thirty-two dramas in Arabic, as well as some dramas in Italian and French, and became well known as a prolific journalist, particularly of political satire. He was an outspoken critic of Isma’il’s regime and the British empire; dedicated to the Egyptian nationalist cause, he coined the phrase “Egypt for Egyptians.” In the period under consideration, only a few individual Jews became involved in Egyptian nationalism, however, after World War I, more Jews joined the movement for Egyptian independence.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Balboni, *Gli Italiani nella civiltà egiziana*, vol. 2, 400. His obituary summarizes the extent of his economic activities; he established the important sugar refining company of Egypt, helped khedive Tewfik Pasha to construct the health resort of Helouan, helped establish the agricultural railway in Upper Egypt, the Crédit Foncier, National Bank, Financial Company of Egypt, water companies, and many other public corporations while also giving loans to Europe. “M. Raphael Suarès,” *Jewish Chronicle*, May 14, 1909.

¹⁵³ “M. Raphael Suarès,” *Jewish Chronicle*, May 14, 1909.

¹⁵⁴ Sanu’ was exiled to Paris in 1878. His complicated life is described in detail in: Irene Gendzier, *The Practical Visions of Ya’qub Sanu’* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966).

¹⁵⁵ Reeva Spector Simon, Michael Menachem Laskier, and Sara Reguer, eds. *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 423.

Jews in Egypt often situated their family history in a wider Mediterranean context, creating networks of both imagination and reality that connected them back to Italy. Miccoli points out that often families “envisioned their history and ancestors through a process of embellishment and ennoblement of the past”; Livorno acquired particular force as the setting of family origin stories.¹⁵⁶ Alexandrian businessman Silvio Pinto wrote a manuscript on the history of his family to celebrate and pass on his family’s legacy, stating “the Pinto family came to Livorno in 1500. In 1800, the Pintos had a factory in Livorno for the production of coral objects...they also owned many buildings on one street, and there was a saying, ‘these houses are not *dipinte* (painted)’ but *di Pinto*, or belonging to Pinto.”¹⁵⁷ This was a common thread among other Jews in the Mediterranean world who constructed a sense of identity around a past connection to Livorno. In August 1889, Aron Daniele Moreno sent a letter from his home in Tunis to his fourteen-year old grandson, on the occasion of his first extended stay in Livorno and tried to instill in his grandson a sense of deep roots in the city the family had left decades earlier. He wrote, “I’m so happy to hear that you are making many acquaintances in Livorno, since this is the purpose of your visit; while in other cities that you have visited and will visit in the future, you can find many monuments and objects of beauty that are missing in Livorno, [in those cities] you will find yourself completely isolated.”¹⁵⁸ The aging Daniele Moreno emphasized that more important than seeing ruins, or fountains, or artwork on this trip to Italy was for his grandson to cement his personal ties to Livorno. By the early twentieth century, the Morenos had been removed from Livorno and Italy for over seventy years. And yet, they chose to send each generation of sons back to Italy for their university education, and frequently exchanged letters,

¹⁵⁶ Miccoli, *Histories of the Jews of Egypt*, 118.

¹⁵⁷ Miccoli, *Histories of the Jews of Egypt*, 118.

¹⁵⁸ Aron Daniele Moreno to Ugo Moreno, 20 August 1889, ASL, Archivio della famiglia Moreno, box 2.

photographs, and visits with their wide circle of family and friends in Italy, revealing the dense economic, social, and cultural exchanges that connected the Mediterranean world.

The Jewish Press, Mediterranean Networks, and Visions of Jewish Solidarity

The migration of Jews from Italy to port cities throughout the Mediterranean during the nineteenth century created “multiple ties and interactions [linking] people or institutions across the borders of nation states.”¹⁵⁹ While Jewish communities had a long history of maintaining connections with distant Jewish communities, in the nineteenth century these transnational connections became bound up with new conceptions of Jewish solidarity. In turn, these channels of contact became forums for representations and perceptions of individual communities. In the years after emancipation, western Jewry had to reconcile their embrace of a national identity as citizens with their retention of a Jewish identity. As Aron Rodrigue notes in his study of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, a sense of international Jewish solidarity went hand in hand with the integration and acculturation of French Jews; solidarity was a “dynamic reconstruction in post-emancipation period” which allowed Jews to take “fierce pride in being French while maintaining pride in and a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people as a collectivity throughout the world.”¹⁶⁰ For Jews in Italy, the nineteenth century brought new possibilities for belonging to the Italian nation, while also reifying the bonds and relationships they created as

¹⁵⁹ Elaine Lynn-Ee Ho, “Citizenship, Migration and Transnationalism: A Review and Critical Interventions,” *Geography Compass* 2, 5 (2008): 1286.

¹⁶⁰ European Jews often had to put the struggle for emancipation in terms of their singular loyalty to the nation state; accusations of “dual loyalty” or nation within the nation had long plagued Jewish communities. The AIU was an international organization, and by 1880, 349 local committees had been established in various parts of the world; there were 65 in France, 113 in Germany, 20 in Italy, including a very active committee in Livorno. The French membership declined from 80 percent of the total in 1861 to approximately 50 percent in 1864 and was less than 40 percent in 1885, although the leadership remained French. Aron Rodrigue, *Images of Sephardi and Eastern Jewries in Transition: The Teachers of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, 1860-1939* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993), 10-12; Lisa Leff, *Sacred Bonds of Solidarity: The Rise of Jewish Internationalism in Nineteenth Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

Jews with other Jewish communities. The Italian Jewish newspaper, *Il Vessillo Israelitico*, concentrated its issues on the moral improvement and edification of Italian Jews, with a particular focus on teaching the values of being good citizens, yet it consistently also devoted attention to making the case for Jewish solidarity in ways that were relevant to the lives of its readers.¹⁶¹ During the Franco-Prussian war of 1871, Leone Ravenna published an article in *Il Vessillo Israelitico* urging Jewish communities to come together through the activities of the Alliance Israélite Universelle no matter the political circumstances; rather than a schism based on the politics of war – with each country’s committee for themselves and their own communities – they ought to recall the foundational principles the organization, for “the idea of Alliance about ‘cosmopolitanism’ not nationality.”¹⁶² *Il Vessillo Israelitico* styled itself as the architect of good Jews and good Italians – with no gaps or contradictions between the two identities.

Notably, the Italian Jewish press devoted a lot of space and attention to reporting on the activities and perspectives of Jews throughout Italy and around the world in efforts to produce feelings of connectivity in Italian Jewry. The newspaper faithfully described the grave troubles facing Jewish communities worldwide, including pogroms in Eastern Europe and the rising number of blood libel accusations in North Africa and the Middle East, with the hope of raising funds, awareness, and support for their suffering coreligionists. But the newspapers also reported on more subtle tensions between communities in the Mediterranean. In an 1885 article, *Il Vessillo Israelitico* reported that after an Italian had insulted and assaulted a French official, with little punishment from the Italian consul, the French general had encouraged general punishment

¹⁶¹ For more information on the history of *Vessillo Israelitico*, please see: Bruno di Porto, “Il giornalismo ebraico in Italia. Un primo sguardo insieme al Vessillo Israelitico,” *Materia giudaica: bollettino dell’Associazione italiana per lo studio del giudaismo* (2001): 104-109.

¹⁶² “La Sede dell’Alleanza Israelitica,” *Il Vessillo Israelitico*, March 1871, Center for Jewish History (CJH), YIVO Library Periodicals Collection, New York, New York.

of Italians and of Jews, even though the Italian wasn't himself Jewish. Fearful of violence, the article protested this conflation of Jews and Italians forcefully, concluding: "Is it not ridiculous for a French general to bundle all the Jews together as a nation even though in Tunis there are Jews that belong to French, Turkish, Italian, and many other nationalities?"¹⁶³ By asking this question, the article suggested to its readers the danger in misunderstandings of nation, nationality, and religion. In 1908, *Il Corriere Israelitico* printed a correspondent's letter that noted an "anti-Semitic current among some members of the Italian community" in Alexandria; Anselmo Morpurgo sent a petition to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to investigate the troubling attitudes of Consul Marchese di Soragna, and two months later he was dismissed from service.¹⁶⁴ However, Soragna's friends were seething with anger, and in elections for the local members of the *Delegazione Scholastica*, the clerical faction had so much rage the elections had to be delayed, and one of the local Italian language newspapers, *Il Dovere*, attacked prominent Italian Jews with antisemitic invective as "anarchists and antipatriots."¹⁶⁵ In depicting these incidents, the correspondent depicted events in the Italian community of Egypt that paralleled political currents in Italy itself.

However, the correspondence between the Jewish communities of Italy and Egypt were often much more circumscribed. *Il Vessillo Israelitico* frequently printed descriptions of the elaborate weddings or funerals of prominent members of the Egyptian community. For one, these life cycle events possibly had a direct impact on members of Italian communities; when Guido Montalcino reported on the deaths of Angelo Levi di Vita and Moise di S. De-Veroli that touched the Jewish community of Alexandria, both men also had deep connections to the Jewish

¹⁶³ "Tunis," *Il Vessillo Israelitico*, June 1885, CJH, YIVO Library Periodicals Collection.

¹⁶⁴ "Alessandria d'Egitto," *Il Corriere Israelitico*, July 28, 1908.

¹⁶⁵ "Alessandria d'Egitto," *Il Corriere Israelitico*, July 28, 1908.

community in Livorno.¹⁶⁶ The correspondents from Egypt were deeply invested in presenting a view of the community as “bourgeois,” since many Egyptian Jews conceptualized themselves as “part of a social and cultural world that referred to a multilayered European(ised) model of bourgeoisie.”¹⁶⁷ In the press, correspondents from Egypt not only depicted refined and elegant social gatherings, but also the image of a Jewish community advancing towards “civilization”; as an article proclaimed in 1871, “Hooray for the progress of Alexandria!”¹⁶⁸ In an 1881 article, Leon Giusto, a Jewish educator in Alexandria, explained to Italian readers Jewish burial and funeral traditions in Alexandria. While Alexandria and Egypt in general were once sites of “barbarous intolerance and capricious persecutions,” they now have made “gigantic leaps towards social progress” and are places that “allow for a true liberty of conscience, a true respect for the dignity of human nature.”¹⁶⁹ Giusto offered as evidence the fact that regardless of religion, individuals could form friendships and see them through even after death, at the funeral and in mourning; this was a “great lesson for certain people considered civilized, or who would like to be.”¹⁷⁰ Giusto repeatedly emphasized a vision of the Jewish community of Alexandria as “civilized,” with social values and cultural practices that the Italian Jewish community could understand.

In March 1912, a new Jewish biweekly newspaper, *Revue Israélite d'Égypte*, emerged in Egypt, with the mission of imparting knowledge of Jewish history and literature to its readers

¹⁶⁶ “Angelo Levi di Vita” and “Moise di S. De-Veroli,” *Il Vessillo Israelitico*, January 1885, CJH, YIVO Library Periodicals Collection.

¹⁶⁷ Miccoli argues that “‘imaginary’ shows to what extent Egyptian Jews interacted with Europe as well as with their Egyptian Muslim counterparts, borrowing and imitating numerous practices and ideas that led to the formation of an ‘imagined bourgeoisie.’” Miccoli, *Histories of the Jews of Egypt*, 7.

¹⁶⁸ “Egitto,” *Il Vessillo Israelitico*, June 1871, CJH, YIVO Library Periodicals Collection. The article described the first stone being laid of a new temple, built and funded by Levi Menasce.

¹⁶⁹ “Pompe Funebri in Alessandria d’Egitto,” *Il Vessillo Israelitico*, January 1881, CJH, YIVO Library Periodicals Collection.

¹⁷⁰ “Pompe Funebri in Alessandria d’Egitto,” *Il Vessillo Israelitico*, January 1881, CJH, YIVO Library Periodicals Collection.

and evoking Jewish pride. The newspaper was part of a wider movement in Jewish history during the early twentieth century that promoted the creation of youth groups, cultural circles, and classes in the name of an intellectual and spiritual renewal. In Egypt, one association of young intellectuals founded in 1907 gathered newspapers and books on Jewish subjects, opened a reading room and held evening classes in the Hebrew language, while another, *Jeunesse Israélite*, opened a French language scientific and historical library.¹⁷¹ By founding libraries and meeting rooms, holding weekly lectures or concerts, these groups “[brought] together” Jews as they engaged in “informal discussions on the vital problems of contemporary Judaism, studying and amusement.”¹⁷² The *Revue Israélite d’Égypte* was directly associated with the *Pro-Cultura Israelitica* movement, which was founded in Florence in 1907 and had branches throughout Italy.¹⁷³ The newspaper sought to edify and regenerate the Jews of Egypt through information and culture, and formulated its mission in terms of finding a broad audience, for it wanted to be “read by young and old, male and female” with articles in both Italian and French so individuals could choose to read articles in whichever language they felt more comfortable in.¹⁷⁴

At the end of newspaper’s first year in print, Nissim Cardozo took stock of its accomplishments and looked to the future of the publication and its role in the Jewish community of Egypt.¹⁷⁵ Cardozo noted that although there seemed to be in Egypt “enough

¹⁷¹ The associations were founded in 1907 and 1908. Landau, *Jews in Nineteenth Century Egypt*, 67.

¹⁷² This is cited from promotional materials of the Congress of Jewish Students in Florence. Archivio Alfonso Pacifici (1899-1974), Inventory edited by Renato Spiegel, p. 41, CAHJP.

¹⁷³ In 1907, Aldo Da Roma published an article “For Jewish Culture,” that lamented the “very humble state” of Jewish culture in Italy, and proposed a committee that would “develop a concrete program of studies, publications, [and] conferences around Jewish ideas and the civil history of Jews throughout time.” Following this article, a group of Florentine Jews founded the first Pro-Cultura group, and rather rapidly, towns across Italy followed suit in establishing their own local committees. *Il Corriere Israelitico*, 1907, 400.

¹⁷⁴ The newspaper felt justified in printing the newspaper in both French and Italian, even if it was inconvenient, because it was necessary for the milieu. Cardozo noted that in some years the new generation will want a French-Italian-English-Hebrew publication. The percentage of articles in French was higher than in Italian. Nissim Cardozo, “La première étape,” *Revue Israélite d’Égypte*, December 31, 1912.

¹⁷⁵ Nissim Cardozo, “La première étape,” *Revue Israélite d’Égypte*, December 31, 1912.

newspapers to satisfy the intellectual needs of the Jewish public, and that in general they profess ideas and sentiments very liberal with regard to all religions and defend the interests of Judaism...it is undeniable that the Jewish element lacks an organ that has a particular originality, founded and directed with view towards a special public.”¹⁷⁶ Cardozo believed strongly that the Jewish community needed a newspaper designed to speak to its particular needs and desires. With this goal in mind, Jewish “men of initiative seized the opportunity to instruct, illuminate and initiate in our colony,” and had promoted a program emphasizing Jewish philosophy, literature, and above all, history.¹⁷⁷ Cardozo reflected that “this history is the history of the people of Israel, a nation phenomenon among the nations...all the glory, all the sadness of our race...having this knowledge will console us in the disappointments of present and reassure us to be able to resist any assaults the future will bring.”¹⁷⁸ The newspaper emphasized the singularity of the history of the Jews as a people, and ignored religion in favor of imbuing Jewishness with a national, cultural, and historical meaning.

Indeed, the newspaper focused on introducing important Jewish philosophers, writers, or historical figures, and giving their audience a sense of their cultural contributions. For example, the newspaper profiled figures such as Baruch Spinoza and Max Nordau, publicized conferences held on the Cairo Genizah or the origins of Jews and commerce, and helped sponsor a community event where Evaristo Breccia, director of the Greek-Roman Museum and president of the Dante Alighieri Society gave a lecture on the Jewish community in Alexandria in the

¹⁷⁶ Nissim Cardozo, “La première étape,” *Revue Israélite d’Égypte*, December 31, 1912. In Cairo and Alexandria, between 1880 and 1908 over 500 newspapers and more than a hundred journals were published, though many were short-lived. There was also an exponential growth in book publishing, all of which suggested the growing importance of the public sphere and public opinion in Egypt. Kenneth Cuno, “Egypt to c. 1919,” *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, ed. Francis Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 99.

¹⁷⁷ Nissim Cardozo, “La première étape,” *Revue Israélite d’Égypte*, December 31, 1912.

¹⁷⁸ Nissim Cardozo, “La première étape,” *Revue Israélite d’Égypte*, December 31, 1912.

period after Alexander the Great.¹⁷⁹ The newspaper devoted a lot of space to summarizing or publicizing the current happenings in Alexandria and Cairo, from meetings to fundraisers to weddings. Despite concerns over rising poverty in Egypt, the editors of the newspaper concluded on the occasion of the Jewish New Year that “last year had to be considered one of best years in the history of our institutions, not only for immediate results, but for the foundation it laid for continuous progress” of our community.¹⁸⁰

The *Revue Israélite d'Égypte* reported particularly often on the B'nai Brith Lodges in Egypt, frequently transcribing full ceremonies and speeches for their readers. At the installation of new leaders of the lodge of Alexandria in 1912, the president of the community, Edgar Soares, spoke in French, H. Barda spoke in Arabic, and David Idelovich gave a speech in Hebrew, in which he pushed for Hebrew to become the language of the Jewish people and spoke out against the emphasis on French by the Alliance. Despite Idelovich's passionate argument, Chief Rabbi della Pergola “prefer[red] to use his own language” and spoke in Italian. In the climax of his speech, Idelovich declared that in the B'nai Brith, there were no American Jews, Russian Jews, Spanish Jews, or German Jews, and everyone who “feels pride in this Jewish nation must knock at the door of the lodge” and enter.¹⁸¹ Idelovich put forth the space of the local lodge and the international networks of B'nai Brith as a path forward as a single Jewish nation, rather than divided by other nationalities. Above all, the newspaper concluded: “the crowd [was filled with] emotion caused by the sight of a fraternity of most cordial and sincere feelings, and pride in the vital forces that are surging and developing in the ancient Jewish race.”¹⁸² In the multilingual

¹⁷⁹ *Revue Israélite d'Égypte*, April 15, 1912.

¹⁸⁰ “La Quinzaine a Alexandrie. 5672-5673,” *Revue Israélite d'Égypte*, September 15, 1912.

¹⁸¹ “Reception of Bene Brith,” *Revue Israélite d'Égypte*, April 4, 1912.

¹⁸² “Reception of Bene Brith,” *Revue Israélite d'Égypte*, April 4, 1912.

milieu of the B'nai Brith lodge of Alexandria, the most important message that emerged was of Jewish fraternity and regeneration.

The vision of cultural transformation promoted by the Pro-Cultura movement in Egypt and the *Revue Israélite d'Égypte* was tangentially, but not fully, connected to Zionism. Zionism was a relatively small movement in Egypt made up of some individuals who were committed ideologically, but still more who were committed as a form of philanthropy or as a form of support for Jews from other places fleeing persecution.¹⁸³ The newspaper did not often report directly on the activities of the central Zionist organization or debate Zionist ideology, but it did report consistently on groups such as the Maccabees, a youth group of “literature and sport” that connected cultivating physical strength and culture to a spirit of renewal and to the Zionist movement. Youth groups such as the Maccabees created communal space and common action, and by printing reports on these groups the newspaper in effect extended this community. It seems that perhaps Jews in Egypt were reluctant to fully embrace Zionism as their possible future if it involved relinquishing their multiple frames of belonging, but they did not feel similar ambivalence towards discourses around Jewish solidarity or fraternity.

The *Revue Israélite d'Égypte* demonstrated concern for refugees arriving in Egypt both from Eastern Europe and other parts of the Ottoman Empire, and devoted a section of almost every issue to exploring the situation of Jews in other parts of the world. In December 1912, Nissim Cardozo discussed the recent expulsion of those holding Italian citizenship from parts of the Ottoman Empire during the Italo-Turkish war, reporting that some of the refugees were helped by consulate with free passage from Alexandria to Naples, where they were “welcomed

¹⁸³ For more information on the Zionist movement in Egypt, please see: Landau, *Jews in Nineteenth Century Egypt*, 115-124; Michael Laskier, *The Jews of Egypt, 1920-1970: In the Midst of Zionism, Anti-Semitism, and the Middle East Conflict* (New York: New York University, 1992).

by the mother-*patria* with every solicitude...the refugee is protected, treated like a brother in distress.”¹⁸⁴ Cardozo noted that the Grand Rabbis of Naples and Rome are “equally devoted to their coreligionists from Turkey...and consider them as family – Italian solidarity, have you ever seen anything so beautiful?”¹⁸⁵ In describing the aid and care given to the refugees, Cardozo layered a vision of Italian solidarity over a vision of Jewish solidarity, conflating the two. In the Egyptian context, Jewish solidarity did not go hand in hand with emancipation as it did for the Jews of Italy, since citizenship in Egypt was less about defining the political relationship and obligations of the individual to the nation, and more about determining status and economic and social utility.¹⁸⁶ In Egypt, the ideas and language of Jewish solidarity became a way for Egyptian Jews to navigate and interact with longstanding Mediterranean networks in new ways.

Alexandria has often been described as a place where nationality mattered, but not nationalism.¹⁸⁷ Certainly, Egypt was an environment where forms of European nationalism were often disregarded or inconsequential. However, in examining layers of the cultural landscape of Italian Jews in Egypt, this chapter has shown how the meanings of belonging to national or ethno-religious communities could shift and vary depending on the context, but could also assert

¹⁸⁴ The refugees were given food and shelter as well as a monthly subsidy that reflected to their social situation in their country of origin (with a minimum 200 francs per month, max 600). Nissim Cardozo, “A propos des expulsés italiens de Smyrne,” *Revue Israélite d’Égypte*, December 1, 1912.

¹⁸⁵ Nissim Cardozo, “A propos des expulsés italiens de Smyrne,” *Revue Israélite d’Égypte*, December 1, 1912.

¹⁸⁶ Interestingly, the *Revue Israélite d’Égypte* reprinted several articles from the Italian Jewish press about how Italian Jews were participating in politics. It reprinted an article from *Corriere Israelitico*, responding to some voices in the Italian Jewish community to abstain from the next general elections, however, the “abstention of Jews from political life, in which they have already been immersed, is not only impossible, it is dangerous...for Jews remain another way to make themselves worthy of their *italianità*.” Jews had to oppose antisemitism that had emerged in certain nationalist circles against “the Turks and Jewish banks” because “have right to this place as Italians and as Jews. Abstention would end up being a weapon. A pretext to re-imprison the Jewish Italians or Italian Jews in moral ghettos.” “Gli israeliti italiani e i partiti avanzati,” *Revue Israélite d’Égypte*, October 15, 1912.

¹⁸⁷ Minkin, “In Life as in Death,” 36.

emotional weight. Italian Jews were often perceived by others as a distinct community, and incorporated into the Italian imperial and national project in Egypt; Jews also maneuvered within these understandings for their own purposes. During the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the number of communal organizations and associations flourished as individuals attempted to create community amidst the diversity of daily life in the city by carving out social arenas and cultural activities. For these men, women, and children, it was not inconsistent to live in ways that were deeply embedded to their local surroundings, and to concomitantly envision and create connections to the Italian nation state and to other Italian and Jewish communities throughout the Mediterranean.

Conclusion

Walking alongside the sea after an afternoon in the archives in Livorno, I watched as the waves of the Mediterranean hit the shore, and a ferry, a cruise ship, and sail boats all crowded in the harbor. As I wandered back towards the city from the port, I passed over several *fossi*, the system of canals crisscrossing the city that were once used to bring goods between the port and the warehouses. A few streets behind the Duomo, a new modern synagogue built in 1962 stands on the same site where the bombed, then looted, historic synagogue of Livorno once stood. The concrete structure of the new synagogue, modeled after a tent in the desert, bears no resemblance to its previous iteration, yet, like its predecessor, it stands as a visible and singular building in the landscape of Livorno. Bombed heavily during World War II, many physical traces of Livorno's past have disappeared. But during my afternoon walk through Livorno, the port, the canals, and the synagogue all loomed large as persistent symbols of Livorno's role in a wider story of Mediterranean exchange.

In tracing the history of Livorno during the nineteenth century, this dissertation considers the "paths to modernity" for Livornese Jews at the intersection of local, national, and global forces. During the nineteenth century, many Jews across Western Europe turned away from commerce. The case of Livorno presents a stark contrast; indeed, because of the relative absence of anti-Jewish sentiment and a "Jewish Question" that linked the need to "regenerate" Jews and their economic life as a condition of emancipation, commerce remained central to the Jewish community of Livorno. However, economic fluctuations and uncertainty in the port city of

Livorno did rock the commercial foundation of Jewish life in the city during the nineteenth century. Some Jews in Livorno were optimistic while others were despairing, in both cases, they made decisions about their economic future based on their information and experiences, often continuing to rely on extended trading networks and family firms. While some historians suggest that these structures reflect early modern patterns of behavior, this dissertation asserts that divisions between early modern and modern economic behaviors were not as straightforward as often suggested. In formulating their economic practices with continuity, Jews in Livorno navigated the formation of nation states, the expansion of empires, and the development of new social and cultural movements. In doing so, they emerge as hybrid figures of modernity, negotiating “in-between” spaces and categories rather than “either-or” ones.

Although they were deeply embedded in the economy and culture of Livorno, Jews moved away from the city in growing numbers during the nineteenth century. This dissertation is a story of mobility and migration, a story of crossing geographical boundaries and creating new frameworks for belonging through economic and legal practices. While the historiography often views emigration as flowing only in one outward direction, this dissertation shows how migration was built on multidirectional contacts between places of origin and places of settlement and had an impact on both societies.

This dissertation is also the history of two interrelated and linked port cities, Livorno and Alexandria. While the sources did not allow me to fully follow the traces of individual historical actors from Livorno to Alexandria, they did provide clear evidence of overlapping Jewish families and communities. In comparing and connecting Livorno and Alexandria, Italy and Egypt, nation and empire, the dissertation tells a broader story about the Mediterranean world during the nineteenth century. By focusing on trading networks and examining carefully the

spaces of the port, consulate, and marketplace, the dissertation is able to examine how individuals and communities moved between nations and empires in their daily lives.

In Alexandria, Jews were a distinct, although not unique, group navigating the multiplicity of legal codes and authorities operating in Egypt. Through a careful analysis of the consular court archives, the dissertation integrates the history of the economic pursuits of Jews in Egypt with the history of forum shopping and nationality. As Tuscan subjects, Livornese Jews used their foreign status as an economic gesture and point of entry for exchanges and relationships in the marketplace. After unification, many Jews in Egypt “became” Italian citizens. However, they didn’t just become Italian automatically, but had to act on it, asserting their status and mobilizing proof. Jews in Egypt were often able to claim their status as Italians, not only by birth, but also because of their sentiment and their “utility.” In cases of “contested nationality,” individuals, communities, and political authorities struggled to determine with the social, economic, and legal significance of nationality and citizenship. In the case of Moise Scemess, authorities debated whether his Jewishness was proof of his status as an Italian or a signal of his local origins. Although Moise Scemess’ voice is absent from the historical record, other individuals used the flexible nature of “foreign” status instrumentally and situationally in their “local” lives. The evidence of the dissertation shows that categories that are often perceived as stable, such as nationality and religion, were very much in flux in reality. Foreign status was flexible and intermittent, performed in certain venues in the city such as the consular court. Even as the dissertation captures this phenomena, it also leaves open further questions about what it meant to be Livornese, be Tuscan, and be Italian and the conflicts of moving from one category to another.

The dissertation concludes that nationality functioned as a constellation of cultural, economic, and legal perceptions and understandings in the lives of Jews in Egypt. Foreign status and its various documentation often gave Jews an amorphous sense of protection in their daily lives. While the evidence shows times when this protection was advantageous, it also captures moments when this protection was fragile, such as the expulsion of Italians from the Ottoman Empire during the Italo-Turkish War in 1912. The instrumental nature of citizenship in Egypt displaces emancipation, or the granting of citizenship to the Jews, as the singular defining event of the Jewish modern experience, and rather suggests that Jews in Egypt became modern in navigating categories of nationality and citizenship in context. Being able to access foreign status was a central feature in Jewish life in Egypt; in 1948, 30,000 Jews out of a total Egyptian Jewish population of 75,000-80,000 held foreign citizenship.¹

Italian Jews who came to Egypt seeking economic opportunities often found some measure of upward economic mobility. By the early twentieth century, commercial ties with Livorno were not as important as they had been in previous years for Jews. Social and cultural associations, such as the Dante Alighieri Society, emerged as new spaces for Italian Jews to attach meaning to their status and to create a sense of community. Italian Jews envisioned their future in Egypt and were deeply rooted in the Egyptian context, yet their cultural activities suggest overlapping senses of Italian and Jewish solidarity. Without relying on the language of “cosmopolitanism” that has dominated interpretations of Alexandria, this dissertation shows both the flexibility and limitations of how identity was practiced in the Mediterranean. Jews in Egypt, like many in the modern world, were “made up” of their shifting encounters and interactions in Alexandria and the broader Mediterranean, embodying the layered and multiple identities that

¹ Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Extraterritorial Dreams: European Citizenship, Sephardi Jews, and the Ottoman Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 126.

are the hallmark of modernity. As individuals and as families, Italian Jews in Egypt were local, national, and global actors simultaneously or in different spheres of their lives.

This dissertation began as a project concerned about the isolation of Italian Jews in modern Jewish history. In examining the Jews from Livorno through a Mediterranean frame, the dissertation argues that local or national studies do not necessarily reveal the full story of Italian Jewish history during the modern era. This dissertation suggests that there is much value in bringing together European history and Mediterranean Jewish histories, and hopes that historians will continue to study Mediterranean Jews within their local contexts and beyond them, taking into account the complicated connections and divisions between various communities in port cities.

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