

THE FAMILIARITY OF STRANGERS

*The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and
Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period*

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NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY AND UNITS OF MEASUREMENT

I use the meaning ascribed to the term *merchant* by Wyndham Beawes in the mid-eighteenth century: "him who buys and sells any Commodities in Gross, or deals in Exchanges; that trafficks in the way of Commerce, either by Importation or Exportation; or that carries on business by way of Emption, Vendition, Barter, Permutation, or Exchange; and that makes a continued Assiduity or frequent Negotiation in the Mystery of merchandizing his sole business."¹ Occasionally, I use the term *trader* interchangeably for stylistic purposes.

Sephardim comes from *Sepharad*, meaning "Spain" in medieval Hebrew. For the sake of brevity, and following an accepted practice, I use this term to refer to Jews of Iberian background who lived in Europe and the New World.² As others have remarked, "Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation" and "Portuguese and Spanish Jews" are less anachronistic expressions.³ All labels, in any case, struggle to describe a reality that was complex and often fluid. It is not always possible, for example, to distinguish between Sephardic Jews (those who fled Spain in 1492 without undergoing conversion in Portugal) and Pontine Jews (those who found refuge in Portugal and after 1497 necessarily lived as Christians and possibly practiced Judaism in secret).⁴ When it is relevant, I differentiate between Levantine Jews (those who left Iberia for the territories of the Ottoman Empire before moving back to Europe) and Pontine Jews (those who came directly to Italy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries). These two labels, too, were often used interchangeably or instrumentally.

Conversos (Spanish) and *marranos* (Portuguese) referred to Jews who had been forcibly converted to Catholicism and were often suspected of practicing Judaism in secret.⁵ In Spain and Portugal, laws about the so-called purity of blood sought to distinguish these converts (also called New Christians) from Old

Christians (defined as those who had no Jewish ancestors). As have others before me, I adopt all these terms (conversos, marranos, New Christians) without any pejorative overtone and without regard for the individuals' inner beliefs.

NAMES OF INDIVIDUALS AND LOCATIONS

In referring to towns, cities, and regions, I retain the names that were most commonly used in Europe at the time and in the documents that I consulted. In reference to Ottoman cities, I use *Constantinople* rather than *Istanbul*, *Salonica* rather than *Thessaloniki* (as it is known today in Greece), *Aleppo* rather than *Haleb* (as it is known today in Syria), and *Smyrna* rather than *Izmir* (as it is known in modern Turkey). *Livorno* had a British rendering (Leghorn), a French equivalent (Livourne), and a Portuguese name (Liorne).

Personal names were not standardized in the early modern period: their spelling varies depending on the language of the document in which they appear. They often were spelled differently even in documents written in a single language, and sometimes in the same document. The name of a Muslim trader from Tunis, for example, appears as *Aly Elghenay*, *Enghenany*, and *Elghenany* in a notary deed drafted in Livorno in 1747.⁶ The lack of standardization is particularly visible when we study individuals and groups who lived or operated in distant locales, left records in multiple languages, and took on different identities. Again for the sake of clarity and consistency, I chose to render all first names in English and to adopt the most common version of last names. I thus rendered *Abram* as *Abraham*, *Isach* or *Isac* as *Isaac*, *Moisé* or *Moseh* as *Moses*, *Raffael* as *Raphael*, *Giacob* as *Jacob*, *Josef* as *Joseph*, *Eliahu* as *Elijah*, and so forth. I also replaced the Italian *Vita* with *Hayyim*, one of the common English transliterations of the Hebrew name, and omitted it when it appeared to be a middle name. Women, too, usually went by an Italian name and a Hebrew name. I often have used the most common English or Spanish spelling rather than the Italian (for example, *Rebecca* rather than *Ricca* and *Blanca* rather than *Bianca*). For Sephardic families who lived in Livorno, I retained the Italianized version of their last names as they wrote them, although some had relatives in other parts of the diaspora who spelled them differently. I thus use *Carvaglio* instead of *Carvalho* because that is how the name normally appears in documents drafted in Livorno and Venice but not in Amsterdam or London.⁷ I also consistently spell *Silvera* as it appeared in the firm name "Ergas and Silvera" instead of the original Portuguese *Silveira* or *Silveyra* because family members used *Silvera*, the Spanish version of their name, when in Livorno.

It is important to remark on the mutability of names, and on the hybridization

of languages more generally, as tangible signs of the multicultural dimension of the quotidian existence of these men and women. But names are also conventions dictated by the need to communicate. When referring to the Brahmins of Goa, with whom they traded extensively, Ergas and Silvera and other European merchants (Jews and non-Jews) "translated" their names. *Camotim* (pl. *Camotins*), for example, was the Portuguese version of the Hindi name *Kamat*. The name appears in documents written by a variety of European merchants and Sephardim but occasionally was used also by other Hindus involved in trade with Europeans. This usage reflects an asymmetrical and unidirectional process of translation but also a need for legibility and standardization.

MONETARY UNITS

The principal currency used in Livorno for long-distance commerce was the silver piece of eight (*pezza da otto reali*, sometimes called simply a *pezza* or "piece"). It was analogous to the Spanish *real* or dollar, which became widely used in international trade during the sixteenth century. In terms of money of account, one piece equaled 6 lire *moneta lunga* or 5 lire and 15 soldi *moneta corta*. Accounts were kept in pieces, soldi, and denari. By convention, in a monetary system that is not in decimal form, a colon rather than a dot separates each fraction of value. That is, 50:4:2 means 50 pieces of eight, 4 soldi, and 2 denari. A scudo (also called a piastra or a ducato) was a silver coin with fixed value of 7 lire.⁸

A proverb quoted in the Savary brothers' *Dictionnaire universel de commerce* declared, "Change et vent changent souvent" (exchange rates and winds change often).⁹ Exchange rates, both within Europe and between European and Asian money, fluctuated over short and long periods of time. Moreover, exchange rates varied with the kinds of transactions: for example, purchases of goods, naval freights, or currency speculations. In the latter case, exchange rates also depended on the destination of the bill of exchange, the period for which credit was given, and the rate of interest charged. The following are the most common rates at which foreign currencies named in the book were exchanged in the first half of the eighteenth century. They should be taken as orders of magnitude rather than as precise figures. A Livorno piece of eight was exchanged for one Genoese scudo, between 60 and 75 sous of a French livre tournois (which was a money of account defined, in 1726, as one-sixth of a silver écu), about 2.5 Dutch guilders, a bit more than one Venetian ducat, between 600 and 850 Portuguese réis; and between 50 and 60 pence of a pound sterling.¹⁰ One Ottoman piaster (also known as piaster iselotte) was worth 4 lire of Livorno.¹¹

A pound sterling was divided into 240 pence or 20 shillings; a guinea was

divided into 21 shillings. In Portugal, the real was the unit of account: 500 réis equaled 1 cruzado, and 1,000 réis made up 1 conto. In Portuguese India, 1 xerafin equaled 300 réis. From 1720 to 1723, the value of a pagoda was 9 shillings; between 1723 and 1740, it dropped to 8 shillings, and in the 1740s it was set at 7 shillings and 8 pence.¹² As a norm, 10,000 pagodas were worth £4,000 or 16,000 Spanish silver reals in the early eighteenth century.¹³

UNITS OF WEIGHT

Units of weight varied greatly from one place to another. The Tuscan pound corresponded to roughly 360 grams. One ounce was one-twelfth of a pound. The cantaro (pl. cantari) was a measure used across the Mediterranean for bulk goods. It usually equaled 100 local pounds or was simply a hundredweight.

UNITS OF WEIGHT FOR DIAMONDS

In Europe diamonds were measured in carats; each carat was divided into 4 grains. In India, diamonds were measured in a unit called *mangear* or *mangelin*, which corresponded to 1 grain in Livorno.¹⁴ Until the twentieth century (when the carat became a metric measure of 200 mg), a carat equaled a slightly different weight in each locality. Thus, in the late nineteenth century a carat weighted 215.99 mg in Livorno, 197.20 mg in Florence, 205.30 mg in London, and 205.50 mg in Paris.¹⁵ We do not know the precise differences in the measurement of carats in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Therefore, I note the measure mentioned in the documents (for example, "carats of Aleppo"), but I cannot compare it precisely with its equivalent elsewhere. It is worth remembering that all dimensions were approximate given the absence of modern scientific instruments of measurement.

CALENDARS

The persons discussed this book moved in areas and among groups that used different calendars. Until 1751 the new year in Tuscany began on March 25. Thus, with regard to today's reckoning, all dates between January 1 and March 25 have been ascribed to the following year. In Venice the new year began on March 1 (*more veneto*, the Venetian style). The Hebrew calendar was used in most Jewish community records. For the sake of clarity and consistency, all dates are given in accordance with the Gregorian calendar (the one commonly used

today in the West and around most of the globe), except when specified or otherwise noted in quotation marks.

All translations are mine. I have not modernized the spelling when quoting from primary sources, but I have added accent marks and punctuation, which generally were omitted at the time.

INTRODUCTION

In the past two decades it has become increasingly common to refer to Jewish merchants and other trading diasporas as “cross-cultural brokers.”¹ But although these diasporic communities have attracted more and more scholarly attention in conjunction with a global turn in the practice of historical writing, the study of cross-cultural trade has not progressed at the same pace. Though the expression is often invoked, an understanding of cross-cultural trade remains elusive. Rarely do historical studies offer a descriptive and analytical explanation of the ways economic cooperation worked across geopolitical, linguistic, and religious boundaries. To add to this conceptual murkiness, historians use the expression “cross-cultural brokerage” in reference to a variety of activities, including intellectual exchanges and diplomatic negotiations. Economic historians, for their part, have turned cross-cultural trade into an abstract litmus test of modernity—the formative stage in the creation of impersonal markets in which contracts and enforcing institutions inspired anonymous buyers and sellers to bargain with little interest in the linguistic, religious, and ethnic identities of others. Thus recent and influential studies about cross-cultural trade in medieval Europe and the Mediterranean region derive actors’ behavior from theoretical postulates more than they document it empirically.²

In this book I adopt a narrow definition of cross-cultural trade, but it is one that forces us to consider the economic as well as the social, legal, and rhetorical determinants of commerce. I do not consider an instantaneous transaction between two strangers to be an instance of cross-cultural trade. Such exchanges have occurred everywhere since time immemorial; they involve no credit and limited risk because traders usually can inspect the merchandise. Rather, the expression designates prolonged credit relations and business cooperation be-

tween merchants who shared implicit and explicit agreements about the rules of exchange but who, because of historical patterns beyond their control, belonged to distinct, often legally separated communities. More specifically, I look at commission agency between merchants who shared no blood, kinship, or ethnic ties. More than any other type of contract, commission agency involved such ample delegation of powers to an overseas agent that it was difficult to monitor by legal means alone. I hope to show that cross-cultural trade as thus defined is a prism through which to reexamine important aspects of the history of early modern European commercial society.

What enabled strangers to cooperate? Which economic and legal institutions were at the foundations of cross-cultural trade? And what were the social and cultural implications of the practice? The descendants of Jews expelled from Spain in 1492 or forced to convert to Catholicism in Portugal in 1497 provide interesting subjects for addressing these questions. A small but commercially vibrant segment of Jewish society, Iberian Jews, or Sephardim, were full participants in the European commercial society of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and yet strangers to it. The most socially integrated group of Jews in Europe at the time, they remained a much-stigmatized minority.

Classic and recent studies of the history of Iberian Jews in the early modern period have illuminated the geographical dispersion and interconnectedness of this diaspora, its unique organization and cultural location within Judaism, and several dimensions of its economic activities. What fascinates me is the role of Sephardim as insider-outsiders in early modern European commercial society. To focus on their business ventures is to grapple with one of the ways in which Sephardic merchants led lives that were at once insular and outward-looking. Trade was a major vehicle of their acculturation, a channel of close personal interaction between Sephardim and non-Jews, and the rationale behind new policies of toleration toward Iberian Jews in several European port cities. The pursuit of profit was a powerful means of bringing strangers into contact, making them familiar to one another, and sometimes turning them into reliable business allies. And yet neither the day-to-day commercial relations nor the government policies that encouraged business interaction among strangers ever led to or aimed to create a commercial society that was genuinely cosmopolitan. By this I mean that commercial society was not harmonious and undifferentiated but was fully conscious of differences between Jews and non-Jews. *The Familiarity of Strangers* insists on the innovations generated by cross-cultural trade but also challenges the assumption that the ability to lend money and delegate decisions to strangers was naturally coupled with the dissolution of corporate boundaries, the rise of individualism, and more tolerant attitudes.

This study follows a group of Sephardic merchants as they settled in Livorno, a port city in Tuscany, in the 1590s and began to occupy important niches in the competitive trade encompassing the Mediterranean and Atlantic Europe. They also specialized in the gem trade with India at a time when the Mediterranean is usually conceived as peripheral to intercontinental commerce. It examines the way in which they negotiated their status with regard to the policies passed by the Medici grand dukes of Tuscany, the Roman and Iberian Inquisitions, and the French Crown, the way they helped shape commercial links between the Italian peninsula, the Ottoman Empire, and northern Europe, and the way they effected a truly global exchange of Mediterranean coral and Indian diamonds. In reconstructing the activities of these merchants, I concentrate on the way they conducted business with non-Jews and whether and how their *modus operandi* changed with the identity of their agents and the type of transaction. A plurality of business organizations—ranging from the family firm to the joint-stock chartered company—coexisted in most parts of early modern Europe. Furthermore, every merchant used a combination of personal ties, market deals, and legal contracts to overcome the risks of long-distance trade. I am interested in whether the combination of these components varied by group, by region, and by type of transaction, rather than in tracing the evolution of different business forms over time.³

Ingrained social norms more than legal prescriptions barred Sephardim from forming an international cartel or entering into long-term partnerships with non-Jews in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. How, then, did a close-knit, endogamous, and relatively small diaspora that operated through small-to-medium-sized partnerships become a force in long-distance and cross-cultural trade? After all, no more than fifteen to twenty thousand Sephardic men and women in the aggregate lived in Venice, Livorno, Bordeaux, Bayonne, Hamburg, Amsterdam, London (after 1656) and in smaller settlements in the Levant, North Africa, and the Caribbean, and only a fraction of them was active in commerce and finance.⁴ The Sephardim based in Livorno, moreover, were only indirectly involved in the Atlantic trade. They traded in areas, including the Ottoman Empire and the Indian subcontinent, where until the late eighteenth century Europeans lacked the hegemonic power they acquired through plunder and human exploitation in the Americas.

In spite of their small numbers, Sephardic merchants conducted business with actors ranging from friends and family to strangers. In order to explain how they went about doing so, I revisit the role of state-sanctioned institutions in rendering market relations more impersonal. It is a gross but fair generalization to claim that historians for the most part assume that blood ties and putative

likeness (a shared religious or ethnic identity and other allegiances that were perceived to be natural) forged bonds of trust that gave trading diasporas significant competitive advantages, whereas economists examine the efficiency with which different governments enforced legal norms that dissolved such bonds and generated impersonal markets. Economists like Avner Greif recognize the importance of social ties and cultural norms, but nonetheless emphasize the processes by which legal authorities loosened family and community obligations over time.⁵

Nowhere have these processes been universal or sequentially progressive. In their activities, Sephardic merchants combined social incentives, shared norms about the conduct of commerce, and legal commitments to secure their agents' cooperation. In the selected ports of continental Europe where they were encouraged to settle, Sephardic Jews were equated with Christians in their capacity as merchants—that is, they enjoyed secure property rights and had access to the same civil and commercial courts as did Christian merchants. This general principle, however, never became a universal rule, because the rights and obligations of Sephardim were always defined locally. In England, the early modern European society that epitomizes the power of commerce to open up new avenues of social mobility and religious tolerance, Sephardim were readmitted only in 1656. Moreover, as aliens rather than subjects of the Crown, they were not really equals in colonial trade.⁶ Everywhere across Europe, at any rate, Sephardim suffered from restrictions on their social and political rights, some of which affected their economic organization (beginning with the prohibition of Jewish-Christian marriages). But legal restrictions and rights do not tell the whole story. In fact, Sephardic merchants built commercial solidarities across ascriptive categories of collective identities and in many cases did so by circumventing legal prohibitions (and thus might not have been able to count on the support of state authorities).

One of the striking outcomes of the early modern European commercial expansion was, in the words of a comparative historian of pre-modern legal systems, the creation of “an uneasy trust” that made cross-cultural exchange possible: the emergence of “routines that generated, if not trust, at least firm expectations about behavior.”⁷ These routines did not imply a totalizing sense of trust between those involved in the exchange. Nor did they necessarily rest exclusively, let alone primarily, on the intervention of mighty tribunals. In many cases, these routines grew from customary legal norms and social systems of interlocking interests that rendered expectations more predictable and created the necessary incentives for cooperation among strangers. What follows is an attempt to uncover which routines were available to the Sephardim of Livorno

and which ones they created; how their position in local society conditioned the ways in which they operated in the market; how exactly their family and communitarian organizations, in Livorno and across the diaspora, affected their business dealings with other Sephardim, with coreligionists, and with non-Jews; and what role juridical tribunals, political protection, and diplomatic concessions played in their economic strategies.

LIVORNO, A HALF-FORGOTTEN REALITY

The flourishing of Jews in Livorno was due to ad hoc policies that the Medici grand dukes of Tuscany promulgated in order to attract Iberian refugees. Particularly important were charters issued in 1591 and 1593 known as *livornine*, which extended to Jews privileges unmatched in other Catholic societies. These concessions competed with those that Dutch Jewry soon came to enjoy. Livorno, however, was not Amsterdam. It was considerably smaller in size, did not command the same centrality in international commodity and financial markets, and did not burst with intellectual vibrancy and heterodoxy to the same extent. In Tuscany, moreover, Jews were not a forceful presence in state finances or military contracts. Consequently, none of the Sephardic merchants based in Livorno ever attained the prestige and affluence of Dutch Sephardic financiers and diplomats such as the Lopes Suassos, Nunes da Costas, Pintos, or Nunes Belmontes. And yet after the mid-seventeenth century, the Jewish community of Livorno became the second largest Sephardic settlement in the West after Amsterdam—a position that it retained for the following century, after which the Western Sephardic diaspora began to lose primacy. Livorno did not have a stock market or a colonial empire, but since roughly 10 percent of its inhabitants belonged to the Jewish community, it was the European city with the highest proportion of Jewish residents.⁸

Although not a comprehensive history of Livorno Jewry, this book sheds light on the history of this community during the first half of the eighteenth century, the period that historians have studied the least.⁹ More important, it continues to chart what Jonathan Israel has called the “diasporas within a diaspora,” that is, the evolution of different and overlapping Sephardic networks.¹⁰ It focuses on the Mediterranean after 1670, when the Middle Sea disappears from Israel's account and from most studies of early modern European trade. It examines old and new connections that Western Sephardim established with the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Although no longer the center and motor of international trade, the Mediterranean and the Italian peninsula were not cut off from the riches and the power struggles that followed the dramatic expansion of European com-

merce after 1500. The eighteenth century witnessed a revival of European (and especially French) trade in the Mediterranean. European states waged war on one another in the region and confronted the Ottoman Empire militarily and diplomatically, striving to extend their economic influence. It is telling that the English stationed more troops in Gibraltar and Minorca than in the whole of North America or India before 1750.¹¹ In 1682 a French merchant reported from Aleppo that, in addition to the caravans that came from Baghdad throughout the year, every summer a large convoy arrived that included more than fifteen thousand camels carrying Indian cotton textiles, Persian raw silk, indigo, and spices.¹² American goods and Asian products made their way to Livorno via Lisbon, Cadiz, Seville, Bordeaux, Marseilles, Amsterdam, and London. Sephardic merchants thrived on these imports.

From the mid-seventeenth century until the rise of Marseilles after 1715, Livorno was the principal redistribution center of the Italian peninsula and probably the most important European port in the Mediterranean. On a typical day in March 1686 an English vessel sailing from Cadiz to Livorno unloaded 8 boxes of indigo, 3 barrels of cochineal, 10,000 Spanish silver coins, 22 boxes of sugar, and a wealth of other commodities. Another English ship arriving from Algiers followed, carrying an even richer and more diverse cargo that ranged from pearls to salted fish, meat, vegetables, cacao, linens, wool, grain, cheese, civet (a precious Indian fragrance extracted from a foxlike animal), and "Chinese oranges."¹³ Anxiously awaiting these shipments along the docks in Livorno were merchants as diverse in origin, outlook, and religious affiliation as the commodities they purchased and sold. Their presence was the result of the livornine and other policies that attracted French, English, Dutch, Armenian, and Greek merchants as well as many Jewish families. In addition to a few Tuscans, Venetians, and traders from other parts of Italy, sporadic visitors from Russia, Africa, and Asia gathered along the docks and inside the countinghouses of Livorno.

Scholars of Tuscany have emphasized the way Livorno's thriving commerce and diverse population contrasted with the religious obscurantism and incipient economic crisis in the grand duchy and the rest of the Italian peninsula.¹⁴ Foreigners and Jews played an uncharacteristic role in the life and the economy of this provincial city. Next to prosperous merchants, crowds of poor immigrants from the countryside, soldiers, mariners, and Muslim slaves lived and worked in this frontier zone on the coast of a small regional state of the Old World. I am less concerned with the atypical status of Livorno or with its internal socio-economic composition than with the similarities and differences in the ways in which it accommodated Jews in comparison to other European port cities with sizable Sephardic populations. Livorno does not conform fully to tradi-

tional divisions between northern and southern Europe according to which the Protestant North was commercially expansive and tolerant whereas the Catholic South was home to old aristocratic ideals and bigotry, but local legal and social conditions had an impact on the commercial undertakings of its Sephardic entrepreneurs at home and abroad.

Following the distinction made by Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Familiarity of Strangers* is a history in the Mediterranean, rather than a history of it.¹⁵ This geographical location conditions several aspects of the story, ranging from the composition and patterns of commodity trade to the presence of the Iberian and Roman Inquisitions. But though it was the main area of interest of Sephardic merchants based in Livorno, the Mediterranean did not mark the outer limit of their purview. Sephardim not only helped connect southern Europe to the Atlantic, but they also established a truly cross-cultural network with Catholics in Lisbon and Hindus in Goa, the capital of Portuguese India, by which Mediterranean coral was shipped to India to be bartered for diamonds and other precious stones. The close examination of this niche market will illuminate the specificities of cross-cultural trade in a commodity chain that long resisted vertical integration and the monopoly of European joint-stock chartered companies.

GLOBAL HISTORY ON A SMALL SCALE

What unfolds in this book is a global history on a small scale. The far-flung connections developed by Livorno Sephardim dictate the global dimension of this project. The small scale of analysis responds to the desire to understand the inner workings of cross-cultural trade as well as the structural relations of political and economic power within which it took place. The result is not a global history as conventionally understood: a bird's-eye view of oceans, continents, populations, and historical eras with the intent of capturing structural patterns of change over the centuries. I do not even offer a comprehensive history of all the branches of commerce or of all the places where Livornese Sephardim played a role. Rather, I follow their mercantile activities in order to understand how an intensively local and communitarian life coexisted with wide-ranging family and economic connections. I also have a predilection for connections that do not conform to the conventional map of geographical, political, and cultural borders of the time and that rarely figure in accounts of Jewish societies (hence the space devoted to the trade between the Sephardim of Livorno and a Brahmin caste of Goa). In this sense, my research participates in the interest among several historians of the early modern period to rediscover connections

that once were obvious but have been obscured by layers of interpretative traditions.¹⁶

Writing global history on a small scale helps us move toward two important goals of this study. In contrast to the prevailing emphasis on the long-term evolution of commercial and credit institutions in early modern Europe, it calls attention to the simultaneous coexistence of a plurality of business organizations and the range of actors with whom a family partnership could deal. Moreover, in contrast to the tunnel vision that affects most historical studies in which trading diasporas are treated in isolation from each other it allows us to identify networks of people who might at first sight appear to be strange bedfellows.

The micro portion of this project centers on a business partnership—Ergas and Silvera—formed by two Sephardic families. It lasted from 1704 to 1746 and had a base in Livorno and a subsidiary branch in the Ottoman city of Aleppo. The survival of 13,670 original copies of letters written by Ergas and Silvera affords us a unique opportunity to scrutinize their business relations with coreligionists and strangers alike.¹⁷ This collection of letters is an invaluable source through which to reconstruct the codes of communication as well as the axes of trade of Livorno Sephardim. But the strategies of this one partnership did not occur in a vacuum. A macro analysis is therefore necessary to illuminate the changing patterns of the Sephardic diaspora, the structure of Jewish-Christian relations in Livorno, the customary and legal norms that governed long-distance trade, and the specific role played by family partnerships such as Ergas and Silvera in the Mediterranean and beyond. It demonstrates, for example, that Sephardic merchants never acquired a dominant position in the trade between Livorno and the Levant in the eighteenth century. At the same time, it shows how their influence in the Eastern Mediterranean, and Aleppo in particular, developed in tandem with the commercial and diplomatic initiatives of the French Crown in the region.

By combining micro and macro scales of analysis, I seek to accomplish several tasks. Most of the existing literature focuses on individual Jewish communities and their relations to local society and authorities (the Jews of Livorno, the Jews of Rome, the Jews of Venice, the Jews of Trieste, and so forth). Instead, I follow the trajectories of two families through multiple locations and thus recover both the local and the global dimensions that constituted their horizons. Analyzing the business operations of one partnership allows me to illustrate all of its networks instead of focusing solely, as most studies do, on the economic ties among members of a single diaspora. In so doing, I move beyond generic invocations of the importance of trust as a characteristic feature of trading diasporas. That an agent was of Iberian Jewish descent mattered to Ergas and Silvera

because it came with a set of “multiplex relationships” (marriages, community membership, economic specialization) that increased incentives to cooperate. But as Ergas and Silvera’s story teaches us, neither blood ties nor a common religious identity guaranteed commercial proficiency and rectitude. Membership in the Sephardic diaspora at large—a diaspora that spanned several continents and oceans—facilitated but did not ensure bonds of trust among those involved in long-distance trade. Their commercial letters show that Ergas and Silvera preferred competent Sephardim to kin in northern Europe and maintained cooperative credit relations with agents as geographically and culturally distant as Hindu Brahmins in Goa. In the end, it was not an Indian agent but a Persian Jew who betrayed Ergas and Silvera’s expectations, accelerating their bankruptcy.

Such a global history on a small scale also has its limitations. Some derive from the availability of primary sources and the feasibility of the project. For example, commercial statistics for the regions I discuss are scarce, making it difficult to delve into systematic regional comparisons or weigh the activities of Sephardic merchants against broader commercial patterns. Global in ambition, this book offers only sporadic quantitative measures of commercial fluxes. A comparative perspective also is barely sketched, although, wherever relevant, I draw contrasts and parallels with other merchant groups in order to explain which specific social norms and institutional formations favored the Sephardim as cross-cultural traders.

One of the major challenges I faced in writing such a history is that its conclusions reassert the importance of historical contexts, and yet contexts in this perspective are multiple, mobile, and overlapping. The interlocutors and points of references for the protagonists—the Jewish diaspora, the Sephardim, specific circles of families connected by marriage and financial bonds, Livorno, Tuscany, the Mediterranean, Atlantic Europe, the Indian Ocean, European maritime empires, and a broader range of merchant communities—cannot be thought of as concentric circles in order of importance or as immutable and uniform contexts. Sephardic merchants based in Livorno both adapted to existing economic, social, legal, and political conditions and shaped new environments and new connections by their presence and their activities. In order to grasp the manifold contexts that defined the quotidian existence and broader horizons of these Sephardim, I have combined synchronic and diachronic narratives. This study uses micro and macro scales of analysis as a way to examine the tension between normative structures and the ways in which groups and individuals manipulated them.¹⁸ In the history of European trade, an overdue emphasis on change over time often flattens the multifaceted experience of trading diasporas. I try to rescue my subjects from the grand narratives that have depicted trading diasporas

either as indispensable, even heroic, communities that resisted the rise of European states and colonialism until the mid-eighteenth century or as introverted groups that, despite their vitality, could not transcend the intrinsic limitations of their insularity to participate fully in impersonal and competitive markets.

The history of Sephardic merchants in early modern Livorno was bracketed most profoundly by two dates: 1591, the date of the first of the two exceptionally liberal livornine, and 1796, when Napoleon's troops first occupied Livorno and initiated a series of regime changes that transformed the lives of the Jews there and the fate of the port in radical ways.¹⁹ In between these two dates, the Sephardic community of Livorno went through its formative period, experienced its golden age, and coped with its progressive decline. Though I highlight the differences between various phases in the history of the city and its Jewish merchants, the chapters of the book unfold thematically as well as chronologically.

DIASPORAS, TRUST, AND CROSS-CULTURAL TRADE

When I first began to read Ergas and Silvera's letter books, I was intrigued by the mention of several non-Jews with whom they exchanged favors as well as remunerated services. These agents included Venetian merchants whose names were unmistakably Catholic, Florentine and Genoese correspondents in Lisbon, a host of other Christian agents across Europe, and, as mentioned, a group of merchants who, I soon discovered, belonged to the leading Hindu caste in Portuguese India. This heterogeneity seemed to be at odds with much of the conventional wisdom about trading diasporas, according to which Jews traded with other Jews, Armenians with Armenians, Quakers with Quakers, and so forth.

Two features of Ergas and Silvera's business relations with non-Jews attracted my attention. First, they appeared to be central to the partnership's activities and occurred in locations such as Lisbon and Goa where the legal protection of property rights for Jews was weak. "New" Christians (Jews forced to convert in Portugal and their descendents who were often accused of having remained Jews at heart) were not well tolerated in Portuguese territories after the early sixteenth century. Tribunals of the Inquisition were set up in Lisbon, Evora, and Coimbra in 1536 and in Goa in 1563. They routinely seized the goods of New Christians as a way of eradicating "crypto-Judaism." These persecutions induced growing numbers of New Christians to emigrate and severely weakened the ties between those who remained and the Sephardic diaspora. How did Sephardic merchants, who by the early eighteenth century rarely chose their business agents from among New Christians in mainland and overseas Portuguese ter-

ritories, govern their cross-cultural trade in these regions? Second, Ergas and Silvera's incursions into the Indian Ocean raise questions about their relations with European states and the chartered companies that controlled the maritime routes around the Cape of Good Hope. The evidence appears sufficiently compelling to prompt a reexamination of the core suggestions and potential pitfalls of the historical literature about trading diasporas.

In recent decades diaspora has emerged as an important subject across academic disciplines ranging from sociology to literary criticism, postcolonial studies, anthropology, and political science. Since the appearance of Philip Curtin's seminal *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* in the mid-1980s, historians have devoted particular attention to the study of diasporas that thrived in long-distance trade. Curtin borrowed the expression "trading diaspora" from Abner Cohen, an anthropologist specializing in the study of West Africa, who fifteen years earlier had defined a trading diaspora as a "moral community" that lives in dispersal but "constrains the behavior of the individual and ensures a large measure of conformity" via social and ritualistic interaction. Curtin's work built on this formulation to tackle a wide variety of cases from antiquity to the mid-eighteenth century, across all continents.²⁰

When *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* was published, the historiography of transregional social formations was still in its infancy. Predictably, Curtin fell into the trap of what the sociologist Rogers Brubaker calls "groupism: the tendency to take discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogenous, and externally bounded groups as basic constituents of social life."²¹ Twenty years later, the same tendency prevails in much of the literature on cross-cultural trade and is responsible for the widespread conflation of "trust" and "diaspora." For J. F. Boshier, "personal trust based on a common religion and carefully fostered relations of scattered families" explains the flourishing of Huguenot business ventures in the Atlantic after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes.²² Recently C. A. Bayly spoke of "communities of mercantile trust" in reference to the trading diasporas that helped create a more globally interdependent world before the nineteenth century.²³ With reference to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Russia, Yuri Slezkine maintains that "the Jews owed their economic success to strangeness, specialized training, and the kind of intragroup trust that assured the relative reliability of business partners, loan clients, and subcontractors."²⁴ Two specialists in the history of Armenian merchants in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries praise them for the "ethos of trust" and the "shared moral and ethical norms underlying it," which "helped the Armenian trading houses to avoid the relatively rigid and costly operation of the hierarchic system of organization practiced by the English."²⁵ Others have gone further in collap-

ing group identity and trust. For Sushil Chaudhury, "that the Armenians often acted as a group rather than as individual entrepreneurs is a result of the pride they took in their identity."²⁶

These statements evoke a romanticized view of merchant communities as harmonious, cohesive, and full of pride. They also fail to explain the workings of the phenomena that they purport to illuminate: they assume that trust is a self-evident attribute of a merchant community. Recently, in a notable study of Sindhi businessmen from the region north of Karachi, the historian Claude Markovits became one of the first to challenge this assumption. He remarks, for example, that sibling rivalry serves as an antidote to essentialized notions of trust.²⁷ Other historians have combined empirical studies and theoretical reflections to chart the specific social norms and institutional forces that governed business cooperation within a trading diaspora. Rarely, however, have they asked whether the same norms and forces also worked in fiduciary relationships with strangers.²⁸

Economists have launched a more corrosive attack against commonsensical understandings of trust. Oliver Williamson suggests that we eliminate the term from our vocabulary altogether and replace it with "calculativeness," arguing that standard economic theory can explain problems that are addressed by invoking trust.²⁹ Following this logic, we would not distinguish between intra- and inter-group trust but would treat each utility-maximizing individual independent of his or her social, linguistic, and ethnic identities or other characteristics and examine solely the information, incentives, and threats that induce him or her to act cooperatively or opportunistically.

The distance that separates Curtin from Williamson is wide. Trust, trading diasporas, and cross-cultural trade have indeed long been sites of passionate controversies between rational choice theorists and even the most ecumenical followers of Karl Polanyi, for whom economic action is always embedded in social structures and capitalist rationality is a recent invention. Disputes between formalist and substantivist economic historians took a new turn after the 1970s, when the new institutional economics rehabilitated the role of government institutions in the development of capitalism against the prevailing neo-Smithian orthodoxy. These scholars often use long-distance trade as ammunition. According to the influential Douglass North, "the development of long-distance trade, perhaps through caravans or lengthy ship voyages, requires a sharp break in the characteristics of an economic structure." This sharp break must include new forms of impersonal contract negotiations, for which state policies and institutions provide the best incentives and security. In North's words, "history in consequence is largely a story of *institutional* evolution in which the historical per-

formance of economies can only be understood as a part of a *sequential* story."³⁰ While the concept of "institutional evolution" in theory allows for the influence of unwritten rules and social norms, in the work of North and his followers it leaves little space for stateless diasporas to generate change.

The new institutional economics proved especially influential in the historical literature about the European commercial expansion in the Indian Ocean. The historian K. N. Chaudhuri embraces it in his studies of the English East India Company and other northern European chartered companies, which he refers to as "bureaucratic economic organisations."³¹ Concurrently, he also dismisses the theoretical validity of the concept of trading diasporas. He argues that "the general characteristics of human behaviour" (by which he means economic rationality), and not merchants' spatial dispersion, social interdependence, and informal organization, account for the role of Jews, Armenians, and other groups active in the Indian Ocean in the early modern period.³² An important collection of essays edited by Jean Aubin and Denys Lombard about numerous merchant communities in the Indian Ocean that first appeared in French in 1988 implicitly refuted this view, but its fragmentary quality and the reluctance of its editors and contributors to theorize diminished its impact beyond the field.³³

Since 1989 the work of the economic historian Avner Greif has been stirring up new and animated debates about the role of institutions in long-distance trade and about the relation between business organization and cultural beliefs more broadly. Criticizing what he perceives to be a restrictive characterization of institutions by North and others, Greif defines institutions as systems of "social factors that conjointly generate a regularity of behavior," and by social factors he means "rules, beliefs, norms, and organizations."³⁴ His contributions have propelled a broader trend in the social sciences, and economics in particular, that emphasizes the interdependence rather than the mutual exclusion of social norms and codified rules. So-called private-order economics has illuminated historical contexts—whether in developing or industrialized countries—in which contracts and property rights are enforced without any help from state institutions.³⁵

Greif revisits the "commercial revolution" of the medieval Mediterranean by comparing the business organization of a specific group of North African Jews (known to scholars thanks to the work of S. D. Goitein and often referred to as Maghribi Jews) with that of Genoese merchants.³⁶ For Greif, Maghribi Jews in the eleventh and twelfth centuries represent a case of socially enforced market governance in which individual self-interest and multilateral chains of information transmission permitted merchants to monitor the integrity of their overseas agents. The letters that circulated among members of this trading diaspora discouraged fraud because everyone boycotted those caught cheating. Greif

calls this business organization a "community responsibility system." After the thirteenth century, however, Genoese merchants implemented a more efficient "individual legal responsibility system," in which the use of limited liability partnerships allowed merchants to renege on a contract with one agent and hire another at no additional cost and with no negative impact on their reputation.

Greif's examples show that the business organization adopted by Maghribi Jews was inefficient because their boycotts only worked against other Maghribi Jews. In contrast, notarial deeds indicate that Genoese merchants sometimes established agency relations with non-Genoese.³⁷ It follows that for cross-cultural trade to become the norm, new contracts, a formal legal code, and effective tribunals are necessary. This is one of the main lessons that Greif draws from his study of late medieval Genoa. His analysis offers a remedy to tautological and generic invocations of the importance of trust for trading diasporas. But it also simplifies the available evidence. First, it is not clear that courts and legal contracts played no role in agency relations among Maghribis.³⁸ Moreover, even if individual legal responsibility became the standard in medieval Genoese trade, other social and legal obligations clashed with what Greif calls "individualistic cultural beliefs." In thirteenth-century Genoa, for example, merchants passed their debts to their sons if they went bankrupt and had to settle scores regarding all offenses against family members.³⁹ Any reader of Goitein will also wonder why interfaith trade disappears from Greif's recounting of medieval Mediterranean commerce. Goitein and his successors studied Maghribi Jews as a case of integration of Jewish and Muslim societies, but in Greif's work the same community becomes self-contained and exemplifies stalled Muslim economic development.⁴⁰

In brief, in Greif's account, the contrast between the Maghribi and the Genoese organization of long-distance trade is stark. However, Greif also concedes that "theoretically, the community responsibility system can foster intercommunity impersonal exchange."⁴¹ Indeed, a significant portion of his work aims to explain the variety of institutions that can solve the two fundamental problems of exchange: opportunism and expropriation. Following his lead while also departing from some of his premises, I illustrate how, as late as the eighteenth century, individual legal responsibility coexisted with elements of the community responsibility system, even in instances in which commission agency involved merchants from far-away and heterogeneous communities.

As these comments suggest, a lot is at stake in studies of cross-cultural trade. They affect competing interpretations of capitalism and its historical forms. Curtin opened his book with the claim that "trade and exchange across cul-

tural lines are perhaps the most important external stimuli to change, leaving aside the immeasurable and less-benign influence of military conquest."⁴² This conviction has found fertile terrain among scholars of world history who conceive of cross-cultural trade primarily as a macro phenomenon. They investigate transregional trade, convergent and divergent structural trends, or the activities of trading diasporas that operated across predictable geopolitical lines, but they pay little or no attention to the description of how strangers made deals.⁴³ To both North and Greif, on the other hand, cross-cultural trade is a micro phenomenon involving individual transactions between nonrelatives and strangers. But in their studies, the workings of cross-cultural trade follow from theoretical postulates about the creation of more secure institutions for arbitration and doctrinal innovations rather than from the analysis of actual transactions between strangers.⁴⁴ This book is an attempt to bridge the gap between these two perspectives. It examines the macro context in which cross-cultural trade took place but also dissects specific transactions and networks.

In 1622 Gerard Malynes, the author of an important early English manual for merchants, asked "whether a merchant may trafficke with Turks, Heathens, Barbarians, and Infidels, and performe promise with them."⁴⁵ The question betrays the continuing influence of Christian theology, which justified the pursuit of profit during the commercial revolution of the Middle Ages by equating a reputable merchant with a good Christian and a good citizen. Non-Christians, and in particular Jews involved in money-lending in medieval Italian towns, were by definition excluded from the virtuous circle that identified skilled and industrious merchants with honorable citizens and devout Christians.⁴⁶ Malynes did not provide a full-fledged answer to his own question, but his work is an implicit admission that he was concerned with *how* (rather than *whether*) Christian merchants could make credible agreements with "Infidels." After the Reformation and after the admittance of Sephardic Jews to key European port cities, the social and symbolic unity of Christendom diminished in force. Meanwhile, the expansion of European intercontinental trade in the sixteenth century increased the need to extend credit to non-Christians. Although it exposes the persistence of lexical and conceptual frameworks in which prejudice coexisted with pragmatic forms of tolerance, Malynes's question was more rhetorical than prescriptive.

Writing about ninety years later, Daniel Defoe returned to the same quandary. In 1710 he wondered, "how do we trade among the Turks, and trust the Mahometans, one of whose doctrines, in the Alchoran, is, not to keep faith with Christians?" This time, Defoe gave a straightforward answer to the question. He

was convinced that "by a just, punctual, and honourable practice in trade," Muslim merchants (and, by extension, other infidels) gained the trust of Europeans, sometimes more than did fellow Christians.⁴⁷

Again, Defoe's confidence that the lure of profit made merchants of all stripes blind even to the most deeply ingrained religious suspicion should not be taken literally. His argument should be read against the backdrop of contentious intellectual and policy debates about the boundaries of English commercial society. But Defoe's assertion that experience and individual credibility mattered more than religious affiliation opens up a productive line of inquiry, and not only for intellectual historians. The Sephardim of Livorno *did* enter into durable business relations with Christians and Hindus.⁴⁸ Neither of the two prevalent approaches that I reviewed above—the belief in the importance of a common religious or ethnic identity or the emphasis on legal institutions that governed credit and property rights—alone provides a satisfactory answer to the question of how Sephardic merchants managed cross-cultural business relations. I suggest instead that we examine the creative combination of group discipline, contractual obligations, customary norms, political protection, and discursive conventions that assisted merchants such as Ergas and Silvera in trading beyond their own diaspora.

My approach incorporates the principal lessons of social network analysis and a growing theoretical and empirical literature concerning trust. I do not consider trustworthiness as a stable attribute of an individual or a group. I thus evaluate the choices made by Ergas and Silvera as the result of their strategic and calculative interactions with other actors. But I also analyze the way in which they managed collective symbolic representations, shared communication codes, and coercive social norms that were beyond their control. While examining the mechanisms of cross-cultural trade, in essence, I aim to avoid the fallacies of what the sociologist Mark Granovetter has called "oversocialized" and "undersocialized" conceptions of social action.⁴⁹

COMMERCE AND CULTURE: JEWS, MERCHANTS, AND CROSS-CULTURAL BROKERS

The Familiarity of Strangers is a social and economic history of Livorno Sephardim. But we cannot employ the expression "cross-cultural trade" without an understanding of the concept of culture. What did cultural differences mean to those who took part in these exchanges? How can we extract meanings from norms and practices? And how can we square eighteenth-century debates about the political and symbolic role of commerce with the modalities of conducting

economic transactions at the time? These questions are ideologically fraught and methodologically complex, not least because intellectual history, social history, and economic history part ways more often than they enter into dialogue with one another. I do not aspire to outline a coherent answer to all these questions, but I do hope to unsettle anachronistic and homological connections between culture and economics.⁵⁰

When I refer to culture, I have in mind both what united and what separated Jews and non-Jews. In the early modern period, merchants of disparate backgrounds expressed their expectations and pursued their economic goals by drawing from progressively more uniform legal customs and rhetorical traditions. Business letters are the most revealing documents of translocal and cross-cultural mercantile customs. As the etiquette of business letters became ever more standardized in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it facilitated fiduciary relations among strangers. At the same time, religious traditions, social practices, and legal norms continued to separate Jews from non-Jews. I focus on the tension between these two coexisting cultural spheres. Shared discursive traditions as reflected in business correspondence were powerful tools of economic integration but cannot be interpreted as reflections of social realities. The cosmopolitan language of business letters did not automatically spawn cosmopolitan feelings of tolerance, mutual respect, curiosity, and appreciation of differences.

For Greif as for North, culture and beliefs can be inferred from economic norms and practices. The presence of laws protecting property rights or of contracts allowing for a clearer division between capital and labor, for example, is exemplary of a society that fosters individualism at the expense of corporate belonging.⁵¹ One of the troubling by-products of this kind of economic reductionism is that it presumes a homogeneous society in which everyone participates in the same patterns of change regardless of religious, class, gender, or other differences. This holistic image leaves us ill-equipped to analyze the role of Sephardic merchants or any other corporate group in the economy of early modern Europe. Curtin, too, for different reasons, embraces a static notion of culture. To him, cross-cultural trade before the nineteenth century was predicated on naturalized divisions between groups, and yet it eventually resulted in the assimilation of a trading diaspora into the "host society."⁵² Perhaps for this reason Jews are conspicuously absent from his wide-ranging survey. More recently, an assorted group of literary scholars and cultural critics engaged in "diaspora studies" has destabilized conventional notions of culture by negating concepts of essence and purity and underscoring the porosity of all boundaries.⁵³ Again, to historians of the early modern period these propositions are as inspiring as they

are frustrating. Few groups exemplify cultural crossover more than the Western Sephardim. Clean-shaven Sephardic merchants in Amsterdam even appropriated the concept of purity of blood in order to define their collective identity in opposition to other Jews.⁵⁴ And yet it would be plainly inaccurate to discount the power imbalance that characterized their status in the Christian world as well as the legal and cultural barriers that separated them from the dominant society. In order to account for the Sephardim's position, I have turned my attention to the insights of the anthropologist Fredrik Barth, a pioneer of studies of interethnic relations who found that sustained economic relations between different ethnic groups do not necessarily dissolve social and cultural boundaries.⁵⁵

'Communitarian cosmopolitanism' is the expression that I use to encapsulate the experience of Sephardic merchants who, in Livorno as elsewhere, synthesized multiple traditions and mingled with non-Jews but did so within the framework of a corporatist society of unequal and separate groups. The forms of communitarian cosmopolitanism changed from place to place, but everywhere they sought to contain fluidity and regulate the interaction between Jews and Christians. As settlements of Iberian Jews became progressively safe and stable across continental Europe in the course of the seventeenth century, legal prescriptions, social organization, and collective self-perception encouraged more clearly defined boundaries between Jews and Christians (except in France, where Iberian refugees were tolerated as "Portuguese merchants" rather than as Jews). During the sixteenth century, ambiguity characterized the religious identity of most Jews who had left Iberia. Among the members of the "Portuguese nation" across Europe and the Atlantic, conversos and Old Christians were not always distinguishable. By the 1630s, persecution by the Inquisition and the growth of Spanish and Portuguese Jewish congregations in Venice, Livorno, Hamburg, and Amsterdam led most New Christians to return to or embrace Judaism outside Iberia. More than a century spent with covert identities was not wiped away, to be sure. The historian Yosef Kaplan has called the Amsterdam Sephardim "New Jews" not only because they or their progenitors had been raised as Christian converts but also because they devised a new, less orthodox form of Judaism.⁵⁶ Their acclimatization to Christian culture was visible not only in their commercial practices, but also in their dress, their forms of self-governance, and their intellectual pursuits. Though fluent in several European languages, only a few among them mastered Hebrew beyond the basic requirements of synagogue attendance. This unique synthesis of normative Judaism and Gentile decorum undoubtedly made business relations between Sephardim and non-Jews easier, but it was hardly comparable to postemancipation assimilation.

Several biographical studies have recently illuminated the extraordinary

careers of individuals (mostly men, the majority of them of high social status) who, as part of the new connections formed during the early modern period, moved across states, empires, and religious divides, sometimes taking up manifold identities over the course of a lifetime.⁵⁷ These biographies are important correctives to nostalgic or imperialistic misappropriations of the past but should not lead us to underestimate the internal and external pressures toward the separation of social spheres that shaped Christian-Jewish relations in early modern Europe. Individual Jews and Christians interacted economically, intellectually, socially, and sometimes sexually. As collectivities, however, they thought of themselves and understood one another as distinct. Secular and ecclesiastical authorities and centuries of theological anti-Semitism helped safeguard boundaries between Jews and Christians in Catholic and Protestant Europe, with the different modalities that I investigate. Religious and lay leaders of Sephardic communities aimed at the same goal.⁵⁸

Overall, cross-cultural trade created ample opportunities for communication and cultural exchange but did not dissolve legal and social barriers. The Sephardim's habit of using Christian pseudonyms when trading with merchants in Iberia is at once a mark of the ease with which they moved in multiple, even antagonistic geopolitical and cultural contexts and a conventionally accepted fiction used to bypass legal restrictions. Ergas and Silvera employed this expedient countless times in their letters, bills of lading, and powers of attorney, which they signed under different aliases—most commonly Ventura and Joseph Benedetti and Henrique Silvera, but also Prospero Salvadore del Monte, Pietro and Paolo del Forte, Raphael and Giuseppe del Monte, Daniel and Manuel De Felice, Jacopo and Simon Oliva, Giovanni Francesco Stella, Giovanni Silvestro Petrini, Dionigi and Ferdinando del Bene. The Medici consented to this device.⁵⁹ Dutch Jews adopted the same tactic. An Amsterdam notarial document dated 1671 records that Francisco and António Gutierrez Gomes carried on business under as many as fifteen different names.⁶⁰ Having both a Christian and a Hebrew name did not necessarily mean that a merchant shifted between religions, not even when crypto-Judaism was a widespread phenomenon.⁶¹ Italian Jews, too, who were not prone to religious wavering, often had two names, one Italian and one Jewish—a sign of their familiarity with and immersion in dominant Catholic culture but not of their endless mutability.⁶²

Trade was not the only occasion for communication between Jews and Christians. Intellectual exchanges intensified in the seventeenth century. Christian scholars who became interested in the Hebrew language and biblical scholarship met and conversed with learned rabbis. Mutual appreciation did not always characterize these conversations in Baroque Italy. Indeed, some of them oc-

curred under duress, as when Hebrew instructors were coerced into tutoring Christian pupils and princes.⁶³ Although not an international capital or a court, Livorno became a crossroads for foreign savants and dilettantes. The nearby University of Pisa further stimulated intellectual dialogue. In the first half of the eighteenth century a Livorno rabbi, Joseph Attias (1672–1739), engaged in polite and secular debates with eminent and amateurish Christian scholars while also serving as an elected officer in his community.⁶⁴ Attias stood out among his colleagues, most of whom lived in a more insular environment.

Although Sephardic merchants were immersed in Christian culture and society, Christian merchants could be comfortable using Judeophobic language at the same time as they sealed business deals with Jews.⁶⁵ The market—as a physical location and as an ongoing process of negotiation—created new opportunities for encounters and cross-cultural fertilization. Commerce encouraged new conversations between strangers and generated new tools with which to curtail the uncertainties that derived from trading with strangers. In the instances I examine, however, the market was not synonymous with anonymity, individualism, or respect, but, rather, was another arena in which early modern power relations were redefined, sometimes harmoniously, sometimes contentiously.

This book seeks to recapture the openness and the strictures of cross-cultural trade. It is an economic history sensitive to the multiple experiences of the marketplace. In no way does it advocate a simple replacement of “the market” with “culture” and “society.” Rather, it strives to show how a global mercantile culture (with its laws and its customs) coexisted with highly localized and segmented social and legal arrangements. It focuses less on the concept of identity than on social networks, power, and institutions. It is more concerned with intertwined networks of communities than with isolated individuals, more with partial acculturation and cultural accommodation than with fluidity, more with prescriptive styles of communication than with the putative self-evidence of the universal pursuit of profit.

DIASPORIC FAMILIES AND THE MAKING OF A BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP

In April 1747 the partnership of Ergas and Silvera was settling its bankruptcy. In a note accompanying the legal agreement signed by the required two-thirds of their creditors, Ergas and Silvera declared that they had run a commercial house in Livorno for more than 160 years.¹ They were exaggerating: the firm had been in business only since late 1704. But its senior partner, Abraham Ergas, could claim legitimately that his ancestors had been reputable merchants in Pisa and afterward in Livorno since the 1590s. A lesser family in the Tuscan port, the Silveras owed much of their affluence and prestige to their association with the Ergases, whom they helped to set up a branch of their business in Aleppo in the early eighteenth century. By the time they went bankrupt, Ergas and Silvera still commanded respect in town. A business adversary who had contributed to their failure said that they were “among the most important and influential in the land” (“i quali sono de’ primi e de’ grandi della terra”).²

This chapter reconstructs the vicissitudes of the Ergas and Silvera families in Livorno and their commercial association. It may seem clichéd to begin a study of Sephardim with a focus on family ties. After all, stories of migrant communities and diasporas are invariably filled with narratives of far-flung relatives wrenched apart by forced separation, bonded by blood, and transformed by the experience of displacement. But my aim is more than descriptive. Only by mapping the precise family connections that Sephardim developed across time and space can we begin to analyze their strategic choices and the benefits and limitations of their reliance on kin (both cognate and affine) as business allies.

Scholars and amateurs struggle to gather accurate genealogical information about early modern Sephardim. Many obstacles complicate even the most basic reconstruction of life events. When available, archival documents are scattered

in many locations and collections. A name, moreover, does not always provide a dependable Adriane's thread through archival indexes, library catalogues, and search engines in ever-expanding online databases. A small number of Hebrew first names often recur across generations and among lateral kin (both in the same and in different locations), and pseudonyms abound, especially among men, and merchants in particular.³

In following the traces of the ancestors and relatives of the partners in Ergas and Silvera, I do not consider last names to be sufficient evidence of kinship. Nor is it my goal to document the presence of individuals named Ergas or Silvera in specific locations at specific moments in time. Rather, I seek to elucidate the process by which members of these larger clans forged marriage alliances and how these alliances shaped their economic investments.⁴ As I argue throughout the book, membership in a broader diaspora helped merchants recruit business agents in distant places and insert themselves into preexisting commercial networks, but it did not automatically ensure that bonds of trust emerged between coreligionists. It was by way of well-crafted matrimonial alliances that Sephardic merchants built their specialization in commercial niches. Their specialization, in turn, made them appealing business agents to coreligionists and strangers alike.

Readers may wonder how merchants who fled persecution, lived in close-knit communities, and actively pursued endogamous marriages can be the protagonists in a study of cross-cultural trade. Indeed, this puzzle is at the center of my investigation. My initial observation is that we ought not to equate cross-cultural trade in the early modern period with the disruption of social and legal boundaries but, rather, examine the specific legal, social, and economic mechanisms that sustained it. The desire to enrich themselves motivated Ergas and Silvera, and all who traded with them, to pursue new opportunities and open up their networks to strangers. Faced with the insecurity of available communication infrastructures and lacking their own state to back commercial initiatives at a time when military force and diplomatic power mattered ever more in the battle for commercial supremacy, Sephardic partnerships sought to secure their inner circles of associates before they expanded their purviews. Analysis of the way Ergas and Silvera engaged in cross-cultural trade must therefore begin with a close scrutiny of their family trajectories and their relations to other Sephardic networks based in Livorno.

What follows is not a full-scale biography of the Ergases and Silveras of Livorno because it emphasizes their matrimonial alliances and economic activities while neglecting other facets of their family and individual lives. To begin with, not all young men in well-to-do Sephardic families pursued a mercantile career. The

study of religious texts was also held in great esteem. For example, the Ergases of Livorno included a learned and ascetic scholar, Rabbi Joseph Ergas (1688–1730). One of his brothers, Moses Ergas, cleverly managed the family's mercantile fortune but died childless. When he bequeathed his assets to his nephews in 1746, he not only subsidized a religious school in his brother's name but also ordered Abraham, Joseph's son, to cultivate his interest in the study of the Torah and guaranteed that he would receive the same income as his brother, who was obliged to manage the partnership.⁵ For merchants who occupied themselves with earthly matters, religion was a spiritual endeavor and a social obligation. Ergas and Silvera complied with numerous requests for financial aid made by rabbis from poor communities in the Holy Land. In Aleppo, Elijah Silvera established a fund (*Bikur Holim*) to provide medical assistance to the needy and endowed the *Midrash Bet Silvera* to foster the education of pupils and scholars.⁶ In their bequests, too, Ergas and Silvera resembled other Sephardic merchants, as Chapter 3 illustrates.

Understanding the lives of Sephardic women in Livorno and, in particular, the ways in which they negotiated religious, gender, and socioeconomic boundaries, is even more challenging. Sons, cousins, and nephews took over the business operations following a senior partner's death. As a consequence, women rarely played a direct role in the management of Sephardic firms, though widows occasionally did so on a temporary basis.⁷ It would thus appear that well-to-do Jewish women were not actively engaged in the local economy in ways that were comparable to the practices in the British Atlantic trade, although further research on the topic is much needed.⁸ As discussed in Chapters 5 and 10, a gendered perspective nonetheless illuminates important aspects of the Sephardic commercial experience. Though not in positions of command, women played a crucial if indirect role in the formation, transmission, and preservation of merchants' capital because of the legal and customary rights they possessed over their dowries.

THE ERGASES IN LIVORNO

The first member of the Ergas family to arrive in Tuscany was Abraham, son of Isaac Israel Ergas (see figure 1.1). In 1594 he rented a house in the parish of Sant'Andrea Fuori Porta, where a new synagogue was inaugurated that year (and where it still stands today).⁹ We do not know when Abraham Ergas and his family left Portugal or the places that they visited before settling in Tuscany. In his rental contract of 1594, Abraham is referred to as a "Levantine Jew," a label that normally indicated Jews who reached the Italian peninsula from the Otto-

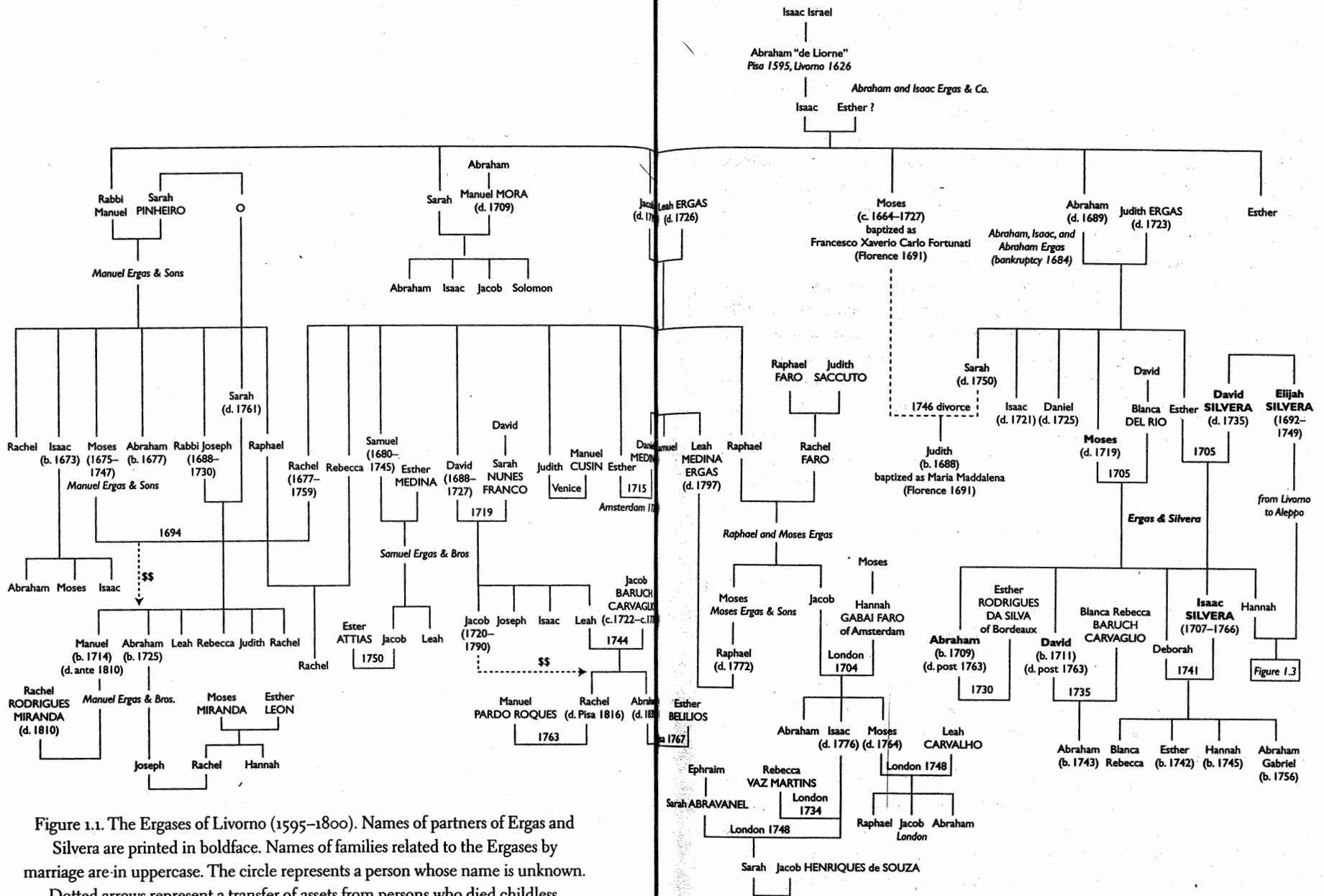


Figure 1.1. The Ergases of Livorno (1595-1800). Names of partners of Ergas and Silvera are printed in boldface. Names of families related to the Ergases by marriage are in uppercase. The circle represents a person whose name is unknown. Dotted arrows represent a transfer of assets from persons who died childless. Sources: SPL, MS 134; PRO, PROB, 11/851, 11/896, 11/962, 1018; R. Toaff 1990; Collins 2006; L. D. Barnett 1949: 67; notary deeds, marriage contracts, and birth and death records from ACEL, ASF, ASL.

man Empire. But in the 1590s this designation did not necessarily imply that Abraham was an Ottoman subject or that he had resided in the Ottoman Empire. Christian authorities used imprecise labels for Iberian refugees. Abraham may also have preferred to be called a Levantine in order to allay suspicions about his forefathers' forced conversion to Catholicism in Portugal a century earlier and the possible accusations of apostasy that might result from it.¹⁰

The century that preceded Abraham's arrival in Tuscany is among the most dramatic chapters in the history of Iberian Jews and the Jewish diaspora more generally. When the Spanish monarchs expelled all Jews from the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon in 1492, many fled to the Ottoman Empire, where Jews and Christians were treated as second-class citizens but were neither actively persecuted nor the targets of systematic efforts at conversion.¹¹ No European country except Portugal allowed the Jews expelled from Spain to settle permanently. About one hundred thousand Spanish Jews consequently crossed the border into Portugal on payment of a tax.¹² Only five years later, however, Portugal's new king, Don Manuel, ordered the forced conversion of all Jews and the seizure of their goods.¹³ After the Portuguese Inquisition held its first auto-da-fé, more and more New Christians left the country. From the 1530s to the 1560s the principal destinations of these émigrés were the Ottoman cities of Constantinople and Salonica, as well as Antwerp, Ferrara, Ancona, and Venice.¹⁴ Some fled to North Africa or the Americas, others to Cochin and Goa in Portuguese India. Until the last decade of the sixteenth century, however, all destinations in Christian lands offered only a precarious refuge.

The livornine of 1591 and 1593 formed the most audacious legislation regarding Iberian Jews issued in Europe at the time. Information about these new charters must have spread rapidly among New Christians and Iberian émigrés if Abraham Ergas and others immediately responded to the Medici's invitation to settle in Pisa and Livorno. Judging from his status in the community of early settlers, Abraham must have brought with him prestige and likely some capital. By 1600 he was elected to the board of lay officials who governed the Jewish community in Pisa.¹⁵

Livorno was just beginning to emerge as an international emporium. Its potential was evident from the almost daily expansion of the port infrastructure and the coming of new settlers—poor workers from the rural hinterland, soldiers, Greek mariners, and entrepreneurial merchants. Located fifteen miles southwest of the ancient maritime republic of Pisa, Livorno was slowly becoming known as Tuscany's only international port and as one of the most important in the Mediterranean. Like most of the Jews who had recently arrived in Pisa, Abraham Ergas soon resettled there. The nascent Jewish community of

Livorno was dominated by a small group of Iberian families, and Abraham took a leading position. In the 1630s he repeatedly sat on the community's governing board.¹⁶ Until the calamitous plague of 1630–31, Venice had been the magnet of Sephardic immigration in Italy. Now that Venetian commercial power had begun to wane, Livorno attracted fast-growing numbers of Iberian Jews. In the 1620s and 1630s, other Ergases left Venice to seek better opportunities in the Tuscan port. By 1633, the lineage of Abraham Ergas *de Liorne* (of Livorno) was distinguishable from that of Jacob and Isaac Ergas *de Veneza* (of Venice).¹⁷ Both Ergas clans became well rooted in Livorno and were major figures in the local Sephardic oligarchy.¹⁸

In the succeeding generations, the Ergases in Livorno married cousins and close kin and created marriage ties with other peers. They dropped their geographical appellations (*de Liorne* and *de Veneza*), but blood and kin ties did not impede the rise of harsh and prolonged family disputes, in particular, those concerning inheritance. In December 1746, shortly before his brother Moses died, Raphael Ergas disputed Moses' last will and initiated a lawsuit against his nephews.¹⁹ Nonetheless, a sense of belonging to the same extended family (*casa*, household or clan) developed, especially in the face of challenges from outsiders.²⁰ After Abraham Ergas was assassinated in 1689, his brother blamed Moses Attias for having hired the murderer and declared him an enemy of the family.²¹

Less certain is whether a sense of belonging to the same lineage also extended to the many Ergas families, several active in commerce, who resided in different parts of Europe and the Mediterranean. In the mid-sixteenth century, Isaac, Samuel, and Abraham Ergas lived in Ancona; they were referred to as "Portuguese" and traded with other Sephardim in Ferrara.²² Not all Ergases left Iberia in the sixteenth century. Members of the same nuclear family commonly lived on different sides of the religious line that divided New Christians and New Jews. In 1605, two brothers in the town of Trancoso, Portugal, Jorge and Baltasar Henriques, established a commercial partnership in Madrid in conjunction with their other three brothers, one of whom, David Ergas alias Manuel da Cuña alias Luis de Altuna, was based in Amsterdam.²³ More Ergases arrived in Amsterdam from Hamburg over the course of the seventeenth century.²⁴ In the Dutch capital, no Ergas ever reached the level of prominence that the Ergases did in Livorno, but several men with this name served as officeholders of the Spanish and Portuguese Jewish congregation during the second half of the seventeenth century.²⁵ At the time, Sephardic capital and people normally moved from southern to northern Europe. Different reasons, however, led a couple of Ergases to trek in the opposite direction.²⁶ We do not know whether the Ergases of Livorno

and Amsterdam intermarried in the seventeenth century, but they offered each other economic services from time to time.²⁷

It is unclear what personal ties, if any, linked the Ergases in Ottoman territories to those in Europe and thus whether this Sephardic lineage preserved connections between its Eastern and Western branches. In Ragusa (now known as Dubrovnik), an Adriatic port city that was a tributary to the sultan, Samuel Ergas traded jewelry with Flemish merchants in 1586.²⁸ In the 1620s some Ergases were doing business in Constantinople with the English Levant Company at a time when Jews were still officially banned from England.²⁹ In the 1630s and 1640s Isaac and Jacob Ergas were in Tunis. After this date, we struggle to find traces of any Ergases on the southern shores of the Mediterranean.³⁰

Although geographical movement and displacement never ceased to characterize Sephardic life, in the mid-seventeenth century, when Sephardim in Livorno and Amsterdam found increased legal security and social acceptance, the most affluent among them also became increasingly sedentary. Several Ergases put down roots in Livorno. By 1678, five partnerships carried the family name in the Tuscan port.³¹ The most successful was the one set up by Abraham on his arrival and continued by his son Isaac and his grandson Abraham. They prospered by importing grain from the Aegean islands, wax and dates from northern Africa, and colonial goods such as muslins, pepper, and tobacco. They also thrived in the marine insurance and credit business. They regularly offered their services to non-Jews and were especially active in the Venetian financial market.³² In 1684, after more than four decades of thriving business, the firm of Abraham, Isaac, and Abraham Ergas declared bankruptcy, an unfortunate but common occurrence at the time.

When filing for bankruptcy, Abraham Ergas and Co. was 56,672:18:4 pieces of eight in debt.³³ When Ergas and Silvera went bankrupt in 1746, the company's deficit amounted to 22,218:19:10 pieces. One is tempted to use these rare figures as benchmarks, for no statistics survive to evaluate the size of commercial partnerships in Livorno, and suggest that the Ergases handled larger budgets in the late seventeenth century than in the first half of the eighteenth. Judging from a few surviving account books, between 1730 and 1744 Ergas and Silvera's annual turnover ranged from roughly 27,000 to 60,000 pieces of eight.³⁴ Their economic position did not compare favorably to that of the wealthiest Sephardic financiers of northern Europe, including some of London correspondents, such as Benjamin Mendes da Costa and the Salvadores. But they won a place among the middle to upper ranks of Mediterranean private partnerships and of the Jewish firms in Livorno.³⁵

Lacking any information about the Ergases prior to their arrival in Tuscany,

we cannot ascertain whether they had been able to carry any wealth with them or whether they were obliged to start anew. Emigration from Iberia was a dangerous and traumatic event. And yet some high-profile families did manage to maintain personal and commercial ties to places they had abandoned and to transfer some if not most of their wealth to new destinations. At various intervals, several brothers named Carvalho Nunes alias Baruch Carvaglio, originally from Guarda, Portugal, moved from Lisbon to Venice in the early seventeenth century (see figure 1.2). There, Moses and Isaac ran an extraordinarily prosperous business and continued to trade with firms in Iberia under the name of Francesco Nunes Carvaglio, until their fortunes dwindled in the 1690s.³⁶ As with all private merchants running small-to-medium-sized partnerships, Sephardim could not compete with state-sponsored oligopolistic companies in terms of capitalization and were exposed to recurrent shortages of liquidity.

After the bankruptcy of Abraham Ergas in 1684, his oldest son, Moses, took up his legacy. His father and grandfather had been involved primarily in intra-Mediterranean trade;³⁷ Moses sought to continue this tradition but also to expand the geographic area and offerings of the business. His goal was to connect with a rising network of Sephardim that operated both in the Mediterranean (from a basis in Aleppo) and in some branches of intercontinental trade, exchanging Mediterranean coral and Indian diamonds in particular. In order to pursue his goal, Moses carefully planned his own and his immediate relatives' marriages in order to enlarge the circle of his associates (see figure 1.3). In 1705 he married Blanca del Rio, the daughter of a family with branches in Aleppo, Livorno, and Amsterdam.³⁸ Meanwhile, he arranged for his sister, Esther Ergas, to marry David Silvera. In Silvera, Moses found the person who could help him develop his business strategies. David Silvera's forefathers had accumulated extensive knowledge of the diamond trade but also lost their fortunes. Now relegated to a lower status than the Ergases in Livorno, the Silvera family agreed to send one of their scions to Aleppo.

Plagued with recurring famines and epidemics and far from Europe, Aleppo was not the most desirable destination for a Sephardi like Elijah Silvera. But in the preceding two decades the Ottoman city had attracted some of the most commercially talented Sephardic young men from Livorno and Venice and occasionally from Amsterdam. Few in number, they acted as agents and partners of their fathers and uncles and exerted considerable influence in the trade with Europe, especially France. Elijah soon emerged as a leading figure among the Sephardic merchants residing in Aleppo under French protection.³⁹

As the Ergas and Silvera families strengthened their relations in Livorno and in Aleppo, the second generation also intermarried. In February 1741 David's

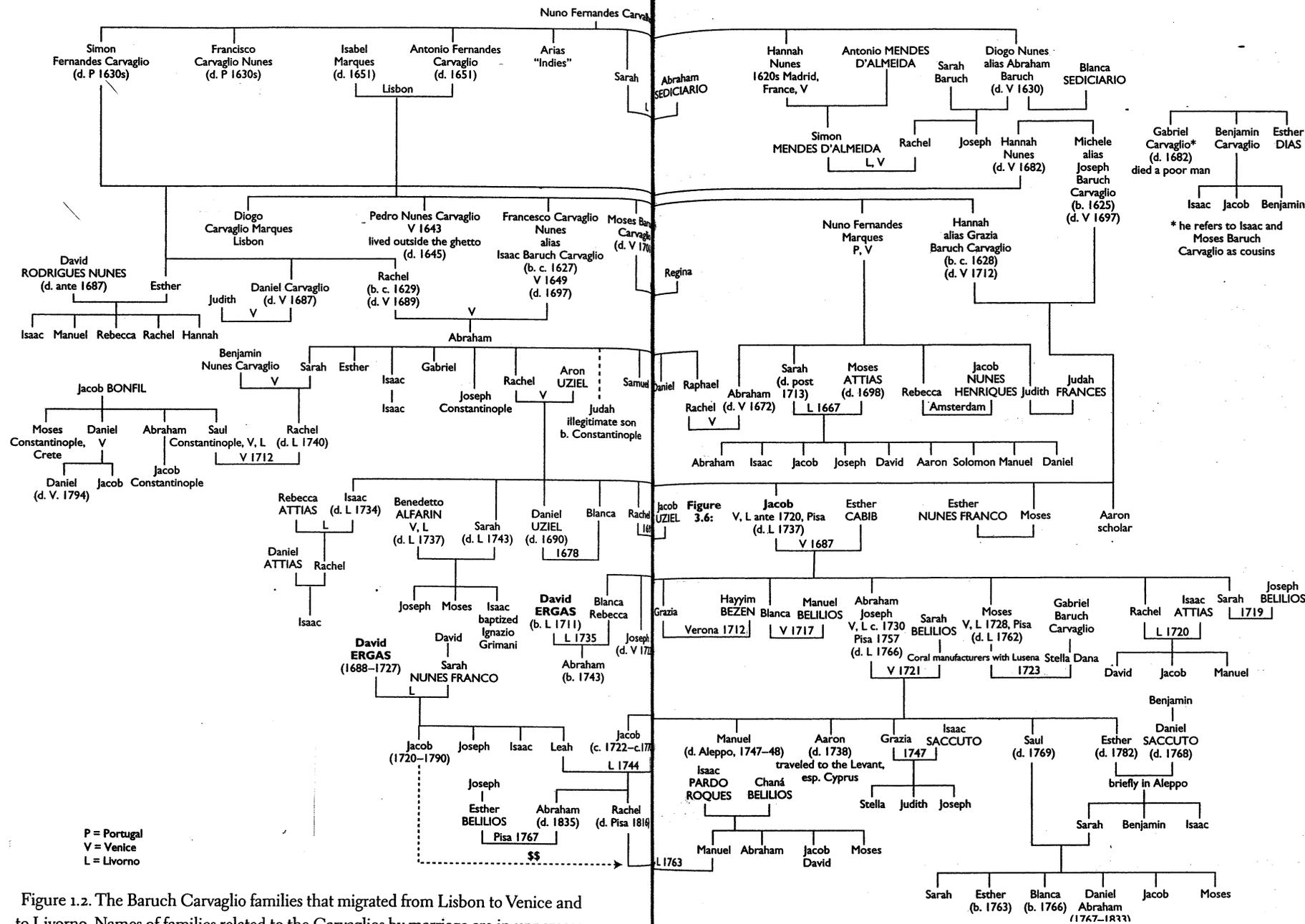


Figure 1.2. The Baruch Carvaglio families that migrated from Lisbon to Venice and to Livorno. Names of families related to the Carvaglios by marriage are in uppercase. Sources: Friedenbergl 1988; A. Luzzatto 2000; Ruspio 2007: 183-85; notary deeds, marriage contracts, and birth and death records from ACEL, ASF, ASL, ASV.

son Isaac Silvera (1707–66) married his cousin Deborah Ergas, the daughter of his father's business partner Moses. When he arranged for his sons' marriages, Moses Ergas chose instead to build ties to other distinguished Sephardic lineages. In 1735 he sealed the union between his son David and Blanca Rebecca Baruch Carvaglio, thus linking himself to an important commercial dynasty that had recently moved to Livorno from Venice and had ties to both northern Europe and the Levant. Five years earlier, Moses Ergas had arranged for Esther Rodrigues da Silva to move from Bordeaux to Livorno and marry his firstborn son Abraham.⁴⁰ Direct participation in transatlantic commerce was beyond the reach of Livornese Sephardim, but through Esther, Moses gained a kinship tie, albeit a distant one, to Benjamin Mendes da Costa, one of the most affluent Sephardim in London.⁴¹ Mendes da Costa proved invaluable as a customer and agent for Ergas and Silvera in the 1740s when they began to carry out their trade in Mediterranean coral and Indian diamonds via London. And when they ran into trouble, it was Mendes da Costa to whom Ergas and Silvera appealed as a "blood relative."⁴²

THE SILVERAS MOVE FROM IBERIA TO LIVORNO

David Silvera was likely a descendent of a New Christian family that had once been fabulously wealthy but for whom emigration from Iberia signified a loss of status. The Silveira clan of Lisbon (also known in Portugal as the de Paz clan) had played a substantial role in private trade with India especially in the diamond trade, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (see figure 1.4). In about 1632 several Silveiras moved to Madrid, where count-duke Olivares, the influential court minister, had taken a bold step and begun to replace Genoese bankers with Portuguese New Christian financiers in the hope of replenishing the state's coffers to fund his ambitious military campaigns. Jorge de Paz Silvera became perhaps the richest of all financial contractors of the Spanish Crown (*asientistas*).⁴³ In Madrid, the Silveiras of Lisbon also changed their last name to Silvera to conform to the Castilian pronunciation and later kept the Castilian spelling as they moved to Italy.

After the downfall of Olivares in 1643 and after the state bankruptcy of 1647, a renewed campaign of the Spanish Inquisition targeted Portuguese bankers and led to their departure in large numbers.⁴⁴ As life became more and more difficult in Madrid, Diogo Silvera (1616–75), who had been made a knight of the religious order of Santiago, fled to Amsterdam. Others, including his sister and nieces, followed his path; at first they lived as New Christians, but soon they embraced Judaism publicly. In 1661 Christobal Mendez alias Abraham Franco

y Silvera confessed to the Spanish Inquisition that he had crossed the Pyrenees more than once and visited most of the Sephardic settlements in Europe in 1643 before leading his parents and sister through a long journey across France to Amsterdam in the winter of 1649–50.⁴⁵

Other members of the Silvera clan left Portugal earlier. Abraham Gomes Silvera, the grandfather of the co-founder of Ergas and Silvera, was born in Livorno in about 1615.⁴⁶ For him and his descendents, achieving sociocultural affirmation in the Jewish community of Livorno was a long process that took place only because of their association with the Ergases. Before joining forces with Abraham Ergas, David Silvera probably held some lower offices in the Jewish community in 1689–90, but only in 1720 was he elected to its most prestigious rank.⁴⁷

ERGAS AND SILVERA

Marriage alliances helped Moses Ergas shape the direction of his business. More than liquid capital, David and Elijah Silvera brought him expertise in trading in precious stones and the opportunity to establish a firm footing in Aleppo. The Levantine trade was Ergas and Silvera's principal activity. Their other specialty was exporting coral beads manufactured in Livorno to India via Lisbon or London. Finally, Ergas and Silvera played an essential role in connecting Mediterranean and colonial markets: through their contacts in Lisbon, Marseilles, Bordeaux, Amsterdam, and London, they imported colonial staples and exported both manufactured goods and raw material from the Italian peninsula and the Ottoman Empire to western Europe.

All of the most prosperous Sephardic partnerships of Livorno specialized in these three commercial activities in the late seventeenth century and first half of the eighteenth. Ergas and Silvera, in other words, were less innovators than they were well-connected members of established networks that focused on manufactured goods and the luxury trade rather than food staples. At the same time, like most private partnerships in early modern Europe, and in the Mediterranean in particular, Sephardic firms handled remarkably diverse commodities and types of transactions. Their success depended more on the sale of several articles than on a single break-through investment. It therefore rested on a broad range of knowledge and the ability to gather timely and accurate information about supply and demand in multiple locations.

Historians of British long-distance trade have found that after 1685 a "revolution of scale" occurred, especially in Atlantic commerce. An increasing number of private merchants began to specialize in a single commodity trade, a specific geographic region, and on imports, exports, or re-exports alone. Meanwhile,

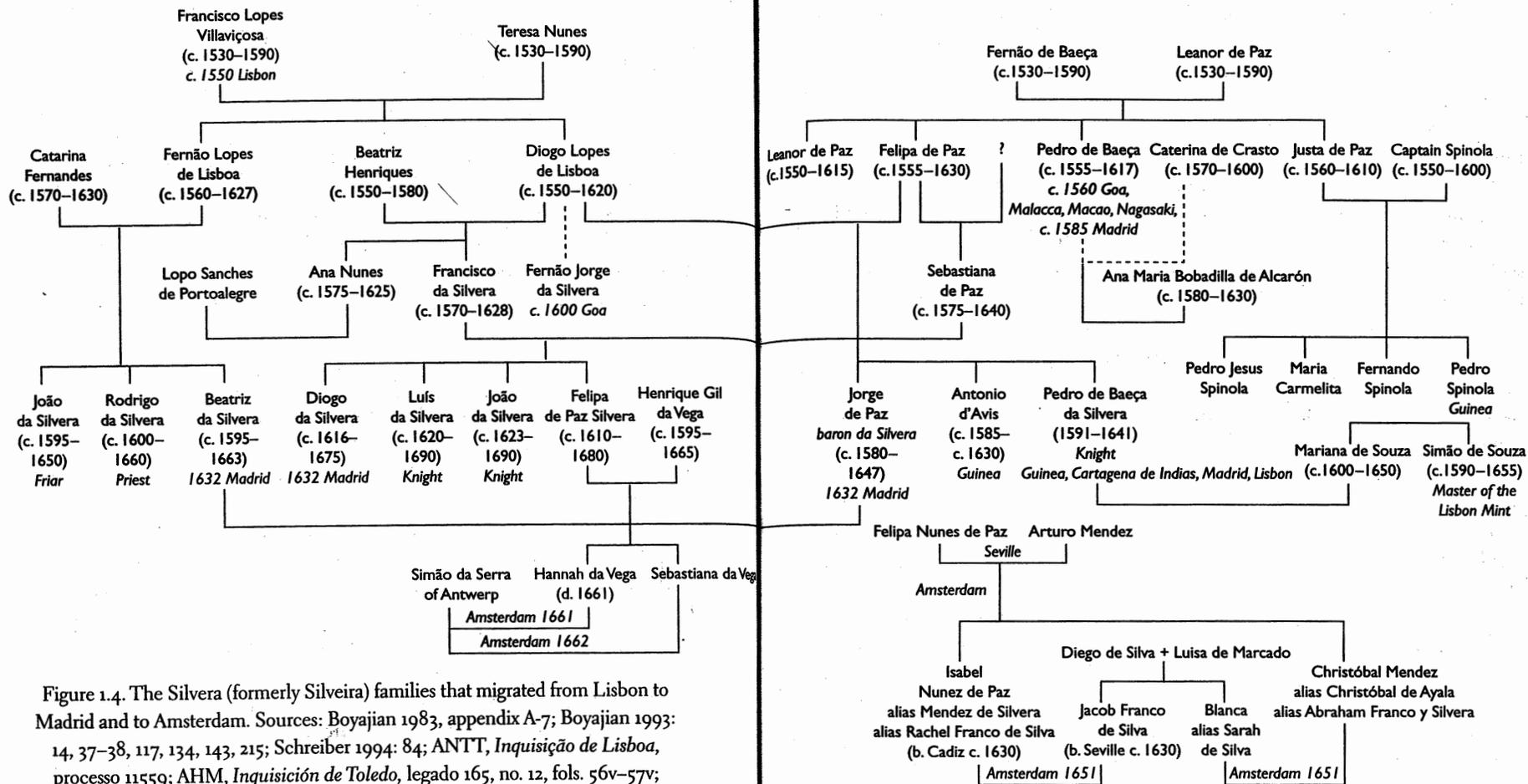


Figure 1.4. The Silveira (formerly Silveira) families that migrated from Lisbon to Madrid and to Amsterdam. Sources: Boyajian 1983, appendix A-7; Boyajian 1993: 14, 37–38, 117, 134, 143, 215; Schreiber 1994: 84; ANTT, *Inquisição de Lisboa*, processo 11559; AHM, *Inquisición de Toledo*, legado 165, no. 12, fols. 56v–57v; GAA, NA, 3002, fol. 30; GA, NA, 3004, fol. 49.

fewer actors came to control larger segments of overseas trade, especially that in sugar and tobacco, in such ports as London, Glasgow, and Bristol.⁴⁸ Mediterranean trade did not undergo an analogous transformation. Eighteenth-century Marseilles, the fastest-growing Mediterranean port, was characterized by what the historian Charles Carrière calls "capitalisme morcelé" (patchwork capitalism), in which numerous small- and medium-sized partnerships pooled capital in order to back heterogeneous ventures.⁴⁹ The same system governed commercial capitalism in Livorno, which was home to multiple economic activities and lacked a stock market. The majority of merchants in the Tuscan port, as in Marseilles, continued to associate credit with the trade in commodities. Only in the late eighteenth century did a few individuals in Livorno specialize in marine insurance as a form of financial speculation.⁵⁰

Some patterns of specialization, however, emerged in the Mediterranean, too. Europeans imported raw silk and, later, cotton from the Levant in greater quantities than any other commodities during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Among the Sephardic merchants who operated in the Mediterranean, a progressive division of labor emerged between those who focused primarily on North Africa and those who, like Ergas and Silvera, traded with firms in the Levant as well as Atlantic Europe and India. Environmental and political conditions, rather than a staunch attachment to traditional forms of commercial organization or a smaller appetite for risk, accounted for the diversification of Mediterranean trade. That Europeans never controlled production in the Middle East or North Africa as they did in New World plantations only contributed to the parcelization of Mediterranean commerce. A plurality of investment strategies and business organizations, moreover, continued to exist in both the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. As David Hancock's work concerning the production, distribution, and consumption of Madeira wine from 1640 to 1815 shows, the integration of distant Atlantic markets could occur as the unplanned result of the relatively autonomous and decentralized operations of a constellation of individuals and small firms.⁵¹

Ergas and Silvera were primarily involved in the exchange of local and imported commodities. They made constant use of bills of exchange to transfer funds, finance their purchases, and serve their clients. These basic credit operations required them to stay informed about currency rates at home and abroad but seldom constituted an independent banking activity. As was customary, they sought to diminish the risk of piracy, war, and shipwreck by loading their goods on different ships rather than filling or manning a single vessel.⁵² For every one of their shipments, they had to decide what monetary value to declare and what insurance policies to purchase. The European insurance market was sufficiently

integrated to allow them to compare rates and premiums available in Livorno, Venice, London, and Amsterdam and to choose the most appropriate.⁵³ On occasion Ergas and Silvera also underwrote marine insurance policies.⁵⁴ Rarely were they involved in ransoming Jewish and Christian slaves captured in North Africa, an activity in which the Livorno Jews played a decreasing role during the eighteenth century.⁵⁵

The Mediterranean was Ergas and Silvera's principal arena, and textiles constituted their primary trade. They imported cotton from the Levant and reexported it to continental and northern Europe along with raw silk from southern Italy and fine silk textiles manufactured in Tuscany and Emilia.⁵⁶ In addition, they imported small quantities of American goods (tobacco, indigo, sugar, coffee, and various colored dyes such as the red *brazil de pernambuco* and the blue-black *campecho* from Mexico) from Cadiz, Genoa, Marseilles, Amsterdam, and, later, from London. Finally, with the elite group of Sephardic merchants in Livorno, Ergas and Silvera had a near monopoly on the exportation of Mediterranean coral to India. A few Armenians were also involved in this trade, but not on the same scale. Coral beads and necklaces were exchanged in India for rough diamonds, other precious stones, or a less desirable set of other goods such as pepper and cotton textiles.

The Levantine trade and the barter of coral and diamonds represented opposite extremes regarding the frequency with which information traveled, the homogeneity of actors involved, and the composition of the cargo. In trading with the Levant, Ergas and Silvera counted on frequent and competing naval services. Fluctuation in supply and demand affected their investments, but the mixed character of Mediterranean trade allowed for adjustments. Most of their suppliers and customers in the Ottoman Empire, furthermore, were other Sephardim. In contrast, their connections to India depended on rigid patterns of navigation around the Cape of Good Hope, the unpredictable yearly yield of the coral fishing season, and the services of Indian merchants who procured precious stones for them.

Within their three major areas of traffic, Ergas and Silvera adapted to the opening or closing of new markets and the varying profitability of specific trades. When they learned that Jews had been readmitted to Naples in 1740 for the first time in two centuries, Ergas and Silvera contacted a Jewish trader recently based there to sell him jewelry, cotton textiles, and spices.⁵⁷ Abraham Ergas's in-laws, Ferdinand and Jacob Rodrigues Silva, rushed to open a branch of their business in Naples in the summer of 1741.⁵⁸ From the perspective of these actors, in other words, new prospects could arise in places that today would hardly figure on a map of the centers of early modern European trade.

Amsterdam and London were the centers of the world economy in the early eighteenth century. London, in particular, offered opportunities to anyone with money and a talent for investment but was also a fiercely competitive environment. The English capital began to attract significant numbers of Sephardim after 1688, but for merchants such as Ergas and Silvera, sending their sons and nephews to London was no guarantee of success.⁵⁹ A cousin of Ergas and Silvera, Jacob Ergas, son of Raphael, was the first of his lineage to leave Livorno for the English capital, where he arrived in late 1699 or early 1700. He was sent there to represent a partnership with his brother Moses to which Judah Supino of London also contributed. Additional capital for this venture came from Jacob's marriage to Hannah Gabai Faro, who was originally from Amsterdam, in June 1704. She carried with her a large dowry of twenty-nine hundred pounds (more than twelve thousand pieces of eight).⁶⁰ The business was successful at first, and Jacob bought some stock in the East India Company. After a few years he suffered a setback, however, judging from his declining contributions to the Sephardic congregation in London.⁶¹ In 1709 the London branch of the partnership was terminated: Jacob owed his brother 4,440 pieces of eight.⁶² Jacob's affairs went from bad to worse. Having lost most of his capital, he returned to Tuscany in 1716 with his wife and children. The following year he petitioned the Livorno Custom House to become a licensed broker (*mezzano*). Taking such a position represented a step down for a merchant involved in international trade because, at least in theory, brokers were not allowed to trade on their own behalf.⁶³

Despite these tribulations, Jacob returned to London, where he resided near the Bevis Marks synagogue until his death. His sons Abraham, Isaac, and Moses made the English capital their home and lived comfortably but never accumulated a sizeable fortune. Isaac married twice, in 1735 and in 1748, and had an annual income of about twenty-five hundred to three thousand pounds.⁶⁴ From his base in London he also assisted the Lusena-Carvaglio firm, a major Sephardic producer of coral beads in Pisa, throughout the 1760s.⁶⁵ Two of his nephews (Jacob and Abraham Ergas, sons of Isaac's brother Moses) achieved more than others.⁶⁶

For partnerships such as Ergas and Silvera, having reliable links with London and Amsterdam was essential for acquiring the American goods that were in demand in Livorno, finding outlets for Levantine products, and, most important, securing entry into the international diamond trade. (London had become the world distributor of rough diamonds and Amsterdam the world capital of diamond cutting and polishing.) But relatives and in-laws were not necessarily the best allies when they were not the most efficient or the best-connected traders in

these capitals. In fact, as we will see, Ergas and Silvera preferred other Sephardim to their immediate kin when seeking agents in Amsterdam and London.

In the fall of 1767 a wedding was held in Livorno for Abraham, the son of Jacob Baruch Carvaglio, and Esther Belilios of Venice. Jacob Carvaglio had moved from Venice himself in the early 1720s and had become one of the richest and most distinguished Sephardic merchants in Livorno. His sons Jacob and Abraham resided in Pisa, where they owned a large coral factory. Members of the Belilios and Carvaglio families had intermarried for at least three generations, consolidating the links between Venice and Livorno and between two prosperous merchant dynasties. While the marriage of Abraham and Esther was being arranged, Jacob Carvaglio dictated his last will to a Christian notary. He named as his heirs all the sons who were to be born to Abraham and Esther or "from any other marriage that he [Abraham] would contrive with a woman of the Jewish nation, of Portuguese or Spanish descent, born of parents living in Livorno, Venice, London, Amsterdam, or Aleppo."⁶⁷

Jacob Carvaglio gave us a strikingly precise and self-conscious definition of the ethnic and geographic boundaries of the group to which he thought he belonged: not the Sephardic diaspora in general but the Sephardic families that had made their home in the cities he named. The Ergases would have considered themselves to be members of the same group. It is not a coincidence that David Ergas, one of the principals of Ergas and Silvera, married Blanca Rebecca Baruch Carvaglio, Jacob's aunt, in 1735. These families formed the upper crust of Sephardic society in Livorno. They were the most acculturated and well-established Jews in Livorno as well as the most global in their reach. This book is about these families as much as it is about the firm of Ergas and Silvera. It is about the intertwined commercial networks that these Sephardic family firms—remarkably small in comparison to the giant corporations chartered by the state in England or in the Netherlands—built across the Sephardic diaspora and beyond it.

Though we lack sufficient statistical evidence to evaluate the extent to which Ergas and Silvera can be considered representative of other Sephardic partnerships in Livorno (in terms of the amount of their capitalization, for example), by drawing from an ample range of sources I hope to demonstrate that their organization and patterns of trade were common among the elite group of Livornese Sephardim in the first half of the eighteenth century. The only exceptional fact about Ergas and Silvera vis-à-vis similar families is that their business correspondence has survived nearly intact. This collection of letters allows us to look far

beyond this single firm. We can analyze how this segment of the Sephardic diaspora adapted to structural changes in European commerce and how it helped shape them. We can also move beyond commonsensical statements about the importance of blood, religious, and ethnic solidarity to explore the way in which cooperation was forged with coreligionists and strangers.

I began by showing how, after settling in Livorno in the 1590s, in every generation the Ergases used marriage alliances with families near and far to reposition themselves in the changing world of European trade. In the following three chapters, I widen my spatial and temporal perspective to place Ergas and Silvera in relation to the Sephardic diaspora (Chapter 2), the Jewish community of Livorno (Chapter 3), and the Mediterranean trade (Chapter 4). Together, these three chapters flesh out the legal, social, economic, and diplomatic contours of the world in which cross-cultural trade took shape. They are thus an essential prelude to the closer examination of Ergas and Silvera's way of doing business that occupies the rest of the book.

LIVORNO AND THE WESTERN SEPHARDIC DIASPORA

In March 1744 the War of the Austrian Succession grew into a maritime conflict between England and France that extended into the Mediterranean. Early that summer an English warship captured a vessel sailing a French flag from Smyrna to Livorno that belonged to the Francos, likely the wealthiest of the Sephardic families of Livorno with branches in London. Once news of the seizure of the ship reached the Tuscan port, Ergas and Silvera promptly informed Benjamin Mendes da Costa, another prominent Sephardic merchant in London, about what happened. In their letter they implored God to return the rich cargo, which in large part belonged to what they referred to as "our nation."¹

Used in the Middle Ages in reference to foreign university students, foreign merchants or corporate representatives at political and ecclesiastical councils, the term *nation* in early modern Europe designated foreign and ethnoreligious communities on which sovereign authorities conferred a distinctive collective legal status that came with specific rights and obligations designed to integrate them into the fabric of local society and economy while setting them apart from the majority of the population. Jews were the only non-Christian nation granted the right to worship publicly in parts of Europe, although this and other rights were subject to local restrictions. For much of the sixteenth century secular and religious authorities as well as ordinary people were suspicious of the expression "the Portuguese nation" (or simply *nação*, in Portuguese) because they doubted that all the Portuguese living in Antwerp, southwestern France, and Italian cities such as Ferrara, Ancona, Venice, and Florence were really Catholic. Later in the century, the same expression became the official designation of newly formed Sephardic communities in Venice, Livorno, and Amsterdam (see figure 2.1).

As Ergas and Silvera's letter shows, Sephardic Jews appropriated the term

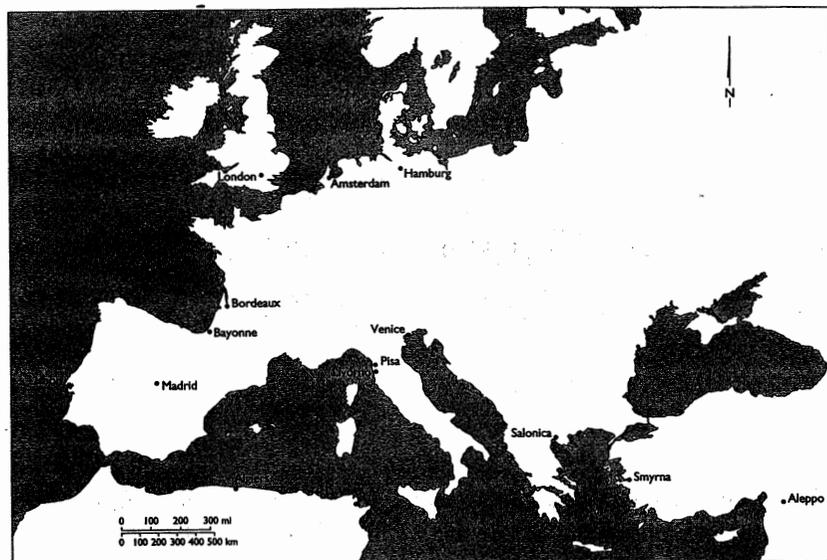


Figure 2.1. Capitals of the Western Sephardic diaspora in Europe and the Mediterranean in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

nation to distinguish themselves from the Ashkenazic Jews in central and eastern Europe, the Jews of Avignon, Italian Jews (*Lo'azim*) and Ashkenazic Jews in the Italian peninsula, Greek-speaking (Romaniote) Jews in the Balkans and the eastern Mediterranean, Arabic-speaking Jews (*Mustarabim*) in the Levant and North Africa, and even from the Sephardim who had settled in the Ottoman Empire at the time of the expulsion or soon afterward. These boundaries were not impenetrable. Ottoman Sephardim blended with Portuguese Jews in Venice. Italian rabbis led Sephardic congregations in Amsterdam and London. And yet social and symbolic boundaries erected barriers within Jewish society, too. The "men of the nation" (*homens da nação*) hardly concealed their sense of pride and superiority. Their self-perception had a socioeconomic component: they were "men of affairs" (*homens de negócios*) whose fortunes were linked to international commerce and finance. It was also grounded in what, for lack of a better term, is generally referred to as ethnic identity, which was tied to their (or their ancestors') identification with Iberia.²

In the century before Ergas and Silvera commenced their activities, this diasporic nation underwent two profound and intertwined processes; both its internal organization and its external borders had become more clearly defined. *Nação* thus stood for the translocal identity (at the same time real and imag-

ined) that distinguished Iberian Jews from other Jews as well as for the legal and social arrangements that allowed Sephardim to exist in Christian societies. This chapter outlines the processes of institutionalization and distinction that characterized the Sephardic diaspora from the late sixteenth century to the early eighteenth as a way to illuminate the legal and social context in which its merchants engaged in cross-cultural trade. It begins by showing how various forces induced most New Christians outside Iberia to join the newly created Sephardic communities by the middle of the seventeenth century. In doing so, it sets the stage for understanding cross-cultural trade not only as a vehicle of endless boundary crossing but also as a set of relations between discrete communities.

While the institutional structures of the *nação* were being consolidated, the Sephardic world also grew increasingly fragmented. This chapter also examines the emergence and transformation of intra-Sephardic networks as seen by those based in Livorno. It thus not only counters the dominant narrative of the Sephardic experience in the West, which revolves around Amsterdam, but also illustrates the tension between a diaspora's ability to seize and create opportunities in changing geopolitical contexts and its need to adapt to structural changes that are beyond its control. I call attention to the intra-Sephardic networks that most interested the group of merchants to which Ergas and Silvera belonged. This evidence helps us understand that cooperation among coreligionists was not based on a vague sense of belonging to the same nation but was contingent on alliances built via marriage and economic specialization.

THE CONTOURS OF THE SEPHARDIC DIASPORA IN EUROPE

Before the Portuguese Inquisition was created in 1536, the Jews who had been forced to convert to Catholicism in 1497 suffered harassment and aggression. A particularly violent massacre of alleged Judaizers occurred in Lisbon in 1506. In spite of evidence that several New Christian families were only nominally Catholic, however, the Portuguese state did not embark on a systematic effort to impose religious conformity at first. Between 1497 and 1536 the lack of organized repression on the part of the Portuguese Crown made room for the existence and diffusion of crypto-Judaic practices by newly converted Jews. This unique religious experience marked profoundly the men, women, and children who lived through it, as well as their descendants, and shaped the collective identity of the Sephardic diaspora.

The ambiguous religious identity of Iberian Jews and New Christians, however, jeopardized the cohesion of the Sephardic world. Different religious iden-

tities would coexist within one family, whether by conviction or from expediency. Some of those who were forcibly converted in 1497 went on to live as faithful Catholics. Moreover, most of those who embraced Judaism after leaving Iberia lacked any knowledge of Jewish precepts and rituals (let alone Hebrew). A few rejected revealed religion altogether.³ Religious wavering, furthermore, inflamed Catholic authorities and troubled Protestants across Europe. Thus, after the late sixteenth century, external and internal forces sought to impose normative collective behaviors on members of the Sephardic diaspora in order to ease Christian-Jewish relations and enforce a modicum of orthodoxy among Sephardic communities.

Christian theology conceived the conversion of all non-Christians, including Jews (accused as they were of the murder of Christ), the primary mission of the Roman Catholic Church. Whether seeking to expand their power or because of heartfelt belief, political authorities often joined forces with the Church to pursue this objective. The arrival of Iberian refugees confronted Christian states and societies in Europe with a new issue. Drawing on canon law and doctrine, the Holy See regarded forced baptism as irreversible.⁴ This prescription had particular implications for Italian states that hosted a tribunal of the newly created Roman Inquisition (1542), including the Venetian dominions, the Tuscan grand duchy, the Papal State, and the duchies of Ferrara, Modena and Reggio, and Mantua. In principle, Jews fell outside the Inquisition's jurisdiction because the Church regarded them as infidels rather than heretics and had no authority over the unbaptized. Anyone who was found to have been born or to have lived in Iberia after 1497 (when all Jews had to have been baptized) could legitimately be accused of apostasy, however. As apostates, New Christians in the diaspora were easy targets for Roman Inquisitors.

The consequences of Church doctrine potentially were explosive. The Holy Office had the power to investigate anyone who arrived from Iberia at a time when several Italian states were trying to attract Iberian refugees because of their perceived business skills and economic ties. The clash between secular and Church authorities reached a high point in Venice during the long trials of Henriques Nunes, also known as Righetto Marrano, who was arrested by the Inquisition of Venice in the fall of 1570, at the onset of the war against the Turks in Cyprus. Evidence gathered in Venice, Ferrara, Rome, and Lisbon disclosed that Righetto had traveled and traded across Europe and the Ottoman Empire presenting himself alternately as a Catholic or a Jew, depending on what was most expedient. After lengthy genealogical investigations that involved the cooperation of several Inquisition tribunals, the judges concluded that Righetto was born in Lisbon in the 1530s and thus guilty of apostasy. According to Brian

Pullan, who first examined this trial, the Righetto case had a decisive impact in shaping Venetian policy regarding New Christians and Jews of Iberian descent. In 1550 the republic had issued a decree expelling all marranos, but many continued to arrive in the city. Righetto's trial exposed the dangers of a policy of tacit toleration. Even the Jews who lived inside the ghetto felt threatened by the presence of New Christians. The representative (*console*) of Levantine Jews in Venice, Chaim Baruch, denounced Gaspare Ribeiro, the doyen of Portuguese New Christians living outside the ghetto, to the Inquisition; in 1580, he called Ribeiro "a Marrano, . . . one who sails with two rudders, because he is neither Jew nor Christian."⁵

In 1589, following Righetto's trials, the Venetian authorities issued new charters for Ponentine and Levantine Jews, that is, for Western (Iberian) and Eastern (Ottoman) Jews. In an unprecedented move, they ceased all background checks of newcomers as long as Iberian refugees lived within the walls of the ghetto and adhered to Jewish law.⁶ The decision was made after the Venetian ruling class, whose commercial interests lay primarily in the eastern Mediterranean, turned down Philip II's offer to subcontract the sale of Indian pepper in Europe in 1583 for fear of capitulating to the growing Spanish influence over the peninsula. The government admitted Sephardic Jews to Venice in the hope that they would help strengthen connections to Iberian markets and boost Asian imports.⁷

In other parts of Christian Europe, rulers found different solutions for accommodating Jews on new terms. Jews had been expelled from England in 1290 and from the majority of French territories in 1394 (small Jewish settlements continued to exist only in Alsace and Avignon). Only in 1656 did Cromwell readmit Jews into England (by his own prerogative rather than by legislation).⁸ France followed a more ambivalent policy. Jealous of its autonomy, the Gallian Church prohibited the establishment of tribunals of the Roman Inquisition in its territories. In the mid-sixteenth century, Iberian New Christians began to cross the Pyrenees and settle in the coastal towns of Saint-Jean-de-Luz and Saint-Esprit-lès-Bayonne, in parts of the interior of the region (Bidache and Peyrehorade), and as far north as Bordeaux. A few families stopped in Nantes, and others established an enclave in Rouen, on the road to the United Provinces. The French monarchy handled the situation by issuing *lettres patentes* to "Portuguese merchants" rather than to Jews, but it included a clause forbidding "any inquiry whatsoever into their lives."⁹ In 1684 Iberian merchants in Bordeaux were referred to as Jews in official French documents for the first time; yet for much of the eighteenth century, both public opinion and local authorities barely tolerated the open practice of Judaism.¹⁰

Protestant countries did not have an Inquisition, but the initial response to

Iberian refugees was lukewarm. Starting in 1580, the secular authorities in Hamburg welcomed Iberian refugees as New Christians owing to their commercial expertise, only to face the opposition of local merchants and the Lutheran clergy. Only in 1612 were New Christians admitted to Hamburg as Jews. Two smaller Jewish communities were then established in nearby Altona and Glückstadt, which were under Danish rule, in 1622.¹¹ Meanwhile, after the Union of Utrecht (1579) granted freedom of conscience throughout the United Provinces, small contingents of New Christians reached Amsterdam in the 1580s and 1590s. Most of them arrived from Portugal via Spain and France; some came from Antwerp after the city was recaptured by the Spanish in 1585; a few left Brazil, a Portuguese colony, for Holland. In Amsterdam they found an environment as secure as possible in Christian Europe, and many began to practice Judaism openly. A synagogue was inaugurated in Amsterdam in 1604, and by 1618 three distinct Jewish congregations existed in the Dutch capital. As they grew in number, refugees also sought to give themselves an institutional structure. In 1639 a united Spanish and Portuguese Jewish community began to operate under the leadership of seven lay syndics called *parnassim* (in Hebrew) or *senhores do Mahamad* (in a mixture of Portuguese and Hebrew).¹²

In the middle of the seventeenth century, Sephardic Jews remained a sporadic presence across Europe, but wherever they were welcomed, their legal status and social acceptance improved steadily. As Jonathan Israel has argued, economic considerations converged with the intellectual and political climate that emerged from the French Wars of Religion (1562–98) to produce a new set of policies that he labeled “philosemitic mercantilism,” as well as broader attitudes favorable to the presence of Jews in Christian Europe.¹³ These policies and attitudes made local societies more familiar with Iberian Jews but also led to the erection of boundaries between Jews and Christians. Cultural hybridity and forms of religious syncretism characterized the lives of individual Sephardim, particularly in the first few generations and in regions such as Central and South America, where the pressure of the Inquisition was uneven, or in the southwest of France, where the Inquisition was altogether absent. But cultural hybridity aroused more suspicion than admiration.

Ironically, the interests of disparate groups—Christian secular authorities, the Catholic Church, Jewish lay and religious community leaders—converged in favor of stabilizing normative community life in the Sephardic diaspora. The aggressive Inquisitorial persecution of New Christians in Italy led many Iberian Jews to establish themselves in the ghetto and progressively erased many traces of the marrano past. In Amsterdam, too, secular authorities understood toleration for the Jews in ways that are reminiscent of post-Reformation confessiona-

lization policies, which implied the permanence and separation of religious denominations. For rabbis, there was little alternative but to accommodate the profound acculturation to Christian mores of their congregations, in particular, their most affluent members.¹⁴ For their part, lay leaders of Sephardic communities worked to facilitate the transition of New Christians to normative Judaism.

Beginning with the creation of a Sephardic charitable fund in Venice in 1613 that provided poor converso maidens and orphans with dowries, other institutions for aiding the poor were created across the diaspora. Their goal was twofold: to help destitute New Christian young women marry Jewish men and to strengthen an exclusive, translocal sense of collective identity rooted in Iberia. The Venetian dowry fund only subsidized women of Iberian descent regardless of their residence (“poor Hebrew girls, Portuguese or Castilian on the father’s or mother’s side”).¹⁵ Its Dutch analog, the Santa Companhia de dotar orfãos e donzelas pobres, created in 1615, catered exclusively to “orphans and poor maidens of this Portuguese nation, and the Castilian, among residents [in the region stretching] from St. Jean de Luz to Danzig, including France, the Netherlands, England and Germany.”¹⁶ Livorno followed in 1644 with the Hebrà para cazar orfãos e donzelas. In principle, any Jewish woman was entitled to receive subsidies from this fund, but between 1670 and 1704 only 10 percent of its beneficiaries were Italian or Ashkenazic, and another 14 percent were Sephardic women from outside Livorno.¹⁷ Private donors betrayed similar preferences in their bequests. In Venice, the affluent Isaac Carvaglio endowed a trust in 1697 to subsidize the poor and honorable daughters of respectable fathers of the Portuguese and Spanish nation (“putte onorate, povere, figlie de buoni padri della mia natione portughese o spangola”).¹⁸

Iberia was a source of pride as well as trouble for the Sephardim of Europe. A cultural association with the golden age of Iberia conferred a much-sought-after pedigree on the Sephardic commercial elite. But the Sephardic oligarchy was especially vigilant about regulating more tangible relations with Iberia. Travel to the “lands of idolatry” (as Sephardim called the Iberian peninsula), whether prompted by commercial ventures or by attempts to proselytize marranos and conversos, was not only dangerous because of the Inquisition but also despised by coreligionists as a potential sign of religious wavering. After 1644, the Portuguese Jewish community of Amsterdam prohibited those who traveled to Spain or Portugal from holding office or leading prayers for a period of four years.¹⁹ The Livorno Hebrà considered any board members who traveled to Spain or Portugal to be dead, although it permitted their sons or close male relatives to take their place. In 1654 the Jewish community of Livorno decreed that anyone who traveled to Iberia under a Christian name be excluded for two years from read-

ing the Sefer Torah in synagogue and holding office. These rules were rigorously enforced, and temporary excommunication (*herem*) was often the consequence for those who did not comply.²⁰

Fluid religious identity, in short, remained a marker of the experience, history, and outward perception of the Sephardim of Europe throughout much of seventeenth century, if not longer. But the secure presence of the Sephardic diaspora in both Catholic and Protestant countries was predicated on the severance of ties to its marrano past and the institutionalization of newly founded Spanish and Portuguese Jewish congregations. Sephardic merchants, interested as they were in creating a secure environment in which to prosper, were among the supporters and beneficiaries of this process of institutionalization. The surveillance that they, as community leaders, exerted on their fellow coreligionists' orthodoxy increased their credibility in the eyes of Christian merchants. This basic fact is essential to understanding economic cooperation between partnerships such as Ergas and Silvera and non-Jews. The solidification of Jewish-Christian boundaries could thus facilitate rather than impede the development of cross-cultural trade.

In Amsterdam freedom of conscience had as much leeway as was conceivable in early modern Europe (Spinoza was not the only Sephardic Jew who regarded Jewish law and revealed religion with skepticism). The leaders of the Portuguese and Spanish nation, however, urged the adoption of the core tenets of normative Judaism as the community's public image. In London, where the Jewish population was significantly smaller than in Amsterdam and Jewish organizations were considerably younger, this process of institutional consolidation was slower and more uneven because several affluent Iberian merchants continued to live at the margins of Jewish society in order to bolster their social standing.²¹ In the Italian peninsula, complexities and contradictions did not disappear from the individual and collective identities of Sephardim. But as the case of Livorno testifies, forces both inside and outside the diasporic nation led the vast majority of New Christians to accept the authority of Jewish religious and lay leaders.

SEPHARDIM IN TUSCANY

The grand dukes began to issue safe-conducts to Portuguese New Christian merchants and scholars so that they could reside in Florence as early as 1545, knowing that they might practice Judaism secretly. In the corporatist society of early modern Italy, the Tuscan authorities issued charters to specific individuals or groups. Levantine Jews, identified as those of Iberian descent who resided in the Ottoman Empire, were invited to Tuscany in 1549. Like Venice, Florence

wanted to capitalize on the first sign of crisis in Ottoman commercial power by attracting these groups of traders.²² Between 1551 and 1563 more charters targeted other merchant communities from the eastern Mediterranean, including Armenian, Greek, and Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire.²³ In 1576 Grand Duke Francis I (r. 1574–87) conferred with Philip II about the possibility of issuing a safe-conduct specifically designed for Levantine Jews willing to come to Livorno.²⁴

In the meantime, ostensibly to appease Pope Pius V while courting New Christians, the Medici made life more difficult for the Jews who had been living in Tuscany for centuries. First, in 1567, the grand dukes ordered them to wear a yellow badge. Then, between 1571 and 1573, they forced all Jews living in Tuscany (about seven hundred of them, mostly dispersed in small towns) to resettle in the newly created ghettos of Florence and Siena.²⁵ In Pisa, home to a small Jewish settlement since the Middle Ages, the local synagogue was shut down in 1570 and the Sephardim were invited to settle in town two decades later.²⁶ For their perceived usefulness to rebuilding international commercial ties, Christian authorities treated Sephardic Jews as a distinct group from the beginning and kept them apart from local Italian Jews.

The livornine of 1591 and 1593 were tailored to the needs of foreign rather than Italian Jews and brought to fruition the Medici's long-standing commitment to attracting Portuguese exiles to Tuscany.²⁷ In more explicit terms than those expressed by the Venetian charter of 1589, the Medici prohibited the Inquisition of Pisa from interrogating the newcomers as long as they ceased to practice Catholicism.²⁸ Although this stipulation did not always protect Sephardim from intrusions by the Inquisition, it did accelerate the disappearance of marranism.²⁹ Whereas Portuguese New Christians entered Tuscan society as Catholics between 1545 and 1591 and mingled with the local elite (especially in Florence), after 1591 they came to Pisa and Livorno mostly as Jews. The rabbinic and Jewish lay authorities in Livorno began to send recent immigrants who needed to be circumcised to North Africa before accepting them as members of the community.³⁰ The 1634 departure of António Dias Pinto, a Portuguese New Christian who had become an influential judge but finally left Florence for the ghetto of Venice, is taken to mark the end of any significant presence of Portuguese marranos professing to be Catholic in Tuscany.³¹

When Abraham Ergas settled in Pisa as a Jew in 1594, he was part of a small group of Iberian émigrés. More arrived as Livorno consolidated its position in the western Mediterranean and anti-Jewish persecution intensified in Iberia (especially during the period of the Spanish rule of Portugal from 1580 to 1640).³² The Navarro, Jesurum, and Franco Albuquerque families were among those who

came in the 1620s and 1630s.³³ Immigration required continued surveillance by Jewish and secular authorities alike. As late as 4 June 1655 the Venetian consul noted a Dutch ship sailing from Malaga to the Tuscan port whose only cargo consisted of forty passengers of "the kind of Christians who become Jews as soon as they arrive here."³⁴ Only two months earlier, when the statutes of the Jewish congregation of Livorno had been drafted, they had prohibited all Jews from talking to people who disembarked from ships arriving from Iberia in order to avoid arousing the Inquisitor's suspicion.³⁵

Precisely at the time when marranism ceased to be a pressing concern of Tuscan authorities, the last two Medici rulers, Cosimo III (r. 1670–1723) and Giangastone (r. 1723–37), began to display less benevolent attitudes toward religious minorities than had their predecessors.³⁶ By then, however, the Jewish presence in Livorno was secure, and the livornine were never revoked. Until its abolition in 1782 the Inquisition of Pisa continued to intrude on the lives of Livorno Jews, but the Medici and the Habsburg grand dukes sought to contain its power.³⁷ In 1730, after being accused of apostasy and arrested by the Inquisition, Jacob Gutierrez Pegna, a resident of Livorno, obtained his release thanks to the intervention of secular authorities.³⁸ In November 1736, officers of the Inquisition stormed into the house of Jacob Baruch Carvaglio in the middle of the night and threatened his grandchildren, as well as the women and servants in the house, but did not prosecute any of them further.³⁹

Giangastone de' Medici, more famous for his indolence than for his initiative, continued to sponsor diplomatic interventions favoring the arrival of more Portuguese New Christians in Livorno. In the 1720s the Iberian Inquisitions unleashed the last and probably the most violent of their campaigns to eradicate all traces of New Christians.⁴⁰ Several communities in the diaspora came to the rescue of their coreligionists in Iberia. London Jews as well as British diplomats and merchants assisted fleeing marranos and smuggled their Brazilian gold and diamonds out of Portugal.⁴¹ Sephardim in Livorno also grew apprehensive about the fate of their coreligionists. By 1724 they had engaged the highest Tuscan authorities, including Secretary of State and Minister of War Carlo Rinuccini, in a plan to provide shelter to Iberian exiles.⁴² At the end of May 1726, at least three families of Portuguese New Christian merchants obtained safe-conducts to come to Livorno.⁴³ Though limited in scope, this operation showed the Medici's continued commitment to "philosemitic mercantilism" and had an impact on both the local community and the diaspora. In 1729 Rinuccini invoked the safe-conducts that had been issued a few years earlier in order to defend Jacob de Morais, a Sephardic Jew who had prospered in Livorno as a silk manufacturer and merchant and who was haunted by the Inquisition of Pisa.⁴⁴ In January 1731,

Gabriel Lopes Pinheiro, a Sephardic merchant from London who was active in the trade with Livorno, Portugal, and the Indies, requested safe-conduct to move to the Tuscan port; it was granted on condition that he give proof of his material well-being.⁴⁵

These episodes reveal how flows of personnel and information continued to circulate between Iberia and the Sephardic diaspora. They also tested the effectiveness of the legal frameworks designed to accommodate Iberian Jews in Livorno. No specific legislation passed after the livornine of the 1590s had sought to define whether different magistrates were in charge of resident and foreign Jews and whether New Christians could be tried by the local Jewish court. All ambiguities came to the surface when these safe-conducts were being issued in the 1720s.

In a letter dated 11 May 1725, the governor of Livorno informed Florentine officials of a conflict between the city's secular and Jewish courts about jurisdiction over Jews and crypto-Jews who traded under Christian names—a practice to which the Medici never objected. The Jewish tribunal of Livorno conceded to the prince jurisdiction over the "Jews who live in hiding in Portugal, Spain, and other places where they are not permitted to be openly Jewish" but claimed for itself jurisdiction over "foreign Jews who live as Jews in places where they can practice Judaism openly," even if they brought their case to court using a Christian pseudonym.⁴⁶ The truth is that it was not always easy to categorize newcomers and transient people as either New Christians or foreign Jews. In 1721, for example, a certain Paolo Antonio Castro of Genoa, who used the Jewish name of Gabriel Arias in Livorno, brought charges against some Sephardic merchants of Livorno before Florentine courts as a Christian; his adversaries wished to avoid the trip to Florence and have the lawsuit adjudicated by the Jewish tribunal in Livorno.⁴⁷ The jurisdictional disputes continued for eight years, until Rinuccini conceded jurisdiction over "foreign Jews" to the Jewish court in 1733. By surrendering additional power to this corporate tribunal, the Tuscan authorities gained yet another tool for facilitating the transition of New Christians to Judaism at a time when a renewed influx of refugees from Iberia threatened to destabilize Jewish-Christian relations once again.

The commitment of Tuscan rulers to aid Jews in Livorno, combined with the port's importance in the Mediterranean trade, bore fruit. In the two centuries after the issuance of the livornine, the resident Jewish population of Livorno grew at a fast pace. In 1601 the city housed a mere 134 Jews. Only twenty-one years later their number had climbed to 711, which amounted to more than 7 percent of the city's population (see table 2.1). In 1643 the community counted about 1,250 members. A half-century later it had reached 2,397. Still further ex-

Table 2.1. The Jewish population of Livorno, 1591–1841

Year	Total population	Jewish population	Percentage Jewish
1591	530 ¹ / c. 700 ²		
1592	900 ³ / 1,140 ⁴		
1601	3,118 ⁵ / 3,710 ⁶	134 ⁷	c. 3.92
1604	8,663 ⁸	c. 200 ⁹	
1609	5,046 ¹⁰		
1613		c. 300 ¹¹	
1616	7,509 ¹²		
1622	9,103 ¹³ / 10,545 ¹⁴	711 ¹⁵	c. 7.23
1633	8,642 ¹⁶	c. 700 ¹⁷	
1640		1,500 ¹⁸	
1642	11,954 ¹⁹ / 12,978 ²⁰	1,175 ²¹	c. 9.42
1643	11,597 ²²	1,250 ²³	
1645	10,079 ²⁴	1,723 ²⁵	
1655		3,000 ²⁶	
1672	18,146 ²⁷		
1689	20,654 ²⁸	3,500 ²⁹	
1692		1,250 ³⁰	
1693	17,709 ³¹	2,397 ³²	13.53
1727–28		10,000 ³³	
1738	30,897 ³⁴	3,476 ³⁵	11.25
1758	32,717 ³⁶	3,687 ³⁷	11.26
1761	34,538 ³⁸	7,000 ³⁹ / 1,256 families ⁴⁰	
1767	30,000 / 44,000 ⁴¹	3,800 ⁴²	
1778	36,595 ⁴³	c. 4,000 ⁴⁴	
1787	37,977 ⁴⁵	4,356 ⁴⁶	11.45
1793	41,278 ⁴⁷		
1807	64,095 ⁴⁸	4,697 ⁴⁹	7.28
1808	62,377 ⁵⁰	4,963 ⁵¹	7.95
1809	50,671 ⁵²	4,753 ⁵³	9.38
1813	48,630 ⁵⁴		
1833		4,833 ⁵⁵	
1834	66,463 ⁵⁶	4,701 ⁵⁷	7.07
1841	78,435 ⁵⁸	4,771 ⁵⁹	6.08

continued...

Table 2.1. The Jewish population of Livorno, 1591–1841 *continued*

Note: This table summarizes most available figures. The most reliable data or estimates regarding the Jewish population are underscored. The figures for the total population usually include residents of the area of Livorno, not only those who lived within the city walls. This fact suggests that the percentage of Jews among the latter group might have been higher. Percentages are given only when data are fairly reliable.

¹Fasano Guarini 1978: 62, 1980: 199.²R. Toaff 1990: 119.³Fasano Guarini 1980: 199.⁴R. Toaff 1990: 119.⁵Fasano Guarini 1980: 199. Pardi (1918: 28) gives a total of 4,985 inhabitants, including soldiers, in Livorno and its environs.⁶Fasano Guarini 1978: 62.⁷R. Toaff (1990: 119). Pardi (1918: 28) erroneously gives a figure of 114. Bachi (1938: 283) repeats the mistake. Fasano Guarini (1980: 199) quotes a figure of 124.⁸Pardi 1918: 32. Vivoli (1842, 3: 64, 237) estimates 8,000 inhabitants in 1604 and 5,000 in 1606.⁹R. Toaff 1990: 279.¹⁰Fasano Guarini 1980: 199.¹¹R. Toaff 1990: 279.¹²Fasano Guarini 1980: 199. Another document counts 8,300 residents (Fasano Guarini 1978: 62).¹³This figure excludes 642 soldiers (Pardi 1918: 34; Fasano Guarini 1980: 199). Di Porto (1980: 239) gives a figure of 9,714 with no documentary reference.¹⁴Fasano Guarini 1978: 62. R. Toaff (1990: 119) gives credence to the highest of all figures: 14,413.¹⁵Pardi 1918: 34; Bachi 1938: 283; A. S. Toaff 1955: 360, 363–64; R. Toaff 1990: 119; Israel 1998: 93; Fasano Guarini 1980: 202.¹⁶Repetti 1835, 2: 780; Pardi 1918: 35; Fasano Guarini 1980: 199. R. Toaff (1990: 119) gives a figure of 12,978, but see note 20 to this table.¹⁷Repetti 1835, 2: 780; Pardi 1918: 35; R. Toaff 1990: 119; Fasano Guarini 1980: 202.¹⁸A. S. Toaff 1955: 360, 363–64; Israel 1998: 93.¹⁹Pardi 1918: 37; Fasano Guarini 1980: 199. Pardi (1918: 37) and Di Porto (1980: 239) report a figure of 12,302 on the basis of a different document.²⁰R. Toaff (1990: 119) repeats the same data for 1632 and 1642. It may be a typo. See also Israel 1998: 93.²¹Pardi 1918: 37; Bachi 1938: 283; Di Porto 1980: 239. Fasano Guarini (1980: 202) and R. Toaff (1990: 121) write 1,115. It may be a typo.²²Fasano Guarini 1980: 199. Pardi (1918: 37) counts 11,657 civilians.²³R. Toaff 1990: 121; Israel 1998: 93. Fasano Guarini (1980: 202) gives this figure for 1645.²⁴Fasano Guarini 1980: 199.²⁵Di Porto 1980: 239.²⁶A. S. Toaff 1955: 360, 363–64. Israel (1998: 93) says that the Jewish population increased "probably to over 2,000 by 1655."²⁷Pardi (1918: 38–39), who suggests that only 17,000 people lived within the city walls. R. Toaff (1990: 119) gives this figure for 1674.²⁸Pardi 1918: 41; Di Porto 1980: 239.²⁹Di Porto 1980: 239. Both Pardi (1918: 41) and Toaff (1990: 121) refute the figure of 5,000 (Pera 1888: 140) for the year 1689.³⁰Repetti 1835, 2: 780, quoted by R. Toaff (1990: 121), who refutes this figure.

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Table 2.1. The Jewish population of Livorno, 1591–1841 *continued*

- ³¹This is Pardi's (1918: 45) estimate for 1694.
- ³²Livi 1918–20, quoted in R. Toaff 1990: 121. This estimate was calculated by Livi on the basis of the data about births and deaths kept by the Jewish nation. Only a few of these registers survived World War II.
- ³³Vivoli 1842, 4: 388.
- ³⁴Pardi (1918: 44–49) gives precise figures for the solely Catholic population and estimates for the total population for the years 1694–1766.
- ³⁵Bachi 1938: 283; R. Toaff 1990: 123; Filippini 1997: 1054, 1998, 1: 117.
- ³⁶Pardi 1918: 49.
- ³⁷R. Toaff 1990: 123; Filippini 1997: 1054, 1998, 1: 117.
- ³⁸Pardi 1918: 50.
- ³⁹Gorani 1986: 100.
- ⁴⁰Conforto and Frattarelli Fischer 1982: 52.
- ⁴¹Gorani 1986: 100.
- ⁴²Repetti 1835, 2: 871; Pardi 1918: 51–52.
- ⁴³Pardi 1918: 54.
- ⁴⁴Estimated by Pardi (1918: 54), who refutes the guess of 8,000 included in the parish registers.
- ⁴⁵Pardi 1918: 56.
- ⁴⁶Pardi 1918: 54. This estimate concurs with the figures of 4,302 (Filippini 1990: 123) and 4,327 (Filippini 1997: 1054) for 1784.
- ⁴⁷Pardi 1918: 60. Guarnieri (1962: 133) offers a higher figure of 51,505.
- ⁴⁸Pardi 1918: 67.
- ⁴⁹R. Toaff 1990: 124; Filippini 1997: 1054, 1998, 1: 117.
- ⁵⁰Pardi 1918: 67.
- ⁵¹Filippini 1997: 1054, 1998, 1: 117. Elsewhere Filippini (1982: 26) argues that the 1808 census underestimated the number of Jews, which might have been as high as 5,338.
- ⁵²Pardi 1918: 68–69.
- ⁵³Filippini 1982: 26; Filippini 1997: 1054, 1998, 1: 117.
- ⁵⁴Pardi (1918: 70) counts 44,130 Catholic inhabitants of Livorno and its environs plus an estimated 4,500 Jews.
- ⁵⁵Bachi 1938: 283.
- ⁵⁶Pardi 1918: 81; Guarnieri 1962: 133.
- ⁵⁷Luigi Serristori, *Statistica dell'Italia* (Florence: Stamperia Granducale, 1842, 173), quoted in Bachi 1938: 238n2.
- ⁵⁸Pardi 1918: 85.
- ⁵⁹Sercia Gianforma 1990, appendix.

pansion continued in the eighteenth century: 3,476 Jews were counted in 1738, 3,687 in 1758, and 4,350 in 1787. Meanwhile, Livorno's total population grew from less than one thousand in 1591 to more than 40,000 by the late eighteenth century. Throughout the period from 1642 to 1787, Jews made up a minimum of 9.5 percent and a maximum of 13.5 percent of the city's total resident population. (These percentages may have been higher within the city walls because figures for the total population do not always distinguish between city and district dwellers.) In this respect Livorno was exceptional among European towns and cities during the early modern period. Only in the Ottoman city of Salonica did Jews ever make up a majority of the population.⁴⁸

Livorno was thus the second largest Sephardic settlement in the West after Amsterdam. In Italy, Rome housed the only other Jewish population comparable in size to that of Livorno, but its Portuguese component was considerably smaller. The population of the Venice ghetto, home to numerous and prosperous Sephardim, reached its zenith of 3,000 before the plague of 1630–31, and then it declined steadily.⁴⁹ Sephardic immigration to Amsterdam peaked in the middle decades of the seventeenth century, after Venice was engaged in a destructive war with the Ottomans (1645–69), New Christian financiers abandoned Madrid, and the Dutch lost northern Brazil to the Portuguese in 1654. The Spanish and Portuguese synagogue of Amsterdam may have enlisted as many as 4,500 members in the 1680s and possibly more around 1735, although in the meantime, Ashkenazic immigrants began to outnumber the Sephardim.⁵⁰ In 1695, London counted only 548 Sephardim (about twenty of them prosperous merchants) and 203 Ashkenazim. By the 1740s, the English capital was home to 6,000 Jews. This number grew to 15,000 in the following half-century, but most of them were Ashkenazic. The Sephardim in London numbered 1,050 around 1720 and a little more than 2,000 in the 1720s and 1730s, after refugees from Portugal arrived.⁵¹

The other Sephardic centers in Europe never had as large a population as did Livorno, Venice, or Amsterdam. The Sephardic population of Hamburg grew to a maximum of about 600 (plus 200 Ashkenazim) in the 1660s.⁵² In France, Portuguese New Christians numbered between 200 and 300 in 1637. These settlements grew in size after Judaism was permitted, with Bayonne housing 1,100 Jews in 1728 and Bordeaux housing 1,500 in 1751.⁵³ In the Dutch and English Caribbean, Sephardic communities experienced a more rapid growth than in Amsterdam and Livorno during the eighteenth century but were still smaller than those in the Old World. The island of Curaçao was home to about 600 Sephardim in 1702 and as many as 1,095 (5.2 percent of all inhabitants) in 1789.⁵⁴ The Jewish population of Surinam, a small Dutch colony north of Brazil, peaked at 1,350 in 1791 and included about 870 Sephardim. In Jamaica, Jews numbered between

700 and 800 in 1735 and 900 by 1770. In Barbados there were about 400 Jews in 1750.⁵⁵ Sephardic settlements in North America never reached comparable sizes, though they included some wealthy merchants.

FROM IBERIA TO NORTHERN EUROPE

Demographics provides a measure of Livorno's nodal position in the early modern Sephardic world. At the same time, Sephardic commercial networks that centered on Livorno evolved in response to the greater attractiveness of other European centers for Iberian Jews. In the mid-seventeenth century, when Dutch Sephardim turned away from the Mediterranean and Iberia and invested primarily in the Atlantic trade and in plantations (in particular, sugar), their co-religionists in Livorno strengthened their own position in the Mediterranean.⁵⁶ During the second half of the seventeenth century, they loosened their connections to Spain but not to Lisbon. The most prosperous group of Livorno Sephardim, the one to which Ergas and Silvera belonged, worked to develop connections between the Levant and northern Europe (first in Amsterdam and later in London). In the eighteenth century Jewish merchant families of the middle ranks, in contrast, focused their efforts on the trade between North Africa and southern Europe.

Personal, cultural, and economic ties between the diaspora and Iberia became weaker after Olivares fell from power, but they never dissolved completely. In 1644 a New Christian merchant in Malaga was brought before the Inquisition because he owned a Hebrew book printed in Livorno.⁵⁷ The first generation of refugees took pains to pass on to their children objects that they had brought with them and that symbolized a deep attachment to the homeland. Thus, in 1653, Raphael Belilios, who in Portugal was called Filipo Terço, left to his two daughters the silverware that had come with him from Lisbon to Venice.⁵⁸ Despite the risks and stigmatization that came with being associated with Iberia, testaments drafted in Livorno by Sephardic men and women of all social strata in the second half of the seventeenth century testify to the uninterrupted personal and economic liaisons between those who left and those who stayed.⁵⁹ In 1662 Rachel Gutierrez Pegna allocated part of her fortune of more than ten thousand pieces of eight to her mother, husband, and one sister, all of whom were living in Spain.⁶⁰ In 1683 Daniel Ribeiro Henriques left a weekly allowance to his niece Rachel, to be paid unless her brothers, who were living in Spain, came to Italy or sent her money.⁶¹ One year earlier, the merchant Daniel Ergas Mendes required that ten pieces of eight be given to anyone of "his lineage and his father's household" who arrived from Spain.⁶² Information about these kinship ties to Iberian

New Christians sometimes were released to the highest tribunals of Florence. During a legal case concerning the inheritance of one Rachel, widow of Daniel Coen del Lara, a copy of her last will, drawn up in the Jewish community in 1684, was transmitted to the prince's chancellery. She had relatives in Iberia and wanted to include among her heirs those who might come to Livorno and revert to Judaism.⁶³

Seventeenth-century testaments of Venice Sephardim are yet more forthcoming about their investments in Iberia and their connections with New Christian correspondents. Shortly after he arrived in Venice, the first member of a merchant dynasty whose other members were soon to follow him into the ghetto, Abraham Baruch alias Diogo Nunes dictated his last will in 1625. It tells us that three of his brothers were still living in Portugal as New Christians and one had left for the "Indies"; he had a sister married to a nephew of his in France and one married to a New Jew in Livorno, and his trade involved large imports of sugar from Brazil, which he kept in the house of the Spanish and Portuguese consul in Venice, Giorgio Cardoso.⁶⁴ In 1635 Abraham Cabib, born João Lopes Gomes in the small town of Trancoso in northern Portugal, dictated his last will in Portuguese in the Venice ghetto. He had four sons: one living in Madrid, one in Brazil, and two in Venice.⁶⁵ In 1691 the wealthy Baruch Carvaglio brothers claimed to have suffered "severe damage" as a result of their affairs in Lisbon.⁶⁶ In 1697 Abraham Henriques Franco declared that he had invested 3,900 pieces in the Spanish galleys that departed from Seville for Cartagena de India every summer ("Galeones de Nueva Espagna") together with his commercial partner in Iberia ("en partes de Ponente"), Pedro Henriques Marques, to whom his daughter was married.⁶⁷

After the 1690s Iberia is mentioned less and less often in the bequests of Livorno Sephardim. By then, most New Christian merchants and bankers had fled, and growing numbers of Sephardim, including some from Livorno, flocked to Amsterdam or invested their capital there. Of the 2,579 Sephardic men and women who married in Amsterdam between 1598 and 1699, 53.7 percent were born abroad. Of these, only 9.7 percent came from Italy. Restrictions on the lives of New Christians in Iberia and France explain the high proportion of arrivals from these regions (31.3 percent came from Portugal, 16.5 percent from Spain, 18 percent from France, 6.9 percent from Hamburg, 3.7 percent from transatlantic colonies, 1.1 percent from the Ottoman Empire and Morocco, and 0.8 percent from London).⁶⁸ No single motive can be detected for the emigration of Sephardim from Venice and Tuscany, but the high proportion of men to women among them and the timing of their marriages in Amsterdam (peaking in the last two decades of the seventeenth century) suggest that economic betterment

might have been the motivation for both wealthy and lower-class Sephardim. Many may have indeed been in dire condition: the Amsterdam Sephardic congregation denied Italian Sephardim full membership in 1697 because too many destitute people allegedly moved to the Dutch capital for the sole purpose of receiving charity.⁶⁹

The last wills of Livornese Jews in the second half of the seventeenth century show how the most well-off among them sought to strengthen their ties to Amsterdam and to London. In 1646, drafting his testament in Livorno, Abraham de Paz named among his heirs his first-born son, now in Amsterdam, another son in Smyrna, and his son-in-law in Livorno; he also enumerated creditors in Genoa, Florence, Venice, Amsterdam, Smyrna, Constantinople, and Tunis.⁷⁰ In 1651 Lopo Soares, a New Christian from Viseu in northern Portugal, also known as Joseph Soares, dictated his last will in Smyrna. A translation was registered in the chancellery of the Jewish nation of Livorno three years later because Lopo had named executors there as well as in Amsterdam, Venice, and Florence. His investments included a deposit of one thousand guilders in the Dutch East India Company and a deposit of forty-three hundred scudi in the Monte del Sale of Florence.⁷¹ In the same year, Solomon Jesurum in Pisa left three hundred ducats' worth of silks and linens to his uncle in Amsterdam.⁷²

The Baruch Carvaglios were among the first to build personal and financial ties not only to Livorno and Amsterdam but also to London. In the last quarter of the seventeenth century, Sarah and Rebecca Baruch Carvaglio of Venice married Moses Attias in Livorno and Jacob Nunes Herniques in Amsterdam, respectively.⁷³ In 1661 Isaac Baruch Carvaglio was already trading with London from Venice.⁷⁴ By 1687 all of David Baruch Carvaglio's maternal aunts lived in London.⁷⁵

To merchants such as Ergas and Silvera or the Baruch Carvaglios the English capital offered several attractions: it continued to be an outlet for Levantine goods and Italian fine textiles as well as a supplier of colonial goods for the Mediterranean; it was a place to subscribe to competitive marine insurance policies and buy bonds and stocks; and finally, by the late seventeenth century, London had emerged as the world's leading market for rough diamonds. In the 1750s, the brothers Abraham and Moses Baruch Carvaglio of Livorno held twenty-two hundred pounds' worth of investments in the Bank of England (which normally yielded a 3 percent yearly interest rate) and one thousand pounds' worth of stocks in the English East India Company (for a total equivalent to about fourteen thousand pieces of eight).⁷⁶ The Franco family of Livorno was even more aggressive in exploiting the potential of London for the exchange of Mediterranean coral and Indian diamonds. Moses Franco Albuquerque, an impor-

tant merchant, silk and coral manufacturer, and banker, sent his son Jacob to London, where he died in 1777 having amassed a large fortune working with his brothers Raphael, who remained in Livorno, and Samuel, who moved to Bombay in 1743 and then to Madras in 1749, where he died in 1763.⁷⁷ Families such as the Levi Sonsinos, Supinos, and Montefiores emulated the Francos.⁷⁸ And those who were not immediately successful in resettling their scions in London, such as the Ergases, took advantage of the English financial market. At his death in 1747 Moses Ergas, son of Rabbi Manuel, owned four thousand pounds' worth of stock in the English East India Company (the equivalent of about seventeen thousand pieces of eight).⁷⁹ In 1749 Raphael Ergas owed sufficient bonds in the Bank of England to vote for its governor and deputy governor.⁸⁰ In 1790 Jacob Ergas, son of David, bequeathed five thousand pounds in annuities of the Bank of England.⁸¹

In order to protect their investments in London, several Jewish merchants in Livorno registered a copy of their last will or a power of attorney given to a relative in London at the local British consulate, which transmitted the documents to the appropriate record office in London. Table 2.2 presents the deeds of those who followed this procedure. This list does not include all Livorno Jews with capital in London (the Ergases, for example, do not appear in it), but it shows that the practice was rare before the 1760s and that over time non-Sephardic Jews joined these investors in increasing numbers. The Recanati were the only family of Italian origin to appear in this list for the first three-quarters of the century; with five thousand pounds' worth of stock, at the end of the eighteenth century the Recanati owned a larger share in the East India Company than any of their coreligionists from Tuscany.⁸² In the meantime, some Jews based in Livorno who specialized in trade with North Africa also invested in the London money market. One Joseph Nataf of Tunis deposited considerable sums in the Bank of England and bought stock in the East India Company through his Livornese agent, Isaac Saccuto.⁸³ The Alvarengas had relatives in London and Algiers.⁸⁴ The Aghib and Racah families operated their business in Livorno, Venice, Genoa, Alexandria, and Cairo.⁸⁵ After some difficulty, Isaac Racah sealed a partnership with his cousin Solomon Aghib in 1721; Solomon settled in Livorno and prospered as a ship-owner and a merchant.⁸⁶ In 1803, having survived the turmoil of the revolutionary years, Moses Racah died a rich man in the Tuscan port.⁸⁷

LIVORNO AND THE EAST

Chapter 3 discusses the rivalries between the old Sephardic oligarchy and emerging groups of Italian and North African Jews in Livorno. For now it is

Table 2.2. Jews from Livorno and Pisa who registered their last wills in London, 1742-1848

Last name	First name	Residence	Will registration date	Source
Supino	Solomon	Livorno	1738, 3 October	PRO, PROB, 11/692
Recanati	Isaac, son of Salvador	Livorno	1742, 4 February	PRO, PROB, 11/716
Penha	Jacob, son of Abraham	Livorno	1751, 1 March	PRO, PROB, 11/786
Attias	Daniel	Livorno	1753, 6 July	PRO, PROB, 11/803
Recanati	Jacob, son of the late Lazarus	Livorno	1759, 8 January	PRO, PROB, 11/843
Rodrigues Monis	Raphael	Livorno	1761, 28 January	PRO, PROB, 11/862
Baruch Carvaglio	Moses	Pisa	1762, 11 August	PRO, PROB, 11/878
Ergas	Rachel	Livorno	1764, 10 January	PRO, PROB, 11/895
Medina, de	David	Livorno	1764, 5 September	PRO, PROB, 11/901
Aghib	Solomon	Livorno	1760, 5 July	PRO, PROB, 11/857
Castro, de	Isaac	Livorno	1767, 3 June	PRO, PROB, 11/929
Baruch Carvaglio	Abraham, son of Jacob	Livorno	1767, 20 January	PRO, PROB, 11/925
Saccuto	Daniel	Livorno	1769, 15 February	PRO, PROB, 11/946
Recanati	Joshua alias Salvador, son of Isaac	Livorno	1769, 19 December	PRO, PROB, 11/953
Baruch Carvaglio	Saul, son of the late Abraham	Livorno	1769, 9 October	PRO, PROB, 11/951
Recanati	Raphael, son of Lazarus	Livorno	1770, 15 February	PRO, PROB, 11/955
Ergas	Raphael, son of the late Moses	Livorno	1770, 24 December	PRO, PROB, 11/962
Recanati	Isaac, son of Lazarus	Livorno	1770, 3 July	PRO, PROB, 11/959
Sachi	Joseph	Livorno	1776, 8 July	PRO, PROB, 11/1022
Leon	Joseph, son of Moses	Livorno	1780, 27 June	PRO, PROB, 11/1066
Nataf	Isaac	Livorno	1782, 14 May	PRO, PROB, 11/1091
Saccuto Baruch Carvaglio	Esther	Livorno	1782, 28 March	PRO, PROB, 11/1088
Serra	Daniel Solomon	Livorno	1783, 16 January	PRO, PROB, 11/1099
Aghib	Jacob, son of Solomon	Livorno	1783, 30 September	PRO, PROB, 11/1107

continued...

Table 2.2. Jews from Livorno and Pisa who registered their last wills in London, 1742-1848 continued

Last name	First name	Residence	Will registration date	Source
Recanati	Elihezer	Livorno	1790, 8 July	PRO, PROB, 11/1194
Recanati	Lazarus, son of Isaac	Livorno	1790, 10 July	PRO, PROB, 11/1194
Ergas	Jacob, son of David	Livorno	1792, 20 July	PRO, PROB, 11/1220
Levi Sonsino	Abraham	Livorno	1793, 2 July	PRO, PROB, 11/1235
Franco	David	Livorno	1796, 14 May	PRO, PROB, 11/1275
Baruch Carvaglio	Aaron	Pisa	1798, 26 October	PRO, PROB, 11/1313
Medina Ergas	Leah	Livorno	1799, 26 November	PRO, PROB, 11/1332
Attias	Abraham Raphael	Livorno	1799, 26 November	PRO, PROB, 11/1332
Nunes de Paz	Solomon	Livorno	1803, 13 August	PRO, PROB, 11/1397
Racah	Moses	Livorno	1803, 20 April	PRO, PROB, 11/1391
Bassano	Israel	Livorno	1809, 19 December	PRO, PROB, 11/1506
Villa Reale Leucci	Allegra	Livorno	1816, 7 August	PRO, PROB, 11/1583
Nataf	Samuel	Livorno	1816, 26 January	PRO, PROB, 11/1576
Baruch Carvaglio	Rachel de Jacob Pardo Roques	Pisa	1817, 16 April	PRO, PROB, 11/1591
Disegni	Jacob David	Livorno	1825, 3 November	PRO, PROB, 11/1705
Franchetti	Isaac	Livorno	1832, 28 August	PRO, PROB, 11/1804
Baruch Carvaglio	Daniel Abraham	Livorno	1833, 26 November	PRO, PROB, 11/1823
Baruch Carvaglio	Abraham, son of Jacob	Livorno	1838, 26 April	PRO, PROB, 11/1893
Leucci	Aaron	Livorno	1848, 15 December	PRO, PROB, 11/2085

sufficient to note that, as the changing composition of those who registered their investments in London shows, the financial networks of these different segments of Jewish society based in Livorno overlapped at least in part by the mid-eighteenth century. In contrast, the Sephardim of Livorno and those in the Ottoman Empire became increasingly distant, culturally, socially, and economically speaking. By 1778 David Attias, who was born an Ottoman subject in Sarajevo but spent most of his life in Livorno, condemned the "fatalism" of his coreligionists in the Levant and urged them to embrace secular and rational European culture.⁸⁸ His views foreshadowed an attitude that became prevalent in the following century, when "the Jews of Western Europe began to envision the Jews of the Middle East, North Africa, and Mediterranean not as partners in commercial or intellectual exchange, but as 'Orientals' in need of protection and 'regeneration.'"⁸⁹

Attias's sentiments reflect the tenor of the times after two centuries during which the gulf between the Sephardim living in the Christian world and those in the Muslim world widened considerably. After 1492, and especially under the reign of Süleyman I (1520–66), the Ottoman Empire became a haven for many of those forced to convert in Iberia. Many of the wealthiest engaged in diplomatic and commercial exchanges with Venice. The weakening of Ottoman commercial power and ad hoc policies created in Venice led many to leave for the Italian peninsula after the 1530s.⁹⁰ After Spanish and Portuguese Jews were admitted to Venice in 1589, three official nations coexisted in the ghetto: those of Italo-German, Levantine, and Pontine Jews. The three nations had an umbrella organization that negotiated with the Venetian government, but each maintained its own synagogue and charity organization.⁹¹ The ghetto was small and crowded; Jews of all backgrounds lived together. And yet distinctions within Jewish society initially remained strong. In his autobiography, Rabbi Leon Modena (1571–1648), a learned scholar, gives us the impression of having mingled with Christians more than with Levantine Jews, and in one passage he hardly conceals his resentment of a Sephardic merchant in Ferrara, whom he calls "diabolic."⁹² Over time, the boundaries between the three nations blurred, with Levantine Jews being pulled into the orbit of the increasingly prosperous Pontines and marriages between Jews of different linguistic and ethnic backgrounds becoming more common.

Across the eastern Mediterranean, in contrast, Ottoman and Iberian Jews grew further and further apart. Differences in language, religious rites, social customs, and economic activities between the Sephardim living in the Balkans, Anatolia, the Levant, and North Africa and those who settled in Italy and in western Europe became more acute in the seventeenth century. To begin with, East-

ern Sephardim quickly abandoned their crypto-Judaism. The first generations of exiles to reach the Ottoman Empire in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, moreover, spoke Castilian and Ladino, a Judeo-Spanish vernacular language. Instead, in Livorno, as in most of the Western Sephardic world, Portuguese was employed in commercial, legal, and communitarian records, and Castilian was reserved for literary, philosophical, and religious texts. In 1743 Isaac Silvera told a correspondent in Genoa that he considered Portuguese his "paternal and maternal language," although he was born in Italy.⁹³ Four years later, Moses Ergas—who was born and raised in Livorno, as was his father—jotted down his testament in an Italian that was inflected with traces of Portuguese.⁹⁴ Only in the southwest of France was Spanish the preferred language among New Christians, although others used it often across the diaspora.⁹⁵ Everywhere, linguistic acculturation was rapid. In the late 1750s, having settled in London, Solomon de Silva, son of a prominent banker in Bordeaux, learned English and retained his proficiency in French but wrote only a rudimentary Spanish.⁹⁶ Knowledge of Hebrew was considerably more widespread among Eastern than Western Sephardim. Portuguese (mixed with Spanish), not Hebrew, was the common language of the Sephardic trading diaspora.

Community organization set Eastern and Western Sephardim apart, as well. A vast array of Jewish communities lived in the Ottoman Empire, including Ladino-, Arabic-, and Greek-speaking Jews and surviving communities of Karaites. Soon after their arrival in the Ottoman Empire, Spanish émigrés imposed their leadership and rites on others. The Spanish congregations of Salonica and Constantinople emerged as the two major centers of Ottoman Jewry (and were sometimes rivals). In the Ottoman Empire as in Europe, each Sephardic community (*kahal*) elected its leaders from among the male heads of household, who formed the governing board (*mahamad*) that administered the community's affairs, appointed rabbis, supervised religious and moral order, assessed internal tax levies, and negotiated with local and state authorities. These similarities notwithstanding, rabbis ruled among Eastern Sephardim to an extent not matched in Europe and the New World, where affluent laymen headed the Portuguese and Spanish Jewish communities. In the Ottoman Sephardic world, every congregation named a rabbi to adjudicate religious, civil, and criminal disputes with the assistance of two sages (*dayyanim*).⁹⁷ In the West, in contrast, the degree of juridical and jurisdictional autonomy granted to each Sephardic community varied from place to place but was firmly in the hands of the lay leadership. After the rabbis examined Spinoza's works, it fell upon the parnassim to approve his expulsion from the Amsterdam congregation in the summer of 1656. Several years after a Jewish community was formally recognized in Bor-

deaux in 1723, a rabbinic court (*bet din*) was created in the 1740s, but it only ruled on matters of religious and moral conduct; wealthy laymen overshadowed the rabbinate.⁹⁸

A strong spiritual bond linked the Sephardim of Europe to Palestine (then under Ottoman rule), but in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries this bond manifested itself first and foremost in the form of monetary remittances. A few men (mostly students and scholars) and women (usually elderly widows) animated by religious fervor left Europe for the biblical land of Israel. Others came for short visits to holy sites. Groups of indigents were occasionally dispatched to Palestine. But philanthropy was the strongest connection between the Holy Land and the Western Sephardic diaspora. Rabbis regularly traveled from Palestine to solicit financial help from wealthier European congregations; Sephardic men and women of means frequently made bequests to subsidize scholarship and aid to the poor in Jerusalem, Hebron, and Safed.⁹⁹

The cultural distance between Eastern and Western Sephardim was wide when Elijah Silvera joined a small but thriving group of Sephardic merchant firms in Aleppo that included Jacob and Joseph Belilios, Lopes, Pinheiro, and Coen, Medina and Chaves, and the Medina family.¹⁰⁰ French consular papers referred to them as "juifs livournais," "juifs italiens ou espagnols," "juifs européens," "juifs protégés de France," less frequently as "juifs portugais," and sometimes as "juifs chrétiens." In the language of the time they were simply "Franks," the generic term for Europeans in the Muslim world. They all lived in physical proximity to European merchants and were not obliged to wear distinctive signs.¹⁰¹ They spoke Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Italian rather than Ladino, and their Arabic was very basic at best.¹⁰² They wore European attire and wigs. In 1690 the French consul in Aleppo decried their habit of wearing hats and wigs.¹⁰³ And the chief rabbi of Aleppo apparently wished to oblige "the Frank Jews" to comply with the requirement of wearing a beard.¹⁰⁴ In 1731 only twenty-three Sephardim of Livorno officially resided in various Egyptian port cities under French diplomatic protection.¹⁰⁵ But their privileges generated antipathy among coreligionists and French merchants alike. A French Capuchin friar ridiculed Western Sephardim for their unrefined hats; he stressed that they had a separate burial ground from Ottoman Jews and even claimed that they "did not share some articles of faith" with them.¹⁰⁶

The depth of the fracture between Western and Eastern Sephardim should warn us against assuming that a common religious identity might be taken to fuel solidarity in commercial matters. In fact, matrimonial and economic alliances followed closely the internal ramifications of the broader Sephardic dias-

pora. In addition, precisely in the decades when Ergas and Silvera operated, new operative and symbolic boundaries emerged among the Sephardim of Livorno.

Beginning in the late seventeenth century, a group of families based in Tunis, Cairo, and Algiers referred to as North African Jews in Livorno and as Livornese Jews in North Africa became active in the region between the northern and southern coasts of the western Mediterranean. In 1685 there were forty-nine of these families in Tunis (they were referred to as *Grana*, from the Arabic term for Livorno). By 1710 they established their own synagogue.¹⁰⁷ In Tunis the Lombrosos controlled three or four factories manufacturing popular woolen hats (*chéchias*) made with Spanish wool imported via Livorno, where they established a business outpost. Others, such as the Aghibs, the Boccaras, the Camposes, the Farros, the Gutierrez Pegnas, the Leons, the Racahs, the Sorias, the Vaises, and the Valensins, followed suit and progressively dominated the exchanges between Marseilles, Livorno, and North Africa.¹⁰⁸

Families such as the Ergases, the Baruch Carvaglios, and the Francos resisted intermarrying with these emerging North African Jews. They also kept separate spheres of commercial influence, dividing their efforts among the Levant (most notably Aleppo), northern Europe (and increasingly London), and the diamond trade with India. In the second half of the eighteenth century, however, these established Sephardic families lost ground to the rising commercial power of France in the Mediterranean and especially to Britain in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. In Livorno, too, their supremacy within the Jewish community began to be contested by Italian Jews such as the Recanati and by a cluster of Jewish families that specialized in the triangular trade between Livorno, Tunis, and Marseilles. What concerns us is that by virtue of their geographical and business specializations, the old Sephardic elite of Livorno frequently entered into prolonged business deals with non-Jews. In contrast, the Jewish merchants who trafficked primarily with North Africa relied primarily on relatives and coreligionists and only occasionally pooled resources with Muslim traders.¹⁰⁹

As a rich literature has insisted in recent decades, distinctive social, economic, and cultural traits kept the Sephardim united across the diaspora and apart from the rest of Jewish society. Affluent merchants cultivated their sense of superiority over other Jewish groups in order to reaffirm their standing in the community. Jewish scholars of Iberian origin were more thoroughly imbued with Christian culture than were most Ashkenazic rabbis. A web of personal and institutional ties bound Sephardim together over vast distances. As Evelyne Oliel-Grausz has documented, persecution and commerce were not the sole

reasons people maintained connections throughout the diaspora. The need to preserve order and integrity in local communities, to acquire religious texts and objects, to relocate rabbis, and to comply with Jewish legal prescriptions multiplied and intensified lines of communication among the Portuguese and Spanish Jewish congregations across Europe and the Atlantic.¹¹⁰ These contacts and migrations reinforced a distinctive translocal, collective identity among Western Sephardim.

At the same time, distinctive but complementary networks crisscrossed this polycentric diaspora. Dutch Sephardim and Ottoman Jewry tend to eclipse Livorno in the scholarly literature, but this chapter has mapped the principal axes of Sephardic migration and commerce that radiated from the Tuscan port. In tracing the affirmation of Livorno as the most important Sephardic hub in southern Europe, I have sought to convey a sense of the vigor with which the most proactive Sephardic merchants created and adapted to new patterns of trade as well as describe the internal variations that came to distinguish different segments of the Sephardic world in the Mediterranean. In so doing, I have sought to set the stage for a reexamination of the notion that a shared confessional and ethnic identity was entirely self-evident or, indeed, alone sufficient to the construction of business relations. As Ergas and Silvera's commercial strategies will demonstrate, a shared identity was often longed for in the choice of commission agents, but more was needed. Even within the same diaspora, only intertwined kinship and credit networks sustained fiduciary relations.

For merchants whose minority status placed de facto if not legal limits on the range of opportunities for business organization (no state would have chartered an exclusively Sephardic commercial company, nor could Sephardic merchants raise considerable capital among non-Jews to set up large-scale operations), solid intra-Sephardic networks were also prerequisites for engaging in cross-cultural trade. Cooperation in business did not require the dissolution of religious and social boundaries.

The creation of a Jewish nation in Livorno in the 1590s was part of the effort by several European rulers to capture the perceived entrepreneurial talent of Iberian refugees. In the Continent more than in England, and in Venice and Livorno more than in Amsterdam or Hamburg, these efforts were accompanied by a stabilization of the porous religious boundaries between New Christians and New Jews. By the time Ergas and Silvera began to operate in Livorno in 1704, they had long ceased to waver between their forbears' allegiance to the Catholic Church (whether sincere or not) and Judaism. Alone among his relatives, Moses Ergas, a paternal uncle of Ergas and Silvera's founder, was baptized together with his three-year-old daughter in 1691 and took the name of Francesco Xa-

verio Carlo Fortunati. His wife Sarah did not follow him in this choice and, as required by canon law, obtained a divorce. Although Ergas-Fortunati probably continued to serve as a liaison for his relatives from Florence, his conversion, like that of many others, left no room for compromise.¹¹¹

In northern Europe a few individual Sephardim, and wealthy men in particular, continued to assume alternative religious identities. The lines of demarcation between Jews and Christians were greater wherever the Inquisition remained vigilant, but the pressure to conform grew stronger in Amsterdam, too. There, as Yosef Kaplan has shown, those who traveled to Iberia were relegated to a marginal position in the community. As community leaders and merchants, Sephardic men of the upper and middle ranks were interested parties in the consolidation of the community's boundaries. Rather than leading to economic isolationism, communitarian control rendered Jewish-Christian relations more stable and peaceful. This stability likely enhanced the collective credibility of Sephardic merchants in the eyes of outsiders, including the many Christians with whom they exchanged favors and negotiated deals. In Chapter 3 I turn to Jewish-Christian relations in Livorno, as well as to the evolution and internal conflicts of the local Jewish community.

A NEW CITY, A NEW SOCIETY?: LIVORNO, THE JEWISH NATION, AND COMMUNITARIAN COSMOPOLITANISM

[Livorno] is not remarkably large, but is regularly built, and is in modern taste. It is well fortified. It contains about 40,000 inhabitants 20,000 of whom are Jews. The most of the trade passes through their hands. It is a free port, which makes the trade here very considerable, consequently a great resort for merchants of all nations. . . . Here all nations, and even the Mahometans, have free access, and may settle. The Jews live in a particular part of the city, have a handsome synagogue, and though subject to very heavy imposts, are in a thriving condition.

Thus wrote Captain John Foss about Livorno, where he stopped on his return voyage to Boston in the 1790s after having been freed from captivity in Algiers.¹ Foss's views reflect opinions that were well established at the time, in spite of their inaccuracy: Jews were not heavily taxed, for example. Only a handful of Muslims came and went as freemen; the vast majority worked as forced laborers on the docks and galleys, and a fortunate few were employed as unpaid domestic servants. The entry in Foss's journal appears to derive less from any genuine impression that the Tuscan port made on him than from what he heard and read about it. Years earlier, the German geographer Anton Friedrich Büsching had described Livorno in exactly the same terms, and his account circulated in several English translations.² Büsching's description, in turn, borrowed generously from a long list of Christian travelers, merchants, sea captains, navy commanders, adventurers, erudites, and polymaths who in the course of the eighteenth century helped crystallize the image of Livorno as unique for its "modern" urban typology, thriving in the midst of a declining Italian peninsula, welcoming toward Jews, and tolerant of an assortment of religious minorities.³

When Foss claims that Jews amounted to half of the town's population he

repeats a common if not undisputed refrain.⁴ This number was far off the mark, but it would not have shocked any reader. A French traveler visiting Livorno in 1719 called it "le Paradis des Juifs" and counted fifteen thousand of them.⁵ An Englishman later picked up the same inflated statistic.⁶ In 1728, Montesquieu wrote that there were between six thousand and seven thousand Jews in Livorno until Rabbi Joseph Attias corrected him, pointing out that his coreligionists numbered no more than five thousand.⁷ This more realistic if still exaggerated figure soon appeared in a travel account published in 1738.⁸ Meanwhile, the Savary brothers' commanding *Dictionnaire de commerce* endorsed an estimate of ten thousand Jews in Livorno.⁹ Others preferred the vague mention of "some thousand Jews."¹⁰ Some settled for fourteen thousand.¹¹ The French Dominican friar Jean-Baptiste Labat, who visited Livorno in 1705-6, offered the highest estimate of all: twenty-two thousand.¹²

These accounts help us reconstruct the genealogy of Livorno's fame as a Jewish entrepôt rather than offer insights into the life of its inhabitants. Inflated estimates of the Jewish population were almost invariably mixed with insinuations about their economic dominance. While correcting these fantasies, modern scholarship has for the most part continued to celebrate the benevolent dispositions of rulers and commoners toward Jews in the Tuscan port. In the 1930s Cecil Roth described the city as "[t]he only place in Italy where Jewish intellectual life was completely untrammled" and did not hesitate to give it the honorific title of "Little Jerusalem."¹³ Three decades later, Attilio Milano called Livorno an "oasis" among the Italian states in an "age of oppression" for Jews.¹⁴ Some contemporary Jewish authors also contributed to this reputation.¹⁵

Livorno's fame is merited. Beginning in the 1620s, its port grew faster than any other in seventeenth-century Italy and remained competitive through most of the following century. The city's population was unusually diverse for the time, and Jews there enjoyed privileges with no equal in most of Christian Europe. However generous, though, these privileges did not subvert the legal, social, and cultural principles that governed Jewish-Christian relations in Catholic countries where Jews were allowed to reside, nor did they eliminate anti-Semitic sentiments and incidents.

In his *Journal* (1764), Edward Gibbon portrayed the town as nothing less than "la véritable terre de Canaan pour les Juifs," but admitted that the recurrence of attacks against Jews testified to a latent, persistent "religious hatred."¹⁶ In 1722 Jewish leaders asked the prince to open an investigation into an incident in which an angry crowd had thrown stones at some Jewish homes.¹⁷ Several years before Gibbon's visit, in 1751, a random shooting set off an attack against the Jewish neighborhood; official records referred to the fury of the irate populace

("furia del popolo inviperito") that took up arms.¹⁸ In 1787 two Jewish and three Muslim merchants on a leisurely tour of Pisa were accused of desecrating sacred images and barely escaped lynching.¹⁹ Popular tumults at the time of revolutionary events and skyrocketing grain prices, many animated by the Catholic reaction, led to more sustained outbursts of anti-Semitic violence in 1790 and 1800.²⁰ Not simply the dark side of otherwise harmonious relations between Jews and Christians, these episodes are, rather, symptomatic of profound tensions that existed in Livorno as in any other part of Christian Europe where Jews lived. In order to contain these tensions, Jewish leaders, as elsewhere, sought to restrain the behaviors that might incite "public scandal" or assaults. In 1677 the Jewish community fined members who celebrated the blessing of the new moon (*Kiddush Levanah*) in the streets: the Jewish festival normally took place at night and inevitably attracted bands of Christians up to no good.²¹

Thus historians must recover the very palpable ways in which Livorno was an exceptionally tolerant environment and, at the same time, a typical Counter-Reformation Italian town. Because legal norms and social conventions bounded the imperatives of profit, the illustration of the fabric of Jewish life and its relation to local authorities and society helps us understand the structure of partnerships such as Ergas and Silvera and business relations between Sephardic merchants and non-Jews.

Neither the available documentation nor prevalent analytical frameworks offer much guidance. Lacking primary sources that open windows onto the quotidian encounters in the streets, taverns, workplaces, and houses among people who spoke foreign languages or a heavily inflected local idiom, wore strange clothes, and sometimes had different skin colors, we must turn to legislative and administrative records to chronicle the behaviors that they prescribed and the transgressions that they condemned. This documentation admittedly tends to reflect boundary-making rather than fluidity; it also is biased toward reporting on the upper ranks of Jewish and Christian society, though the majority of the Jewish population lived in modest conditions.²² Nevertheless, an investigation of the legal and administrative contours of *la Nazione Ebraica*, the Jewish nation, of Livorno, and a closer look at its elites allow us to distill fragments of experience and reconstruct the power dynamics present in negotiations between state authorities and a variety of foreign and ethnoreligious minorities. Among these, Jews were economically the most influential and socially the most threatening of the established social order because their emulation of Christian aristocratic manners (which was especially pronounced among elite Sephardic men involved in trade and finance) both assuaged and heightened anxieties about the separation of Jewish and Christian social spheres.

It is common to refer to port cities, European and otherwise, where a certain degree of religious toleration grew from state policies or the spontaneous mixing in the marketplace, with the adjective *cosmopolitan*. Thus several historians call Livorno a cosmopolitan city that set itself apart from the rest of Tuscany.²³ Henri Méchoulan praises the "necessary cosmopolitanism" that allowed the Sephardim to settle and prosper in Amsterdam.²⁴ José do Nascimento Raposo describes seventeenth-century Bordeaux, where New Christians were not allowed to practice Judaism, as "a true cosmopolitan center."²⁵ Others identify cosmopolitanism as a common feature of littoral societies of all times and places in comparison to inland people.²⁶ All these characterizations presume a link between trade and a more open and tolerant cultural setting that is not entirely lacking empirical proof but needs to be tested in its local and historical specificities. New laws compelled the population of Livorno and other European cities to accept the presence of Sephardic families on grounds that would have been unthinkable a century earlier. Policies of religious toleration, however, cannot be equated with tolerant and cosmopolitan attitudes of mutual respect. The prospect of commercial prosperity gave state authorities a rationale for accommodating religious minorities, and the pursuit of profit multiplied occasions for dealings between Jews and non-Jews. At the same time, the Tuscan authorities, the Inquisition, and Jewish leaders all wished to make sure that fraternization between individual Jews and Christians did not erode the boundaries between the two groups beyond repair.

In the case of Livorno it seems preferable to speak of communitarian cosmopolitanism. The expression will likely sound like an oxymoron to those attuned to liberal-pluralistic models of assimilation. And yet it best describes the familiarity with strangers common to the least and the most privileged strata of the population of Livorno as well as the logic that defined and enforced corporate identities. In keeping with this corporate logic, the state invested every identified nation in Livorno with specific rights and obligations deemed commensurate with its position in relation to the body politic. Acculturation worked exclusively in one direction, and social conflict and upward mobility remained largely confined to one's own community of origin. The result was a highly diverse and yet a highly segregated society that resembled late-Ottoman Alexandria more than today's London or New York: a society in which, for the majority of individuals, the nation to which they belonged constituted the horizon of expectations.²⁷

This chapter outlines Livorno's communitarian cosmopolitanism and compares it to the norms that regulated Jewish-Christian relations and Jewish self-government in other Catholic states and in Protestant countries. In so doing, it pursues two intertwined goals: it scrutinizes the nature of Livorno's cosmopoli-

tanism while also examining the role of the Jewish nation as it evolved into a governance institution for Sephardic merchants (a role that it played indirectly but powerfully, especially until the early eighteenth century, when other components of Jewish society challenged the Sephardic supremacy in community matters). In the course of the book, we will see how communitarian cosmopolitanism impacted the organization of trade.

JEWS AND OTHER NATIONS IN LIVORNO

Cosimo de' Medici the Elder was the informal head of the Florentine Republic when the latter purchased Livorno from Genoa in 1421 as part of its territorial expansion and incorporated it into the port system of Pisa, which was suffering the consequences of heavy sedimentation by the Arno River. In the mid-sixteenth century, his descendant, also named Cosimo de' Medici (Cosimo I, r. 1537–74), the hereditary ruler of Tuscany, laid the foundations for transforming Livorno from a fishermen's village into a Mediterranean hub of long-distance trade. The work began with a plan for the military defense of the port. A new city statute in 1545 granted Livorno greater fiscal benefits and more juridical and administrative autonomy than any other town in the state. In order to attract ships and merchants from all over the Mediterranean and Europe, Cosimo I launched the construction of a new harbor in 1571. Three years later, a canal linking Livorno to the Arno and thus to Florence via Pisa was completed. Once the docks, shipyards, warehouses, and quarantine hospitals were ready, Francis I charged Bernardo Buontalenti, the Medici's trusted architect, with planning the residential city. The project gave Livorno its distinctive form: a five-star perimeter that encircled orthogonal streets along which private dwellings and public buildings were aligned symmetrically (see figure 3.1). In 1606, with great fanfare, this previously undistinguished Tuscan town was given the name "city" by its patrons, who saw their glory reflected in its beauty and efficiency.²⁸

Livorno was a "new city" because it was built from scratch according to the rationalist principles of Renaissance architecture; it was also a new city insofar as it was intended to be a social experiment. Populating Livorno with the right social and economic groups, including foreigners and merchants, was as crucial to the Medici's project as building its civil, military, and port infrastructures, and it proved to be an equally long and laborious task. The privileges that Florence issued to a variety of merchant communities in the Mediterranean in the 1550s and 1560s yielded limited results. In 1572 forty-five foreign families residing in Livorno were exempted from all taxes.²⁹ In 1577 Filippo Sassetti, formerly the agent of a Florentine commercial house in Asia, suggested offering incentives



Figure 3.1. Map of Livorno in the mid-eighteenth century

Features:

1. Duomo (the main church)
2. Church of the Virgin Mary (Chiesa della Madonna)
3. Church of Saint Catherine
4. Synagogue
5. Armenian Apostolic Church of Saint Gregory the Illuminator
6. Greek Uniate Church (Santissima Annunziata)
7. Greek Orthodox Church (Santissima Trinità)
8. Bagno (the building that housed Muslim slaves)
9. Monument to Ferdinand I and the Four Moors
- 10a.–10b. Via Ferdinanda, the main street
- 11a.–11b. Via Reale
- 12a.–12.b. Via della Madonna

Source: ASF, *Segreteria di gabinetto*, 696, fols. 24–25.

Credit: Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, Italy.

(including very low customs duties) to attract "Levantine merchants" (mostly "Turks and Jews") to the Tuscan port in order to undercut Venice and make Livorno the European emporium for eastern Mediterranean goods in the way in which Antwerp was the European emporium for colonial imports.³⁰ By 1601, the town had 3,710 inhabitants, among whom 23 were merchants and brokers, more than 100 were Jews, and most were men—soldiers, Muslim slaves, and seasonal workers.³¹

The livornine of the 1590s accelerated the settlement of foreigners and trading diasporas and at the same time clarified the Medici's intentions. The charter of 1593 was addressed to "merchants of all nations, Levantine and Ponentine, Spanish and Portuguese, Greeks, Germans and Italians, Jews, Turks and Moors, Armenians, Persians and others."³² But the language and the prescriptions of this legislative text, which revised the 1591 version according to the requests made by Jewish representatives, made clear that it aimed to appeal primarily to New Christian families in Iberia and those who had already embraced Judaism in Europe and the Levant. The new charter shaped the social, economic, and administrative organization of the Jewish nation and the contours of Christian-Jewish relations in Livorno for more than two centuries. Reinstated by every Medici ruler until 1737, the livornine were again ratified by the Regents of Tuscany and in 1765 when the grand duchy came under direct Habsburg rule. In 1808 Napoleon replaced the Jewish nation with a consistory modeled on the one that he had created in France. Only in 1836 were the livornine abrogated.³³

According to Roman law, which constituted the substratum of all legal regimes in early modern continental Europe, Jews were to be considered citizens rather than slaves or second-class citizens of subject territories. On the basis of this principle, Jews enjoyed a number of civil (but not political) rights in medieval and early modern Italy. But canon law and discriminatory legislation passed by sovereign authorities overruled the general principle of Roman law.³⁴ The livornine defined the limits of civil and property rights to which local Jews were entitled but included concessions that were not available elsewhere in Catholic Europe. To begin with, Jews no longer had to wear the distinctive badge prescribed by the Lateran Council of 1215.

The degree of jurisdictional autonomy of the Jews of Livorno was also considerably greater than that of their coreligionists in Rome and Venice, where rabbis and lay leaders could police the inhabitants of the ghetto through internal disciplinary measures and voluntary arbitration but never obtained the right to act in place of secular authorities.³⁵ The livornina of 1593 introduced the institution of the massari (the Italian equivalent of *parnassim*, *senhores do mahamad*, or *memunim*). Five massari were elected on a yearly basis and charged not only

with overseeing all the community's affairs but also with settling legal disputes among Jews in all civil cases and in minor criminal cases.³⁶ They adjudicated on the basis of Jewish law (*halakhah*), whether by consulting with rabbinic authorities or not, and could incorporate customary principles of merchants' law as well as the statutes of the commercial court of Florence into their decisions.³⁷ Any dispute among Jews in Livorno had to be adjudicated first by the massari, a proviso that reinforced the corporate logic of the administration of justice. Sentences issued by the Jewish judges could be appealed to the court of the governor of Livorno, which was led by a legal professional (*auditore*) and which also acted as the tribunal for any lawsuits between Christians and Jews.

After 1614 the massari were vested with a truly extraordinary power: when they screened new members for admission into the community (a procedure called *ballottazione*), they also conferred on them the status of Tuscan citizens, that is, subjects of the grand duchy.³⁸ Members of the Jewish nation appeared in this capacity, rather than as foreigners, before civil magistrates and appeals courts. As Tuscan subjects, they also enjoyed diplomatic and consular protection by the grand duchy and its allies—a privilege that proved particularly useful in the conduct of trade with the Ottoman Empire. In return for these concessions, the Medici made membership in the Jewish nation conditional on maintaining a permanent residence in Livorno. Those who wished to leave for a few months had to secure permission beforehand. The exemption from paying any direct taxes that was granted to all heads of households belonging to the Jewish nation of Livorno likely gave prosperous merchants an incentive to comply with the residency requirement.³⁹ By delegating to Jewish leaders the power to select new members, the Tuscan authorities also made them responsible for the consequences of admitting families that might appear less than desirable. The pressure was felt in 1718, when the massari banned eighty "foreign Jews, enemies of the [Livornese Jewish] nation," most likely because they were poor.⁴⁰

The Jews of Livorno enjoyed other privileges that distinguished them from their coreligionists in the rest of Tuscany, as well as from the bulk of the Jewish population of Italy and Europe. Aimed at attracting merchants with significant international connections, the livornine allowed Jews to conduct all economic activities except the retail sale of second-hand clothing.⁴¹ This provision broke with the medieval tradition of Italian towns whereby Jews were only permitted to sell used garments and lend money as pawnbrokers. Whereas in Venice Sephardic Jews were excluded from all guilds and therefore specialized in wholesale importing and exporting and in finance, in Livorno craft guilds were never instituted and Jews could be active in local retail sales and manufacturing.⁴² From the outset they ran silk and coral-processing factories and extended their

investments in rural areas through the cultivation of tobacco and other products.⁴³ The livornine included other concessions to those who joined the Jewish nation that were especially attractive to merchants, including the cancellation of all debts previously accumulated outside Tuscany and the legal validity of private account books and all contracts relating to commercial activities.⁴⁴

Perhaps the greatest recognition of the respect and autonomy of decision granted to Sephardic families in Livorno was the prohibition of involuntary baptisms of Jewish children under the age of thirteen.⁴⁵ Elsewhere, such baptisms were not rare occurrences as a consequence of the conversional zeal of Catholic religious orders or the personal initiative of Catholic servants and wetnurses who worked in Jewish households. Even the Venetian government, which prided itself on resisting pressures from Rome, never challenged openly the doctrine and practice of baptism of Jewish infants. The Medici established an institution that specialized in the instruction of new converts to Catholicism in Florence (Casa dei Catecumeni) but never opened one in Pisa or in Livorno.⁴⁶ At the same time, they actively supported numerous religious orders that proselytized Jews, "Lutherans" (the collective name under which most Christian reformed churches and sects were labeled by Rome), and Muslim slaves, especially under the conformist rule of Cosimo III. Catholic rituals filled the public space and civic ceremonies in Livorno as in any other Italian town; conversions from Judaism to Catholicism were celebrated publicly.⁴⁷

The Jews of Livorno were the only ones in Italy to be neither confined to a ghetto nor denied the right to own real estate. Social forces and government intervention nonetheless contributed to a de facto zoning of the city center, and attempts were made to forbid Jews from living in the same buildings as Christians. A predominantly Jewish neighborhood with a synagogue at the center was located behind the cathedral and apart from the central square and the main avenue, via Ferdinanda (later via Grande), which linked the dockyards to the road to Pisa and the hinterland and served as the stage for processions and other public events (see figures 3.1 and 3.2).⁴⁸ Affluent Jewish families, however, bought mansions or portions of houses in the most prestigious areas in town. A decree of 1625 required Jews and non-Jews to use different staircases when living in the same building; the measure reflects the authorities' desire to demarcate physical space more than it does the feasibility of such rules.⁴⁹ Several Jews rented their properties to Christians and to Muslim freemen. Knowing that the Jewish nation prohibited him from renting to Muslim slaves but not to freemen, Raphael Ergas petitioned the prince in 1726 to be allowed to rent some building he owned near the synagogue to "Turkish merchants."⁵⁰

The growing commercial position of Livorno in the Mediterranean, combined



Figure 3.2. The ancient synagogue of Livorno (c. 1920).

Credit: Alinari Archives, Florence.

with a perceived sense of leniency toward heterodoxy, helped attract foreign merchants. Between 1579 and 1597, French, Flemish, English, and Genoese consuls were sworn in, to be followed by Dutch, Portuguese, and Swedish consuls.⁵¹ The composition of foreign nations in Livorno changed over time. In the first half of the eighteenth century, the English were the wealthiest, followed by the French and the Dutch, while Armenians, Raguseans, and Greeks lagged behind. A consul headed each recognized nation, but he was not given the same degree of jurisdictional autonomy as were the massari for fear of the diplomatic conflicts that such a privilege might ignite. Only the Jews formed a "suddita nazione," a nation made of subjects of the grand duchy; other merchant communities were simply "nazioni estere," foreign nations.⁵² As with all laws in Old Regime Europe, the livornine were not universal in character but designated rights and obligations specific to Jews.⁵³ Other foreigners appealed to these patents in order to enhance their status, but it fell to the prince to determine when the livornine could be used in negotiations with the many nations of Livorno.⁵⁴

None of those nations ever competed with Jews in terms of demographic size, nor did they include the same variety of men, women, and children, rich and poor, scholars, artisans, and merchants. Most foreigners were young male commissioners of their principals abroad. Some of them married local women and put down roots, especially in the eighteenth century. The “Flemish” (a fluid term that referred to Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinist merchants from the Low Countries and occasionally to those from Hamburg and other Hanseatic ports) were numerous in the 1620s and 1630s, but they progressively lost ground—there were about twenty of them in 1666 and 1710 and only a dozen after that point. English merchants, in contrast, more than doubled in number from the mid-seventeenth century to 1752, when twenty-one of them were members of the British Factory of Livorno (which excluded the Catholic subjects of the British Crown). Many French and Swiss Calvinists also enlisted as members of the British Factory, leaving only a few merchants to join the numerous artisans and petty traders who formed the French nation. The number of French merchants oscillated between fifteen and twenty-five from 1650 to 1720 and dwindled to seven in 1783. More foreign merchants lived in Livorno with only a loose affiliation with consular authorities and thus went unrecorded in most primary sources.⁵⁵ Armenians began to appear in Tuscany in the mid-sixteenth century. Their presence grew slowly, to peak in the mid-seventeenth century, when there were at least forty-seven Armenian merchants in Livorno. In 1763, there were a mere fourteen Armenian heads of household.⁵⁶ By then, Greeks greatly outnumbered Armenians, although most were of modest means. A visitor noted in 1789 that many Armenians and Greeks were less well-to-do than other foreign merchants: they engaged in local retail trade, and the Armenians sewed mariners’ uniforms.⁵⁷ Overall, foreigners were a presence in Livorno, but their numbers paled in comparison to those of the Jewish inhabitants or to those of foreigners in cities such as Amsterdam.

Local and state authorities sought to regulate freedom of religious worship very carefully. The livornine granted Jews the right to have a synagogue. The first was inaugurated in 1595 at 114 via Ferdinanda but was soon moved to a less central location.⁵⁸ The livornine, however, did not sanction religious freedom as a universal principle. Fear of Protestantism haunted religious and secular authorities in Livorno as in the rest of the Italian peninsula. In 1618 and 1621, on taking office, the city’s governors were instructed to be vigilant against pernicious ideas that might infiltrate Livorno from regions north of the Alps.⁵⁹ And yet if they hoped to continue to attract foreign merchants, the Medici could not wage war against all “heresies.” It was a badly kept secret that non-Catholic worshippers gathered in two churches located in a street adjacent to the main square (via



Figure 3.3. The Armenian Church of Saint Gregory the Illuminator in Livorno.

Credit: Photo by the author.

della Madonna). A church of the Greek Uniate rite (Santissima Annunziata) was inaugurated in 1606, and it also housed Melchite, schismatic Greeks. An improbable mix of English, Dutch, French, Portuguese New Christians, and Armenians of dubious Catholic faith confessed in several languages and raised altars to their patron saints in the Chiesa della Madonna, which was run by a Catholic religious order.⁶⁰

Strengthened by its growing political and commercial power, the English monarchy demanded the right to public worship for its subjects in Livorno. It finally obtained a burial ground for Anglicans in 1695 and later, in spite of the continued opposition of the Archbishop of Pisa, authorization for an Anglican chaplain to officiate in the British Factory in 1707.⁶¹ The latter was no small concession. In 1786 an Englishman could claim that Livorno was “the only city in Italy where the Protestant religion is publicly tolerated.”⁶² The Armenian Apostolic Church of Saint Gregory the Illuminator was inaugurated in 1714, after the Pope gave permission to celebrate the Mass in Armenian on condition that the Roman liturgy be followed and the Armenian Patriarch never mentioned (see figure 3.3).⁶³ In the more peripheral church of Saint Catherine, a chapel was reserved for the Syrian-Maronites, who prayed in Arabic.⁶⁴ Only after the advent of the House of Lorraine in 1737 did it become possible to conduct Orthodox rites;

in 1757, however, the authorities still insisted that the place where Greek Orthodox worshippers gathered (Santissima Trinità) could not display any religious sign on the façade.⁶⁵

Nowhere in Christian Europe did religious toleration officially extend to Muslims. In Livorno and Marseilles, however, so numerous were Muslim slaves that at the very least it was necessary to concede to them a burial site.⁶⁶ Tuscan secular authorities tolerated the presence of three mosques inside the building that housed several thousand Muslim slaves (the Bagno), a unique edifice in early modern Europe that mirrored those where Christian captives were held in North Africa.⁶⁷ Although these mosques were supposed to be concealed, their existence was so extraordinary that it caught the attention of several authors. Büsching noted that “Mahometism . . . [was] tolerated . . . at Leghorn.”⁶⁸ The second edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* corrected erroneous assumptions about the indiscriminate acceptance of all Reformed churches in Livorno but also listed Muslims along with those allowed to worship in this Catholic city: “Roman Catholics, Jews, Greeks, Armenians, Mahometans, and even the English factory, are indulged in the public exercise of their religion; but other Protestants must be satisfied with the private.”⁶⁹

Today we know that more Muslim merchants visited European ports than was once believed.⁷⁰ One of them, Ali Ben Ramadan, sojourned in Livorno in 1749; he was said to be a “Turkish merchant from Algiers” and “perfectly fluent in the Italian language.”⁷¹ A decade earlier, a “Turkish Moor from Dalmatia” named Ramadan Fatet had given power of attorney to an English merchant in Livorno to represent him in a lawsuit against a British captain.⁷² The Jews who traded with merchants in North Africa were likely to connect with Muslim traders in various capacities, including short-term partnerships, as when Isaac Nataf and a Muslim from Tripoli shared the costs of chartering a ship sailing to Livorno in 1747.⁷³

Once again, we are left to speculate about how day-to-day business cooperation coexisted with deep-seated prejudice and to what extent quotidian interaction could subvert the politics of toleration imposed from above. Christian, Jewish, and Muslim merchants occasionally strolled side by side along Livorno’s central square and streets, where frescoes depicting victorious military campaigns against the Ottomans adorned the façades of many buildings. After Tuscany signed a peace treaty with the Barbary powers in 1748, the Regency of Lorraine order the frescoes removed.⁷⁴ Yet a marble statue of the prince who had commissioned the frescoes, Ferdinand I (r. 1587–1609), surrounded by four larger-than-life bronzes of black Muslim slaves chained at his feet, continued to stand by the harbor and stands to this day (see figure 3.4). The contradiction

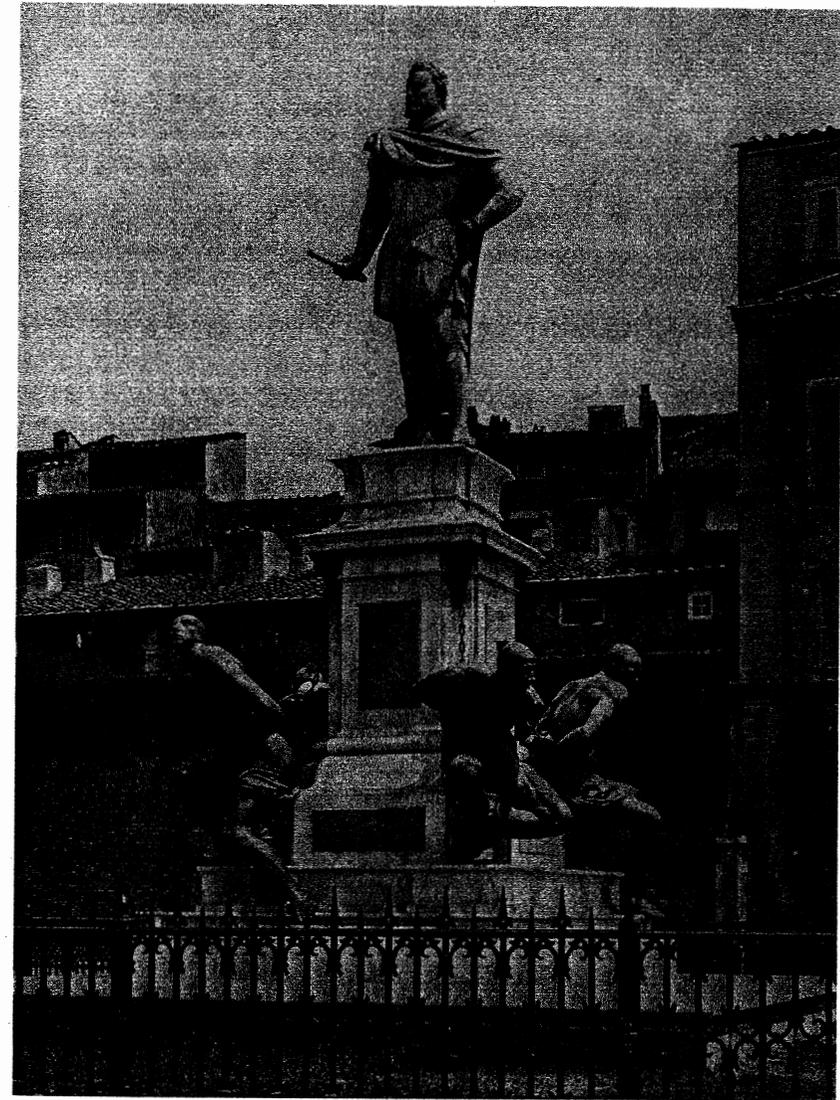


Figure 3.4. Monument to Ferdinand I and the Four Moors (constructed in Livorno from 1595 to 1626). Credit: Alinari Archives, Florence.

must be more patent to our eyes than it was to those of contemporaries if no description of Livorno that praised its benevolence toward religious minorities ever failed to mention this monument.⁷⁵

SEPHARDIC ARISTOCRACY: INTEGRATED AND SEPARATE LIVES

The separation of religious groups did not impede profound acculturation among Livornese Jewry. Analyzing the culture of Amsterdam Sephardim, Yosef Kaplan speaks of a *bom Judesmo* (worthy Judaism), one that conformed to Dutch norms of propriety and aesthetic decorum.⁷⁶ In Livorno, too, a highly original and at first sight paradoxical synthesis of the culture of the lower rank of Spanish nobility, rabbinic Judaism, and mercantile values emerged. Nowhere in early modern Europe were Jews formally allowed to join the ranks of nobility unless they renounced their faith. Moreover, Sephardic elites were heavily engaged in commercial and financial activities at a time when Christian (and especially southern European) nobles looked down on those whose fortunes derived from movable assets rather than land ownership. If I speak of a "Sephardic aristocracy" in Livorno, as in Hamburg, Bordeaux, Amsterdam, or London, it is because a process of cultural and socioeconomic distinction developed among the upper echelons of the Western Sephardic diaspora. Sephardic merchants absorbed and displayed exterior markers of Christian gentility and used them to express and enforce a sense of superiority over their coreligionists. Selective acculturation helped them blend into Christian commercial society, but it remained first and foremost a symbolic contest within their own nation.

Everywhere across the Western Sephardic diaspora, men shaved their beards in defiance of rabbinic prohibitions on the use of razors. They also adopted the attire and consumption patterns of local elites and displayed little sensitivity to moralizing polemics against luxury. The same community leaders who included sumptuary norms in the statutes of the Jewish nation in Livorno in 1655 were as likely as their peers in Amsterdam to infringe on them.⁷⁷ Sephardim conveyed positive impressions of their association with Iberia, which for most Jews carried the stigma of apostasy. Half-real and half-fictional Iberian aristocratic lineages were rehearsed in the diaspora.⁷⁸ Coats of arms were sculpted on the tombstones of the old Sephardic cemeteries in Europe and the New World.⁷⁹ A fountain issuing a palm tree on the Francos' gravestones was accompanied by a Latin motto (*sub pace copia*, with peace comes prosperity).⁸⁰ The Ergas family blazon contained a lion rampant, bearing a crown (see figure 3.5).⁸¹ The use of coats of arms was one among many customs that marked what, in reference

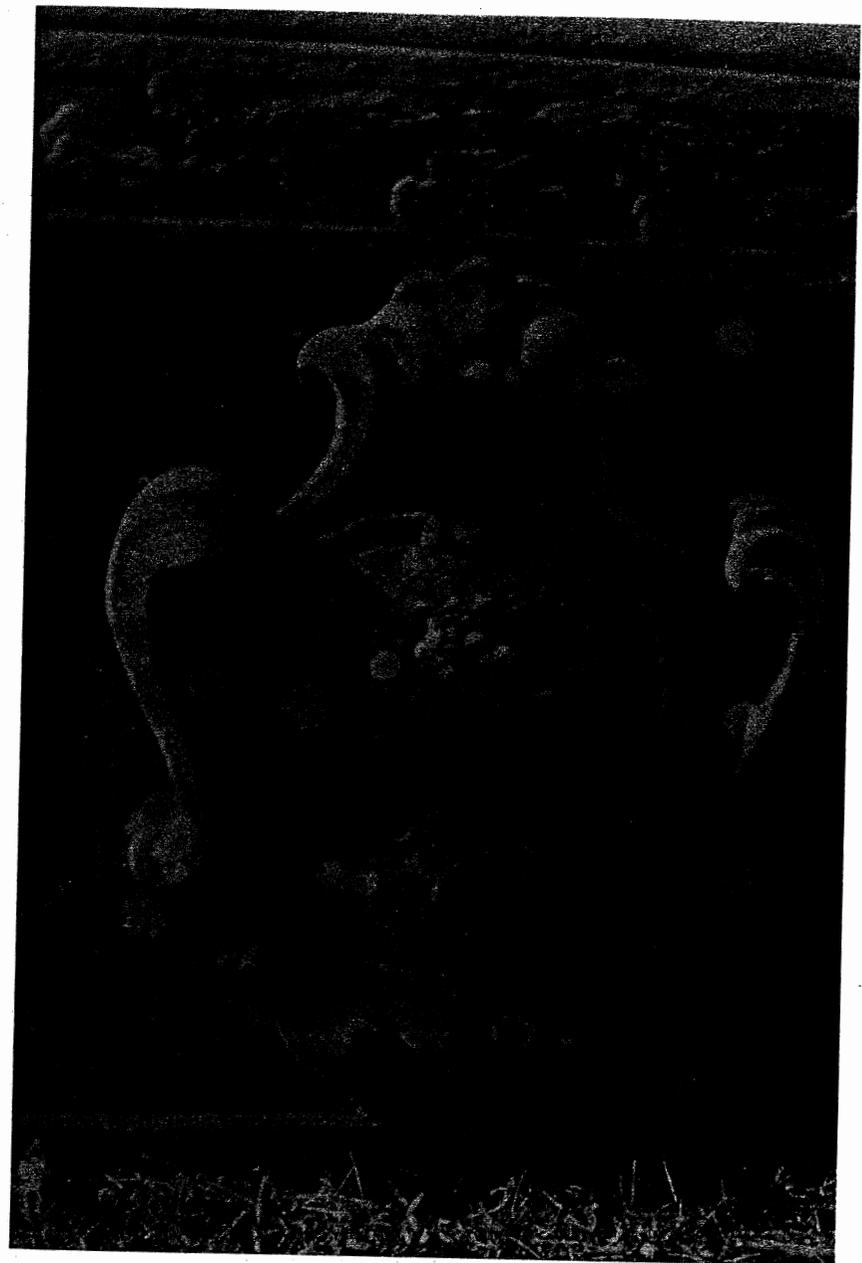


Figure 3.5. The tombstone of Sarah, the wife of Rabbi Jacob Ergas (5522/1761).
Credit: Photo by the author.

to the Amsterdam Sephardim, Miram Bodian has called “a bicultural life.”⁸² In eighteenth-century Bordeaux, the Gradis family “strove to live nobly (*vivre noblement*)”; while sustaining strong ties to Judaism, they built a mansion in town and purchased an estate in the country to showcase their refined taste and collections of exotic flora.⁸³

Cecil Roth went as far as to conclude that a “portrait of a Ghetto aristocrat of the seventeenth century is hardly to be distinguished from that of a contemporary patrician.”⁸⁴ In Livorno, where there was no court, no landed aristocracy, and no closed patriciate such as that of Venice, external appearances blurred social hierarchies to a greater extent. A surviving portrait of Jacob Baruch Carvaglio, painted on the occasion of his marriage to Esther Cabib in Venice in 1687, depicts him wearing a periwig (oddly misplaced on his head), black tights, and a brocade jacket, with his gloves in his left hand and the engagement ring for his fiancée in his right (see figure 3.6). His dress and pose are those of any local gentleman.⁸⁵ In the 1760s Isaac Medina of Livorno was depicted in a stylish cloak and periwig holding a sheet of music, in a composition reminiscent of Vivaldi’s iconic portraits.⁸⁶ Even more lavish are the portraits of affluent New Christian and Sephardic financiers and diplomats who mingled with high society in Amsterdam and London, such as Francisco Lopes Suasso alias Abraham Israel Suasso, who lent William III of Orange 1.5 million Dutch guilders at the time of his military expedition to England in 1688, or Raphael Franco, who had his portrait painted by Gainsborough in 1780. In it Franco appears indistinguishable from any English gentleman, sitting at his desk in elegant garb including a vest, breeches, and lace stockings.⁸⁷

The specific rights and limitations that Sephardim encountered from place to place shaped the models of consumption of the families of means. In Venice, Jews were always denied full rights of ownership in real estate and the confined area of the ghetto limited the possibility of turning private dwellings into luxury mansions where they might entertain respectable Gentile guests.⁸⁸ Only in 1725 were restrictions on dress codes and on theater and opera attendance eased for the Jews of Hamburg, Altona, and Wandsbek, many among whom were Sephardim.⁸⁹ In Bordeaux, New Christians were long barred from attending the theater.⁹⁰ After a tense debate, they were also excluded from the local Masonic lodge.⁹¹ The incorporation of dominant cultural and social norms was particularly fast and deep in England, where it weakened the ties of the Anglo-Jewish elite to their coreligionists.⁹² The emulation of Christian codes of conduct acquired a racial component across the Atlantic. Not only were Sephardic attitudes toward African slaves virtually indistinguishable from those of Dutch slaveowners in the Caribbean, but acculturated Sephardim now came to be

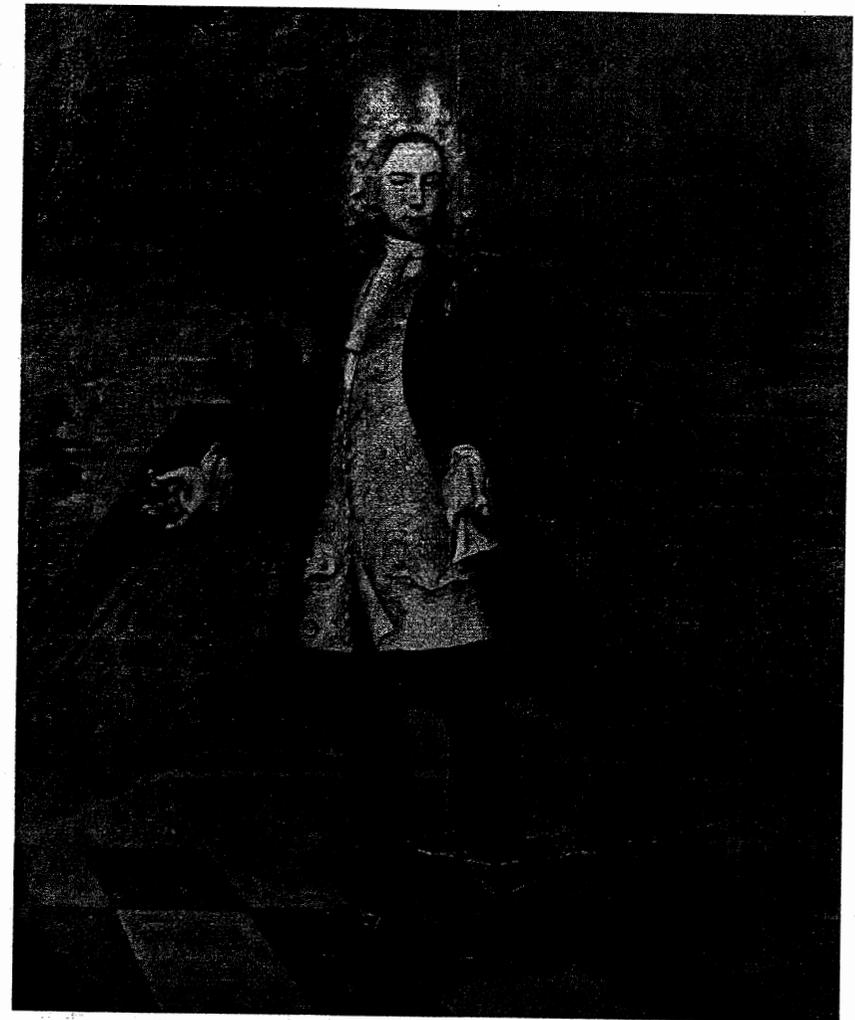


Figure 3.6. Anonymous, *Portrait of Jacob Baruch Carvaglio* (Venice, c. 1687).
Credit: The Jewish Museum, New York / Art Resource, NY.

identified as unmistakably white, in spite of a longstanding European tradition that represented Jews alternatively as black or white.⁹³

In Venice and Livorno, Sephardim never became court Jews, nor did they command the social status and financial capital of their northern brethren. They did, however, stand out in their communities, and in Livorno they seized every

opportunity left open by the livornine to embrace the habits that conferred status among local elites. Jewish young men who did not pursue a career in scholarship or business could contemplate the medical profession, although the right of Jewish physicians to treat Christian patients in Livorno was often contested.⁹⁴ Christian and Muslim domestic servants were staples in Jewish households of means. Jacob and Leah Ergas kept a female Muslim servant under their roof for thirty-four years.⁹⁵

The status of a Jewish family was reflected in part in the geography of its urban residences. When he arrived in Livorno in 1626, Abraham Ergas rented a house near the synagogue. After nearly two decades as the head of a flourishing commercial house, by 1644–45 he resided in via Ferdinanda.⁹⁶ Ten years later, he bought a large new house in the same street, which he passed down to his descendants, who also acquired new properties.⁹⁷ The partners of Ergas and Silvera owned parts of two large houses in the more peripheral via Reale, where the Baruch Carvaglios and Attiases also lived.⁹⁸ In principle, Jews were not allowed to own real estate outside the Livorno city walls, but exceptions were made for them and other foreigners. These properties were not large (only one probably measured four hectares in the early 1780s), but they conferred considerable prestige. In 1724 David and Raphael Ergas obtained from the grand duke permission to buy some houses in the plain surrounding Livorno.⁹⁹ The heads of Ergas and Silvera also spent a considerable part of their time in their country home. David Gomes Silvera died there in 1735.¹⁰⁰

Inventories drafted at death or at bankruptcy open a window into the homes of these affluent Sephardim. When his business failed in 1684, Abraham Ergas possessed an impressive variety of jewelry, coins, silver plate, brocades, and other precious textiles and clothes.¹⁰¹ A half-century later, his nephews Abraham and David Ergas and their business partner Isaac Silvera lived with their wives, children, and servants in adjacent apartments in town adorned by several paintings (some with landscapes, others with stories from the Bible and Hebrew inscriptions) and large mirrors, lighted with crystal chandeliers, and slept in beds with ebony columns; their cabinets stored a case of wigs and a variety of Hebrew books (whose titles, unfortunately, are not specified). Their residence in the countryside was more modest.¹⁰² Other Sephardim lived in houses with yet more opulent interior decoration. Solomon Sulema, whose belongings were inventoried in 1743, owned a remarkable assortment of jewelry, silver plate, porcelain, furniture, sets of dishes, glasses and cutlery, paintings, and precious coins.¹⁰³

These comfortable houses accommodated large family reunions at which dietary laws were observed; on special occasions Gentile friends and acquaintances were invited to sit at table. None other than the city's governor, together

with the highest political authorities, the local nobility, and numerous merchants attended a Jewish wedding in Livorno in 1770.¹⁰⁴ The library of Rabbi Joseph Attias, a friend and correspondent of scholars of the caliber of Ludovico Antonio Muratori, Giambattista Vico, and Antonio Magliabecchi (the grand dukes' librarian), attracted Jewish and Christian intellectuals and visitors alike, becoming a miniature of contemporary French salons.¹⁰⁵ Jewish men, women, and children flocked to comedy performances ("aas comedias de Goim"), generating a "scandal" that the massari attempted unsuccessfully to suppress in 1665.¹⁰⁶ A half-century later, the partners of Ergas and Silvera were among those who attended the opera and theater regularly.¹⁰⁷ On the last Sunday of April 1741, they left their workbenches to join the so-called Game on the Bridge in Pisa with their families, a yearly aristocratic festival where opulence and sophistication were flaunted.¹⁰⁸

State authorities as well as Jewish leaders were torn by the desire to keep channels of communication between Jews and Christians open and the need to limit the transgression of social boundaries that were considered natural. Cosimo III reiterated a ban on all sexual interactions between Jews and non-Jews (which targeted Jewish men who paid for Christian prostitutes) and between 1677 and 1683 passed a series of restrictive laws meant to curtail all relations between Christians and Jews. The laws included prohibitions on Christians' serving in Jewish households, on Jewish families' hiring Christian wetnurses, and on Christians and Jews living in the same building.¹⁰⁹ A few years earlier the Jewish nation had also placed new limits on Jewish-Christian contacts when it prohibited large gatherings on the eve of a bar mitzvah, since these gatherings occasionally degenerated into Christian mocking of Jewish rituals.¹¹⁰ Jewish-Christian encounters were largely class-bound, and we know more about such encounters when they occurred among people in the upper social strata. Those, too, however, could generate resentment. In the summer of 1734 a Christian merchant of Livorno voiced a protest against Moses Baruch Carvaglio, who had mixed with Gentiles at the annual opening of a thermal spa near Pisa.¹¹¹

Whether they were affluent Sephardim in Amsterdam, well-to-do merchants in Livorno, or middle-class Jews in Rome, they all faced similar dilemmas: how to balance the need to preserve a ritualistic and social space for orthodoxy with the endless occasions for mingling with Gentiles. In the words of Kenneth Stowe, the inhabitants of the ghetto in sixteenth-century Rome embarked on a process of "conservative acculturation," which rendered their behavior acceptable to Christian neighbors but also assured the preservation of a distinct Jewish identity.¹¹² Catholic influences were even stronger among the majority of Sephardim and nourished the heterodox ideas of some. And yet, whether in the lands of

Dutch confessionalization or under the threat of the Roman Inquisition, the survival of Portuguese and Spanish Jews required that fears of religious wavering be dispelled. Sephardic merchants were among the first beneficiaries of the peaceful acceptance enjoyed by their coreligionists.

Thanks to collective taxation and private benefactors, the Jewish nation offered an education to all its children. The amalgam of Jewish orthodoxy and Christian gentility was more than a strategic tool for promoting acceptance; it shaped the individual and collective lives of Sephardim. Thus, starting at a young age, Jewish boys in Livorno acquired proficiency in several languages (normally the local idiom as well as Spanish and Portuguese), studied practical mathematics, and learned only enough Hebrew to pray in synagogue.¹¹³ Gender and class limited access to education. The wives of the partners in the firm of Ergas and Silvera were fully literate in Italian and perhaps in Portuguese, but their relative Rachel Ergas (1677–1759), widow of a wealthy merchant, was unable to sign her own name.¹¹⁴ Prosperous patrons sponsored religious schools for young men. When he died with no children of his own in 1770, Raphael Ergas made exceedingly large donations to charity. He invested 50,400 pieces of eight in the East India Company and the Bank of England, the interest on which provided for a religious school, ten scholars in residence, the dowries distributed by the Livorno Hebrà, and other charitable activities.¹¹⁵

Philanthropy provided Sephardic men of substance with ample opportunities to assert their social standing. When renovation of the synagogue began in 1695, wealthy Sephardic merchants donated considerable sums to decorate the building, usually requesting that their family names be engraved on the site (see figure 3.7).¹¹⁶ As many as sixty voluntary charitable associations existed within the Jewish nation of Livorno.¹¹⁷ As with all exclusive clubs, these associations allowed Sephardim to enhance their status in the community while also checking on the reputations of other members. For this reason, Sephardim tried to maintain exclusive control of the governing bodies of these associations for as long as possible. In 1734 Saul Bonfil stipulated that either his brother or his nephew would inherit his post on the board of the Livorno Hebrà, as Moses Baruch Carvaglio had done in Venice in 1710 when he left each of his seats in various charitable boards to one of his five sons.¹¹⁸ The perpetuation of socioeconomic rank was equally important. A testament of a seventeenth-century Sephardic merchant demanded that his executors marry his children to social peers (“gente di mio eguale”).¹¹⁹ In 1765 Abraham da Costa bequeathed one-half of his estate to the Hebrà as long as the recipients of its charity were maiden girls from Livorno or had resided there for at least ten years and had respectable parents and ancestors (“buon parentado”).¹²⁰

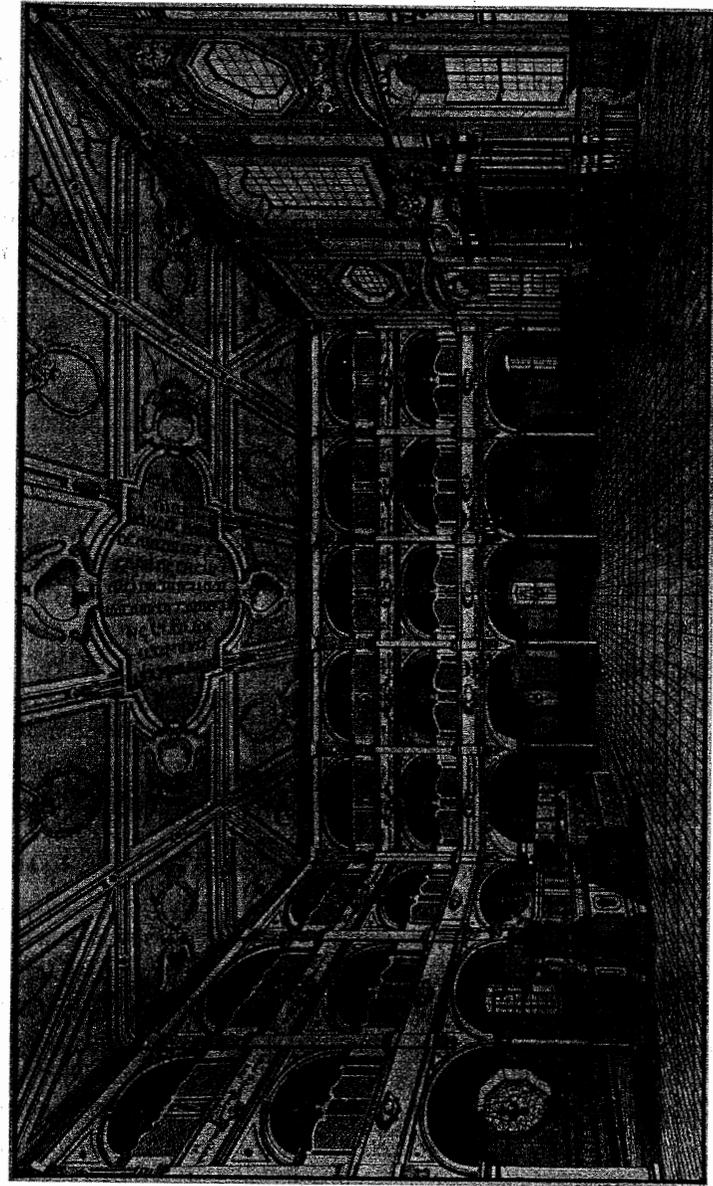


Figure 3.7. Ferdinando Fambini after Omobono Roselli, *Interior of the Livorno Synagogue* (1793).
Credit: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.

In a society that knew no hyphenated identities as we understand them today, the Western Sephardim stand out for having absorbed and synthesized a plurality of cultural traditions. Language skills and the perpetuation of Iberian *hidalgo* culture combined with the absorption of local customs made Sephardic men, and some women, able to converse amicably with Christian elites. This ongoing conversation, however, did not imply the breakdown of corporate barriers. When Moses Cassuto traveled across Europe on behalf of Ergas and Silvera in the 1740s, he visited a number of aristocratic courts, including Versailles, in search of buyers for a very large diamond; when he was not scouting around for business deals, he socialized most often with Jews and filled his diary with observations about the conditions in which Jews lived in different locales.¹²¹

COMMUNAL STRIFE WITHIN THE JEWISH NATION

The extent to which Sephardim utilized their wealth and symbolic self-representation to assert their power in the governing bodies of their communities gives us a measure of how deep communitarian cosmopolitanism ran. During the first half of the eighteenth century, Sephardim such as the Ergases of Livorno faced a mounting challenge from new Jewish settlers. All Western Sephardic communities were oligarchic and were torn by struggles between factions and clans to dominate the elections of high-ranking lay officials. In Amsterdam, endogamy within the circle of dominant families was an instrument for preserving control of power.¹²² A small settlement with an even smaller group of wealthy merchants, the Hamburg Sephardic community was strongly hierarchical, except from 1662 to 1678, when it adopted a more open internal electoral system.¹²³ In Venice, the concentration of power increased as the Jewish population grew in size in the early seventeenth century.¹²⁴ After a democratic beginning, the Jewish nation of Bordeaux rendered office-holding hereditary in 1716.¹²⁵ Confronted with new challenges, Dutch Sephardim closed their ranks. As Ashkenazic immigration grew more conspicuous and some African slaves converted to Judaism (and thus obtained the right to be manumitted), the Spanish and Portuguese Jewish communities across the Dutch world devised a two-tiered structure that distinguished between full-fledged members (*yehidim*) and those admitted with a limited membership (*congreganten*). *Yehidim* lost their position if they married an Ashkenazi or a *congregant*.¹²⁶

The Jewish nation of Livorno remained firmly in the hands of Western Sephardim until the late seventeenth century. Conflicts about the control of the nation's offices grew as the community became larger and more diversified in its

composition. During the eighteenth century, Italian and, later, North African Jews challenged the Sephardic hegemony. Although intermarriage and business cooperation between North African and Western Sephardim increased in the course of the century, the top and bottom strata of each group seem to have grown further and further apart, suggesting that class began to be more relevant than ethnicity.

Shifts in the balance of power in the community reflected local demographic patterns as well as structural changes in international trade. After the last attempt by the Medici to attract New Christians from Iberia in the 1720s and 1730s, the number of Iberian immigrants to Livorno dwindled into insignificance. Meanwhile, new families arrived from the Papal State and other parts of Italy, as well as from North Africa, and gradually changed the ethnic profile of Livornese Jewry.¹²⁷ Of the 487 new members who were admitted to the Jewish nation between 1753 and 1807, 33.48 percent came from the Italian peninsula, 29.18 percent came from North Africa, 16.74 percent came from the Levant, and 11.8 percent came from Europe; only 3 were said to have arrived from Iberia ("Ponente").¹²⁸ By the time of the Napoleonic census of 1808, North African Jews made up 13 percent of the nation and controlled 42.64 percent of the Jewish commercial houses in Livorno.¹²⁹

Having gained its administrative independence from the community in Pisa in 1597, the Jewish nation of Livorno began to elect five *massari* each year in 1642, selecting eligible candidates among a restricted group of Iberian merchants.¹³⁰ The demographic expansion of the community called for the creation of new representative and administrative bodies but not for the elimination of the ethnic requirement for office-holding. In 1667 a new assembly of *governanti* (appointed for life by the grand duke and replaced by cooptation) was called to assist the *massari*.¹³¹ In 1693 another large and permanent assembly (the *congresso della nazione*) was instituted with the double aim of increasing the number of Sephardim in office and excluding Italian Jews. Its sixty members were elected for life and entitled to transmit the office to their male descendants for three generations. Moreover, it was the *congresso* that presented the grand duke with a list of names from which he chose *massari* and *governanti*.¹³² These provisions ensured the perpetuation of the Sephardic oligarchy but generated the hostility of Italian Jews—hostility that some termed "reciprocal hatred." Italian Jews regarded Sephardim as "transgressors of the law of Moses"; the latter looked down on the former as people of low birth, tailors of used clothes, and petty tradesmen ("gente vile, rappezzatori di vesti rotte e rivenduglioli").¹³³

In order to appease the Sephardim, the Medici once more ruled against allowing Italian Jews to join the *governanti* in 1697. As a result, the Jewish nation

could still be referred to as the "Portuguese and Spanish nation."¹³⁴ But Italian Jews persisted in their demands, and in December 1715, the Medici approved a substantial reform of the administrative structure of the Jewish nation that broke the Sephardic monopoly of power.¹³⁵ This and other concessions ignited a fight for control of the community's institutions that continued through the 1720s, when official documents talk of a "Spanish nation" and an "Italian nation."¹³⁶ The Sephardim still commanded symbolic clout and influence. In 1731, Florence conceded to their request for a requirement of a two-thirds majority in all elections to lower offices.¹³⁷

Conflicts in Livorno between Italian and North African Jews, on one hand, and the old Sephardic elite, on the other, began at a later date and never escalated to the same level as did those between Ashkenazim and Sephardim in Amsterdam. Ashkenazic refugees from Poland and Eastern Europe began to flow into the Dutch capital at the end of the Thirty Years' War (1648), became more numerous from the 1670s onward, and constituted an even greater force after 1726. By the end of the eighteenth century, the demographic balance between Sephardim and Ashkenazim in Amsterdam was completely reversed. In 1795 there were about 25,000 Jews in a city of 221,000 inhabitants; of these, 22,000 were Ashkenazim and 3,000 Sephardim.¹³⁸ Most Ashkenazic families lived in modest if not dire conditions, especially in the early phases of immigration, and lacked the economic power and prestige to challenge the hegemony of the Iberian New Jews. In order to preserve its status, in 1671 the Amsterdam Portuguese and Spanish congregation forbade its members from marrying Ashkenazic men and women.¹³⁹ Non-Iberian Jews were also excluded from the boards of influential charity organizations. Money was raised to send the indigents to far-off destinations, mostly to the New World and sometimes to the Ottoman Empire; palpable discrimination marked even these aid policies, with poor Sephardim receiving a higher subsidy than poor Ashkenazim.¹⁴⁰ It is in this context that in 1762 Isaac Pinto, a scholar and affluent Sephardi of Amsterdam, famously rebutted Voltaire's spiteful depiction of Judaism as obscurantist by blaming the French thinker for failing to distinguish "the Spanish and Portuguese Jews from the rest." By "the rest" he meant the poor Ashkenazim who had flooded into Amsterdam fleeing persecution in Germany and Poland.¹⁴¹

Non-Sephardic families in Livorno were too few or too poor to pose a real threat to the established oligarchy until about 1730.¹⁴² This explains the virtual absence of marriages between Sephardic and Italian families in seventeenth-century Livorno.¹⁴³ The Recanati family was the first among those of Italian origin to acquire substantial wealth and to insert itself in some of the commercial networks controlled by the Western Sephardim. Lazzaro and Salvatore Re-

canati became the preferred agents in Livorno of the influential Roux mercantile house of Marseilles from at least 1729 onward.¹⁴⁴ As seen in Chapter 1, they also invested more and more in the London financial market. In 1769 Lazzaro Recanati was still the only Italian among the nine most prominent Jewish merchants in town.¹⁴⁵ In the following two decades, Italian Jews such as the Recanati and Montefiore families replaced the Francos as the most internationally active Jewish merchants of Livorno.¹⁴⁶

As Italian and North African Jews became more numerous and more influential, no formal prohibition on marriages between members of different Jewish groups was ever introduced. Unlike Venice or Amsterdam, where different congregations were set up along ethnic lines and followed different rites, in Livorno all Jews prayed in the same synagogue and the Jewish nation always remained institutionally united, even after it ceased to be a Sephardic citadel during the first half of the eighteenth century.¹⁴⁷ Over time, individual friendships, business relations, and marriages between Jews from different ethnic groups became thinkable. In 1673 Rachel, daughter of Hananiah Ergas, married Moses Aghib, who had arrived in Livorno from the Levant a few years earlier; their son Solomon also married a young woman from the Levant; her name was Rachel Racah.¹⁴⁸ Solomon Boccara moved to Livorno from Tunis around 1740; his son later married one of the Montefiores, a well-established Italian Jewish family.¹⁴⁹

Nonetheless, symbolic barriers between different ethnic components of the nation remained strong. Though they gained respectability and filled administrative posts, for example, Italian Jews continued to be forbidden from observing the rites that commanded the most prestige in synagogue.¹⁵⁰ Reservations concerning North African Jews were the strongest. In 1745, the governanti sought to exclude Joseph Latad from their assembly and later accused one of his relatives of spying on other Jews.¹⁵¹ Western Sephardim and North African Jews often exchanged insults. In 1760, in the midst of a bitter lawsuit regarding the settlement of outstanding credits, Isaac Saccuto, an influential merchant, replied indignantly to the insinuation made by Joseph Nataf of Tunis that Saccuto had forged his account books. "We are not in Barbary," Saccuto proclaimed before the massari. Quick with his words, Nataf replied: "I may be a Barbarian but I am no thief."¹⁵²

In 1751 the British merchants living and trading in the Tuscan port city, among whom there were many long-term residents, refused to pay their tax assessments. After 1737 all foreigners in Livorno had had to choose between acquiring Tuscan citizenship and paying the concomitant taxes or remaining foreigners and continuing to enjoy fiscal immunities. Jews alone were entitled to the status of

Tuscan subjects and exempted from *per capita* taxes. When they denied fiscal exemptions to British nationals, the Tuscan authorities argued that if they were to exclude from the ranks of Tuscan subjects all those who in the previous fifty years could trace their ancestry abroad, there would be no one who could be said to be from Livorno: the port would be "a city with no citizens."¹⁵³ The statement was an exaggeration, but Livorno was indeed home to an unusually diverse population when compared to other Italian towns and even to some of the largest European cities. This diversity was an integral part of the city's everyday life and its heavily promoted image. When the Medici issued a new golden coin in 1676 that was expected to circulate widely across the Mediterranean, they chose to carve the image of Livorno together with the motto "Diversis gentibus una" (many diverse people, one city).¹⁵⁴

Livorno was a frontier society unlike any other within the Tuscan state and an experiment in political and social engineering animated by the Medici's desire to compete in the arena of international trade. The sheer proportion of Jews in Livorno and some of the specific rights conferred on them (including the ability to own real estate outside a closed ghetto and rent it to non-Jews) multiplied the occasions for encounters between Jews and non-Jews. It is frustrating that we know so little about these encounters and the personal dynamics that they created. But everything suggests that, as Thomas Cohen has written with regard to sixteenth-century Rome, Jews in Livorno were "at once intimates and outsiders" with regard to local society.¹⁵⁵ The elite Sephardim who mingled with non-Jews in their capacity as merchants, scholars, and cultural consumers also controlled the offices of the Jewish nation for most of its existence and were invested in policing the boundaries between their coreligionists and the local population. Those boundaries, rather than obstructing economic cooperation with non-Jews, fostered the peace necessary for Sephardic merchants to conduct their business affairs.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, and especially after Peter Leopold became grand duke of Tuscany in 1765, the Habsburgs launched a number of reforms aimed at weakening the corporate privileges of the old regime, including the abolition of guilds and the rationalization of legal and jurisdictional systems.¹⁵⁶ Ecclesiastical reforms were also paramount in this design and went so far as to extend freedom of worship to some non-Catholic Christian denominations. The Jewish nation nonetheless succeeded in safeguarding and reinforcing its corporate autonomy. The inheritability of most of its offices was revoked between 1769 and 1780.¹⁵⁷ But in 1766 the governor of Livorno abandoned any plan to abolish or curtail the *massari's* power to temporarily excommunicate those who infringed on the nation's statutes.¹⁵⁸ When, for the first time in the

Italian peninsula and after much objection, the Habsburgs conferred active political rights on the Jews of Livorno in 1780, the Jewish nation was entitled to appoint one delegate, according to a principle of corporate representation that did not take into account demographic or socioeconomic factors.¹⁵⁹

Grand Duke Peter Leopold (later Emperor Leopold II, r. 1790–92) initiated an ambitious plan of enlightened despotism. In Trieste, the reforms adopted after the passage of the 1781 *Toleranzpatent* gave rise to what Lois Dubin has called "civil inclusion" (in contrast to a postemancipation civic inclusion), which both eased Christian-Jewish relations and encouraged Jewish acculturation into the Gentile milieu. The Habsburgs did not follow suit in Livorno, where one encounters a lack of concern about the 'Jewish condition' among Tuscan and Jewish intellectuals alike.¹⁶⁰ When Napoleon annexed Tuscany to his empire in 1808, Jewish community leaders resisted the adoption of the French assimilationist model. They obtained the reinstatement of old privileges with the Restoration in 1814, although this time the Jewish nation had to renounce its judicial power. Only in 1848 were Jews fully emancipated and all privileges of the Jewish nation dismantled.¹⁶¹

Communitarian cosmopolitanism describes the way Livorno accommodated strangers from the proclamation of the first *livornina* in 1591 to the abolition of all corporatist institutions. As a formula, it also applies to nearly all early modern European societies that made room for foreigners and religious minorities in the post-Reformation period. But the legal status of Jews and the ways in which they participated in dominant societies varied considerably from place to place. Stressing the degree to which Western Sephardim anticipated core aspects of the Berlin *Haskalah* (the Jewish Enlightenment), David Sorkin insists that in the port cities of Atlantic Europe membership in Jewish congregations was "voluntary," in contrast to the mandatory affiliation imposed in the Italian peninsula and the Ashkenazic world.¹⁶² French cities on the Atlantic, such as Bordeaux, however, may not conform to this model. Following historians such as Gérard Nahon, Ronald Schechter recently called accounts of secularization among the Jewish communities of southwestern France "myths" and claimed that Portuguese Jews in Bordeaux "were scarcely less separated from their Gentile neighbors than were their brethren in Alsace, Lorraine, and Metz."¹⁶³

Given historians' tendency to contrast northwestern European models of toleration to the intransigence of southern Europe, a comparison between the legal status of Sephardim in Catholic Livorno and Calvinist Amsterdam is in order. Such a comparison should begin by stressing the high degree of segregation along confessional lines that characterized post-Reformation Dutch society. Recent research suggests that intermarriage between Protestants and Catholics,

for example, was not as common as was once believed.¹⁶⁴ Occasions for social encounters between individual Jews and non-Jews were plentiful but were policed by community leaders in both Amsterdam and Livorno. In 1655 the Amsterdam *parnassim* condemned those who gathered with non-Jews on Saturdays and Sundays.¹⁶⁵ In order to limit such interactions, the Amsterdam political authorities prohibited Jews from hiring Christian servants, a practice that was permitted in Livorno.¹⁶⁶ Sexual intercourse between Christians and Jews was anathema in all Christian societies. Although many illicit liaisons escaped punishment, they likely involved the sexual exploitation of women more frequently than they generated romantic relationships.¹⁶⁷ Scholarly conversations between Jews and non-Jews were particularly intense in Amsterdam, but there, as in Livorno, basic education remained entirely separate because Jewish children could not attend Christian schools. Outside the sphere of commerce and finance, economic segregation also prevailed. Excluded from membership in craft guilds, Amsterdam Sephardim were only allowed to work in sugar refining, tobacco manufacturing, and the diamond industry.¹⁶⁸ As they came to control a number of these establishments, they hired primarily a Jewish workforce that was largely made up of poorer Ashkenazim.

Religious toleration was incomparably greater in the United Provinces than in any Catholic country. The absence of an Inquisition made it possible for a handful of New Christian merchants to act as diplomats for the Spanish and Portuguese Crowns in the Netherlands, as did members of the Curiel, Belmonte, and Lopes Suasso families. Renowned scholars such as Saul Levi Mortera could ridicule Calvinism as idolatry for its belief in the Holy Trinity (a concept that was seen as incompatible with monotheism).¹⁶⁹ Public disputations of this sort were unimaginable in Livorno. There, Jewish polemics were heard mostly within the nation. Rabbi Joseph Ergas wrote extensively against the influence of Sabbatianism in Kabbalistic scholarship, but only in his youth and only in passing did he dare express anti-Christian sentiments.¹⁷⁰ He was less restrained with his coreligionists, as when he reproached his rival the eminent Paduan Kabbalist Moses Hayyim Luzzatto for ignoring basic prescriptions for Jewish conduct by "trimming his beard even[ly] with scissors."¹⁷¹ And yet Rabbi Ergas would not expect his own brothers and cousins to wear a beard.¹⁷² In fact, I wish we knew more about what it meant for some members of the same Sephardic family in Livorno to uphold orthodoxy while others derived their wealth and recognition from forging economic alliances with non-Jews.

A complex set of rules weakened the autonomy of Jewish corporate institutions in Amsterdam, more so than in Livorno. In the Dutch capital, Jews were excused from appearing before a tribunal on Saturdays, and secular courts were

requested to incorporate the rulings of Jewish rabbinical and lay magistrates. But the Spanish and Portuguese congregation there was treated as a voluntary religious association with internal disciplinary powers rather than as a fully autonomous corporate body.¹⁷³ For a few months in 1683, the Amsterdam municipal government went so far as to force the *parnassim* to obtain approval from the city's magistrates before they could issue a *herem*. However temporary, this provision was the most serious breach of its independence that a Sephardic community could imagine.¹⁷⁴ Recall that in Tuscany the Jewish nation had the power of granting the status of Tuscan subjects to its newly admitted members. The *massari* held ample jurisdiction in civil and criminal lawsuits between Jews. Jewish customs and institutions governed marital law in Livorno, as elsewhere in Italy. As a result, secular authorities tolerated Jewish marriages that canon law would have declared bigamous.¹⁷⁵ In Amsterdam, Jews were allowed to celebrate marriages according to their rites, but after 1622 they were required to register all marital unions performed by rabbis in the town hall. Later, they were ordered to respect the regulations of the Estates of Holland with regard to the degrees of consanguinity allowable in order for a wedding to proceed.¹⁷⁶

Overall, the Tuscan state delegated to the Jewish nation greater functions and powers than did its Dutch counterpart. In so doing, it created compelling incentives for New Christians to abandon their religious ambiguity and join the ranks of the Jewish community. On the other hand, more self-sufficiency for Jews in Livorno also meant less social integration. Compared to their coreligionists in Tuscany, English Jews stood at the opposite end of the spectrum of local variations of communitarian cosmopolitanism. Prosperous Sephardim in London were less inclined to strict observance of Jewish law and neglected communitarian affiliation to an extent not matched on the Continent. Fewer in number than the Jews of Amsterdam and having more recently arrived, they embraced the codes of respectability prevalent in eighteenth-century London, including the habit of taking up residence in rural retreats away from the busy financial center and partaking in convivial gatherings with non-Jews. A rapid and profound absorption of the social conventions of British high society and some conversions to Anglicanism did not dispel anti-Semitic sentiments. The so-called Jew Bill of 1753, which proposed to facilitate the naturalization of Jews in England, ignited a popular protest that led to its repeal.¹⁷⁷ In the end, as Adam Sutcliffe suggests, the assimilationist drive of English society rendered London less rather than more cosmopolitan than Amsterdam, if we understand cosmopolitanism as a respectful and productive encounter of cultural differences rather than the leveling of all differences.¹⁷⁸

Nowhere in early modern Europe, in short, can we trace a linear correla-

tion between mercantilistic policies of toleration and the legal and social acceptance of Jews. Marseilles, Livorno's main rival in the Mediterranean, offers a striking example of the way commercial prosperity could be achieved in spite of discriminatory policies. Religious homogeneity increased in the French port after the revocation of the edict of Nantes in 1685, when many Huguenot business families embraced Catholicism, at least outwardly.¹⁷⁹ In spite of pressure from the French Crown, the local Chamber of Commerce, which represented the interests of powerful wholesale merchants, financiers, and ship owners, strongly opposed the settlement of ethnoreligious minorities in Marseilles. In 1682 a royal decree ordered the expulsion of the Jews from the French port; a few went underground and continued to operate in the city even after the order was repeated more than once between 1690 and 1758. Their numbers, however, remained small.¹⁸⁰ The Muslim presence was largely limited to numerous slaves captured at sea. The presence of Greek sailors and mariners remained quite marginal until the rise of a new Greek commercial elite in the nineteenth century.¹⁸¹

The Chamber of Commerce of Marseilles followed a model of commercial development that was the opposite of the one embraced by the Medici for Livorno. In 1667 it argued that, unlike its Tuscan competitor, Marseilles could count on a strong merchant navy and therefore had nothing to lose from the proscription of all who were not French subjects.¹⁸² This prediction proved accurate, and Marseilles grew quickly (if not as fast as did French Atlantic ports) and came to dominate the trade between Europe and the Ottoman Empire in the last quarter of the seventeenth century. As we will see in Chapter 4, the chamber cooperated with Jewish merchants from Livorno overseas while it banned them at home.

A cursory comparison of Livorno, Amsterdam, London, and Marseilles, in sum, shows the intricate and localized interplay of *raison d'état*, the imperatives of trade, policies of toleration, and tolerant attitudes. Though smaller than Amsterdam and London, early modern Livorno can be referred to as cosmopolitan if we compare it to Marseilles and many other European towns and port cities. The adjective would apply to Western Sephardim even more in view of their eclectic incorporation of multiple cultural traditions and their settlements in distant cities, states, and empires. The range of their economic partners across the globe is further evidence of their ability to converse productively with outsiders. In invoking the term *cosmopolitan*, we ought nonetheless to keep it anchored in the practices of its own time. No less relevant is the demonization that it often elicited. Even Peter Leopold repeated common clichés when he expressed resentment that, in the absence of a local aristocracy, Livorno was ruled

by merchants. Given that most of them were foreigners, he added, they had no attachment to the country; disunity, malice, partisanship, the desire to ruin one another, and the exchange of insults prevailed among them.¹⁸³ Penned by the most enlightened of the late eighteenth-century Italian rulers with reference to a social experiment of which the Tuscan authorities were proud, these reflections give us a sense of the extent to which in the early modern period tolerance and acculturation were never complete.

Thus, Sephardic merchants in Livorno shaved their beards and dressed like Christian gentlemen but refrained from writing their business letters on religious holidays.¹⁸⁴ And although many post-Reformation European states sought to attract Jews and foreign merchants, they also sought to regulate religious minorities. In this they were not unlike Muslim empires. Rudi Matthee contests prevalent depictions of officials' attitudes toward Christian minorities, including Armenians, in Safavid Iran as a sequential evolution from fanaticism to tolerance to decline; instead, he argues that at any given time these policies ranged "from tolerance, even cosmopolitan acceptance and inclusion, to parochial rejection, exclusion and, occasionally, oppression."¹⁸⁵

Similar attitudes coexisted in eighteenth-century Livorno. While the first edition of Beccaria's treatise against torture (1764), the third edition of Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* (1770–79), and other classics of the Enlightenment were being printed in the Tuscan port, priests continued to accuse Jews of ritual murders of Christian infants after the issuing of a papal bull titled *Beatus Andreas* in 1755.¹⁸⁶ The concept of communitarian cosmopolitanism accounts for these apparent contradictions and defines the framework within which Jews related to political authorities and local society until their emancipation. The local character of communitarian cosmopolitanism also informed the strategies of merchants such as Ergas and Silvera because family ties and social networks generated within the Jewish nation and across the Sephardic diaspora, rather than the dissolution of corporate boundaries, contributed to the creation of the conditions for cross-cultural exchange.

BETWEEN STATE COMMERCIAL POWER AND TRADING DIASPORAS: SEPHARDIM IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

The trade of Algiers is not so considerable. The English, French, and Jews of Leghorn, are rivals in it. The two first send in their own vessels, and the last under a neutral flag, cloth, spice, paper, hardware, coffee, sugar, linens, alum, indigo and cochineal; and receive in exchange wool, wax, feathers, leather, oil, and several goods arising from captures.

—*Abbé Raynal* (1776)

In his landmark study of the early modern Mediterranean, Fernand Braudel maintained that toward the end of what he called the “long sixteenth century,” Jews and Armenians became “the successors, in the Levant, of that rich Italian bourgeoisie which once controlled the entire Mediterranean.”¹ The French historian was specifically interested in the activities of non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire in the eastern Mediterranean after the 1540s, when the sultan curtailed the privileges that Italian merchants previously had enjoyed in Ottoman ports. His interpretation has become a classic: the “Italian bourgeoisie” turned its back on commerce in favor of landed investments, and Iberian Jews (many resident in the Ottoman Empire and some in Venice) and, increasingly, Armenians and later Greeks, became key players in the trade between the Balkans, the Levant, and the Italian peninsula.²

In calling attention to the role played by these stateless merchant groups, Braudel did more than marshal evidence in favor of his thesis that the Mediterranean trade retained its vitality for more than a century after Christopher Columbus sailed across the Atlantic in 1492 and Vasco da Gama reached India in 1498. He also challenged the conventional notion that a sequence of Euro-

pean state powers (first the Dutch, then the English, and finally the French) replaced the Italian (especially the Venetian) domination of the eastern Mediterranean. Braudel was instrumental in challenging the prevalent emphasis on national rivalries in the region (a heritage of the colonial period) and in legitimizing the study of trading diasporas when the subject was hardly popular. His legacy is reflected in a rich if fragmented literature about the Mediterranean in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that covers the multitude of actors, including pirates and corsairs, who navigated that sea and glutted its coastal markets.³

Braudel’s intuition, however, was not corroborated by figures documenting the economic contribution of stateless diasporas in the Mediterranean commerce. Moreover, the parallel that he drew between the “Italian bourgeoisie” and its “successors” was as elusive as it was poignant. Despite their growing numbers and influence, neither the Jews nor the Armenians or Greeks, for that matter, ever became dominant actors in the Mediterranean, in part because they lacked the ability to wage wars and seal diplomatic agreements on their own. The political, military, and diplomatic weakness of trading diasporas was not exclusive to this region. As Sanjay Subrahmanyam warned in an early and penetrating critique of Philip Curtin’s work, we ought to consider the relations between trading diasporas and political authorities if we want to do more than portray merchant communities as “relatively open and ‘floating’ groups that exist through all of human history.”⁴

The establishment of Western Sephardim in the Mediterranean trade during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was the combined result of their own internal organization and the political economy of the European powers that chose to compete for their services. The first part of this chapter discusses the policies adopted by the Medici and the Habsburg rulers of Tuscany in favor of Livorno and the impact of these policies on Sephardic commerce. The privileges granted to Jewish merchants allowed them to carve out a major space in the economy of the Tuscan port but fell short of assuring them of the diplomatic protection that was necessary in the Ottoman Empire. The French Crown stepped in to fill this gap. The second part of the chapter deals with the tense but enduring association that the Sephardim developed with the French in the Levant. In so doing, it analyzes a case in which the collaboration between a stateless diaspora and state commercial power, though asymmetrical, was mutually beneficial; it did not, however, prove a breeding ground for deeper cultural communication and acceptance.

This chapter focuses on Livorno and its Jewish traders in the Mediterranean in the period that is best known for the rise of Atlantic economies and the influx

of Asian goods to Europe. Following the lead of Immanuel Wallerstein, neo-Marxist historians have described the position of the Ottoman Empire with respect to Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as semicolonial. In this period, Europeans established their primacy in the Mediterranean by virtue of their balance of trade: they exported national and colonial manufactured goods to the Levant and North Africa and imported food and raw materials.⁵ In addition to influencing the production patterns of commodities exported from the Ottoman Empire, they also controlled most Mediterranean maritime routes. Nevertheless, no European state ever came close to exerting the control over the production process, price setting, or the transport system that the Dutch did in parts of Southeast Asia and that various European powers exerted over the New World plantations and mines. European merchants held outposts in various Ottoman ports, but their prerogatives remained largely dependent on the concessions negotiated between European states and the Sublime Porte. They purchased goods on the market and depended on a number of local brokers, suppliers, and lenders, among whom there were many Jewish, Greek, and Armenian Ottoman subjects, as well as a few Muslims and Arab Christians. Studies of the role of Jews as commercial and diplomatic mediators between the Ottoman Empire and the European powers thus nuance the neo-Marxist interpretation and shed light on the multiple negotiations that contacts between these powers involved at the economic, political, and cultural levels.⁶

The distinctive characteristics of Mediterranean trade account for the significance of trading diasporas and local intermediaries. Commerce in the region was remarkably miscellaneous. Handling a hodgepodge of goods required different skills and credit relations than did investments in American cash crops: merchants in the Mediterranean had to evaluate the quality of a variety of goods, follow their price fluctuations, and know how to make money by buying and selling many small parcels and interacting with a large number of suppliers and customers. "More of less" was the driving principle of private entrepreneurs in the region.

Some commodities, however, dominated exchanges between Latin Europe and the Ottoman Empire: Europeans imported primarily raw silk and cotton from the Levant and exported large quantities of woolen cloths and refined silk textiles. This trend sustained the boom of Marseilles in the eighteenth century, when woolen cloths manufactured in Languedoc dominated French exports to the Levant, while imports of raw cotton and cotton yarn grew exponentially. But European ships sailing in the Mediterranean were loaded with a dazzling assortment of natural and manufactured goods and called at numerous ports along the route, loading and unloading commodities at each stop. Overall, Europeans

longed for woolen yarn (angora, mohair, and chevron wool), vegetable dyestuffs (galls from Aleppo, saffron, alizarin), wax, leather, animal skins, ostrich feathers, medicinal products (especially a bindweed called scammony), grains from Tunis and the Aegean islands (until Russia took control of most of the grain traffic from the Black Sea in the late eighteenth century), and other foodstuffs (olive oil, Egyptian rice, Arabica coffee, dried fruits, honey, cheese, tobacco from Salonica, and legumes). Sudanese silver and gold were transported across the desert to Tunis, where they were loaded on ships bound for Livorno. Indian cotton textiles (chintz or calicoes) and spices (pepper, cinnamon, nutmeg, and cumin) reached Levantine ports from the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf along caravan routes.⁷

Among the most desirable commodities that Europeans shipped to the Ottoman Empire were not only fashionable textiles (an ample variety of silk brocades and muslins) but also chemical products (alum, vitriol, and ceruse), mineral colorants (azur, cinabre, and verdet), perfumes, metals (steel, copper, lead, iron bars, and especially iron wires), a wealth of manufactured goods (ceramics, glassware, eyeglasses, soap, knives, scissors, coral beads, and, most significant, paper), and some foodstuffs (salt, fish, fruits, liquors, and wine for native and foreign Christians). Loads of salted fish arrived regularly from the Baltic. American products such as sugar, coffee, cochineal, brazilwood, and indigo were quite lucrative; a light cargo with high value, indigo was particularly remunerative. Livorno also functioned as a redistribution center for bulk commodities from different parts of the Italian peninsula, including large quantities of raw silk from Sicily and Calabria, which were reexported to northern Italy and Europe. By the late seventeenth century, exchanges between Livorno and Iberia declined substantially, although Lisbon remained not only a source of Brazilian tobacco, sugar, and gold but also a base for the intercontinental trade in Indian diamonds.

European merchants and licensed companies were periodically short of goods to sell in Levantine ports. Although there were exceptions, including the French trade in Aleppo, in general the monetary value of European imports from the Ottoman Empire exceeded that of exports. Coins minted with American silver (the Spanish real, the Dutch Rijder, the Venetian zecchino, the Austrian thaler, and other currencies) helped finance the European deficit in the Levant. There, silver was used to trade with Persia and India and eventually it reached China, the greatest consumer of this precious metal in the early modern period.⁸ As some authors have pointed out, however, it is wrong to assume that Europeans always balanced their trade deficit by exporting silver because exchange rates were favorable to them and because Europeans also controlled coastal navigation in Ottoman waters. (In the eighteenth century local merchants tended to

hire French ships for transporting merchandise from one Ottoman port to another.)⁹

Even with the input from American mines, silver was expensive, and Europeans' search for alternatives to precious metals constant. Barter was by far the most common means used by Europeans to acquire Ottoman goods, so much so that in eighteenth-century Aleppo a 10 percent discount applied to all cash purchases of raw silk.¹⁰ Credit was the other alternative to purchasing with cash. Bills of exchange were used to advance sums to and offset debts of European merchants on opposite shores of the Mediterranean and sometimes were used in transactions with local traders and Ottoman officials. The depreciation of Ottoman currencies did not invite the use of bills of exchange as speculative ventures.¹¹

In light of the conditions of early modern Mediterranean trade, it is easy to understand why diasporic groups with members in the northwestern and southwestern banks of the Middle Sea were advantaged in the exchange of goods, information, and credit and less dependent on exportation of bullion from Europe. It is not surprising, for example, that mentions of exportation of bullion to the Levant are conspicuously absent from Ergas and Silvera's letters. Amid the constant warfare among European powers in the Mediterranean during the eighteenth century, Sephardic merchants also had a freer hand in their choice of naval freights and could thus try to minimize the risks of Christian piracy, which was becoming an even greater concern than Muslim piracy. European naval powers, meanwhile, sought to load Sephardim's cargoes on their vessels.

Cut off from direct participation in the transoceanic ventures, lacking a robust fleet and a pulsing manufacturing or agricultural hinterland, Livorno developed into an international emporium designed primarily for the redistribution of overseas commodities.¹² The Medici's policies made it the main base of the northern Europeans in the Mediterranean and gave a home to Sephardic partnerships that were rich in expertise and contacts across the Mediterranean and Western Europe. The Tuscan rulers, however, could not offer Jews the diplomatic protection necessary for them to operate in the Ottoman Empire. France, which after the last quarter of the seventeenth century emerged as the dominant power in the Mediterranean, proved a more useful, albeit a more contentious, ally. By examining the selective association between the French Crown and the merchants of Marseilles, on one hand, and the Western Sephardim (the Jews of Livorno, in particular), on the other, we can also begin to reassess the vexed question of what share of European commerce was actually handled by Jews.

Historical scholarship concerning the period when the Mediterranean ceased to be the motor of Europe's economy is piecemeal. No comprehensive study

of the Mediterranean trade in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries exists that can be compared to Braudel's magnum opus. Most scholarly works bear the imprint of colonialism and conceive the Mediterranean as an outlet for European rivalry and expansion; archival collections and historians' linguistic abilities largely perpetuate these divisions. Most titles are thus devoted to the English in the Levant, the Dutch in the eastern Mediterranean, the French in North Africa, and so forth. A focus on the Western Sephardic diaspora and its commercial ties to both the Ottoman Empire and Europe cuts across national boundaries and examines the interaction between private merchants and state authorities.

THE PORT OF LIVORNO AND ITS JEWISH MERCHANTS

Livorno's commercial and port activities were unusually dynamic in the rather stagnant economy of seventeenth-century Italy, which affected Venice, Genoa, and Naples.¹³ The town held a strategic position in a new system of trade that was established after the arrival of northern European ships and merchants in the Mediterranean in the late sixteenth century. Already in use during the 1570s, the port of Livorno affirmed its role during the grain crisis of the 1590s, when Dutch ships used it to import grain from Danzig, English ships anchored there more and more frequently, and new players in the Atlantic trade entered the Mediterranean.¹⁴ During the first half of the seventeenth century, Livorno increasingly challenged the primacy of Venice, adopting more liberal customs policies, favoring the settlement of foreigners, and investing in its port infrastructure. It also profited from the waning Venetian influence in the eastern Mediterranean that resulted from the prolonged war between the Republic and the Ottomans over the dominion of Crete (1645-69).

In the 1620s, the English chose the Tuscan port as their primary base in the Mediterranean. They imported large quantities of dried fish, metals (lead, iron, and tin), woolen cloth, and colonial products (pepper, tobacco, sugar, cotton, indigo, and ginger) to Livorno. There, they acquired a variety of sumptuous Italian silk articles, the silver necessary for their purchases in the Levant, and an assortment of other goods.¹⁵ From the mid-seventeenth century to the second decade of the eighteenth century, when Marseilles rose to prominence, Livorno grew into the largest port of call and redistribution center of Mediterranean Europe and linked the Italian peninsula to continental and northern Europe (including its colonial markets) and the Ottoman Empire. Even after Marseilles surpassed it, the Tuscan town still held a crucial place as a regional, peninsular, and international port until the 1780s.

Three policies made Livorno unique. In 1646 the Medici first declared that the port city (not the grand duchy at large) would remain neutral in all international conflicts. Dutch and French consuls signed a treaty of nonbelligerence in Tuscan waters in 1676, and Livorno's neutrality was sanctioned officially in the treaty of London of 1718. The city was thus spared the retaliation and boycotts that paralyzed other ports during the numerous armed conflicts that took place in the Mediterranean. It nonetheless suffered their impact as would any other port because of the general decline of commercial navigation in times of war.¹⁶ Second, the Medici had collected very light customs duties in Livorno since its inception in 1565. A comprehensive customs regime was drafted in 1676 that eliminated all levies on import and export goods, including food staples, and replaced them with a light tax on the deposit of goods in the city's warehouses (*stallaggio*) and an anchor duty (*ancoraggio*). The arsenal and storage facilities also assisted in ensuring Livorno's success.¹⁷ In the eighteenth century, moreover, the port grew into an international financial and insurance center.¹⁸ Finally, the unusual privileges and toleration that were extended to foreign merchants and Jews willing to settle in the city for commercial purposes helped Livorno to flourish, in contrast to neighboring Genoa.

Livorno was and is often referred to as a "free port." It was not a truly free trade zone, but it came to represent the ideal type of free port of its age because it combined unusually light customs duties with a liberal policy of acceptance toward foreigners and religious minorities.¹⁹ As a free port, it relied more on private and foreign vessels than its own navy. In 1561, with papal consent, the Medici gave birth to a military order, the Knights of Saint Stephen, charged, among other things, with arming a fleet to prey on Ottoman ships, ransom Christian captives, and supplement the few Tuscan galleys that were in the trade with Sicily, Genoa, and sometimes Marseilles. Seaborne activities, however, fell behind in the Knights' priorities, and their impact on the commercial and military life of Tuscany weakened.²⁰ The majority of ships anchored at Livorno flew foreign flags, although some local merchants owned and manned their own vessels. Among the Sephardim, the Franco family held the largest number of ships in eighteenth-century Livorno. In 1710, Moses and Abraham Franco (alias Alberto and Salvatore Audimonti) equipped a ship of 5,000 *cantari* (approximately 230 tons) with a Tuscan passport and flag to sail to Surat, India, via Lisbon.²¹ Most private merchants who were engaged in importing and exporting chartered cargo space in ships flying English, French, Dutch, and other flags. In the eighteenth century, English vessels were particularly numerous at the docks of Livorno.²² Fine silk textiles made in Florence, Lucca, and other Tuscan towns, coral beads polished in Livorno, marble from Carrara, straw hats, and iron mined on the

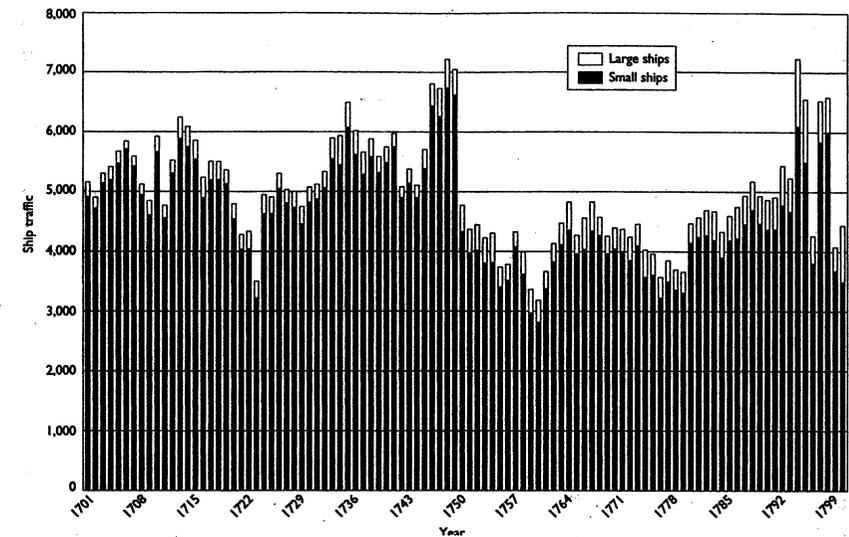


Figure 4.1. Ships entering the port of Livorno, 1701-1800. Sources: ASF, *Segreteria di Finanze ante 1788*, 800; Filippini 1998, 2: 149-50.

island of Elba were among the local commodities shipped to faraway destinations.²³

Much to the dismay of historians, the archives of the Livorno Customhouse were destroyed in 1877 to make room for new governmental offices after the creation of the Kingdom of Italy. Adding to the loss of records caused by this demolition is the absence in Livorno of the magistrates that typically oversaw many branches of the urban economy in early modern Europe, such as guilds and superintendents, or a customs regime that kept track of the merchandise in transit. As a result, we lack reliable serial records that document the number of ships that entered and left Livorno, the quantity and value of the commodities traded, and the contribution of different merchant communities to the town economy.²⁴ In the most comprehensive study of Livorno's port and commercial activities from the mid-seventeenth century to the early nineteenth century, Jean-Pierre Filippini has mined the state archives of Florence and Livorno as well as French consular archives in search of sources that helped him trace the major shifts in the movement of the port between 1676 and 1814. Not even his studies, however, offer conclusive evidence.²⁵

Figure 4.1 summarizes the number of ships that arrived in Livorno during the eighteenth century, distinguishing between small vessels (*barche*, *brigantini*,

feluche, leuti, golette, checce, and, after 1780, *navicelli*), which carried goods between nearby ports and sailed along the coast, and larger vessels (*navi*), which transported primarily bulk commodities over greater distances. In reading this graph, note that the tonnage of all types of Mediterranean ships increased in the late eighteenth century, although not as dramatically as it did for Atlantic ships.²⁶ On the basis of these and other data, Filippini identifies the years 1729–31 as a short-term crisis (“*crise conjuncturelle*”) that led to a decline in the shipments of silk cloth, Livorno’s principal export, to London.²⁷ A series of bankruptcies that occurred in Marseilles in 1729–31 and involved numerous Jewish bankers across Europe aggravated conditions in Livorno.²⁸ They also slowed down French trade in the Levant, with obvious consequences for the Tuscan port as well.

Filippini dates Livorno’s “structural crisis” to the years between 1735 and 1765, during the regency of the House of Lorraine, when the number of ships arriving from Italian ports decreased while Venice experienced a temporary resurgence and Marseilles underwent rapid growth.²⁹ Others suggest that Filippini is probably too pessimistic about the period before 1748.³⁰ Indeed, the data summarized in figure 4.1 indicate a drop in the early 1720s rather than late in the decade, when Livorno endured the consequences of the destructive plague that hit Marseilles in 1720 and of the two financial crises of that year: the collapse of the financial system put in place by France’s secretary of the treasury, John Law, and the bursting of the speculative bubble induced by the South Sea Company in London. In addition, the Tuscan port faced new competition from the free ports established in Trieste and Naples in 1719, in Messina in 1728, and in Ancona in 1732.³¹ A short positive trend followed between 1735 and 1748, before stagnation set in. Overall, the period when the firm of Ergas and Silvera was active (1704–45) preceded the sharpest decline of Livorno.

Under the reign of Francis Stephen of Lorraine (r. 1737–65) and his son Peter Leopold (r. 1765–90), several attempts were made to revitalize Tuscan commerce, including the formation of a governmental body with ample competence over commercial and naval matters (the *Consiglio di Commercio*, 1746–69), a renewal of the fleet (*Editto della Marina*, 1748), and the creation of a suburban neighborhood adjacent to Livorno (San Jacopo) for the settlement of fishermen and artisans (1751–58). All these initiatives met with limited success. Although the treaties signed with the Ottoman and Barbary powers between 1747 and 1750 were meant to revive Mediterranean trade, European rivals could now place long quarantines on the ships arriving from Livorno that were suspected of having called at Ottoman ports where plague was endemic.³² At last, in 1765, Peter Leopold repealed the much-resented decision made in 1739 to contract out the collection of all customs levies, which had led to stricter surveillance

over contraband. In sum, during the eighteenth century, the port activities of Livorno fluctuated quite a bit and did not grow as much as they did in other ports such as Marseilles or Bordeaux in the same period.³³ After a protracted decline in the late 1740s or early 1750s, Livorno experienced its most severe setback during the Seven Years’ War (1756–63), although European (and especially English) pirates made huge profits during the war.³⁴ The Russian-Ottoman War of 1768–74 added new difficulties for the Levantine trade at about the time that the Amsterdam credit market was hit by crises in 1763 and 1773.³⁵ The last glory days of Livorno can be dated to 1793–95, when Tuscany joined the anti-French coalition, the Royal Navy protected the port, and the financial market of marine insurance boomed before cracking in October 1795.³⁶

Throughout the eighteenth century, the Jewish population of Livorno grew, and Jewish merchants and bankers proved essential to the town’s and the port’s economy. Regrettably, no aggregate sources are available to allow a calculation of the investments and turnover of Jewish partnerships in Livorno. Available evidence, albeit indirect, suggests that Iberian Jews did not rush to take advantage of the privileges issued in the 1590s. But by the second or third decade of the seventeenth century they were relatively numerous in Livorno. In 1642 the Medici levied a special tax to help finance the military engagement in a peninsular dynastic war (the War of Castro). In Livorno, the distribution of the tax among shopkeepers and merchants shows the Jews to have been more numerous than all other groups, with eighty merchants and brokers contributing the largest portion of the levy (4,622 scudi), followed by twelve Florentines (1,460 scudi), ten English and ten Flemish merchants (1,400 scudi each), and thirty-three Frenchmen (1,054 scudi).³⁷ In 1688 Florentine officials estimated that the Jewish nation had fourteen to eighteen commercial firms, six to eight retail establishments (“*case di fondachi o bottegai buoni*”), and about a hundred individuals who lived comfortably (“*persone che hanno qualche comodità*”).³⁸

Based on other available accounts, Jews always made up the single largest group of the mercantile class active in Livorno. Filippini assesses the number of partnerships in the first half of the eighteenth century at not quite one hundred. Roughly thirty were run by Jews, twenty by Dutch or Germans, fifteen by Frenchmen, ten by Englishmen, and another ten by Italians; a few Armenians and Greeks also ran independent businesses.³⁹ In 1765 the governor of Livorno, Bourbon del Monte, counted twice as many merchants of varying fortunes: overall, 50 were Jews, 30 were Tuscans, and 120 were assorted foreigners.⁴⁰ The Jewish presence remained as strong at the end of the century, with 44 of 143 partnerships run by Jews in 1793 and 46 of 199 run by Jews in 1796.⁴¹ A number of Jewish entrepreneurs also held exclusive government contracts in

the seventeenth century for the manufacturing of tobacco (1645), brandy (1650), and paper (1652); others continued to run silk, soap, and coral shops in the eighteenth century.⁴²

The contribution of Jewish merchants to the city's economy derived not only from their numbers but also from their geographical networks and the diversity of their commercial and financial activities. Sephardic partnerships in Livorno exhibited a breadth that even the most solid Catholic Italian merchants lacked. The Saminati-Pazzi, for example, a major trading and banking firm that was active in Florence and Livorno for more than a century beginning in 1618, had a widespread network of agents and correspondents in Italy but a much more tenuous one outside the peninsula, with some agents in Iberia and the Levant and only a weak presence north of the Alps (Amsterdam was their main outpost in northern Europe and they had only secondary connections to Antwerp, Augsburg, Krakow, Lyon, Lille, London, and Vienna).⁴³

JEWISH MERCHANTS AND CHANGING PATTERNS OF MEDITERRANEAN TRADE

Stressing the significance of Jewish merchant-bankers for the Mediterranean economy, Braudel spoke of a "century of the Jews" in an analogy with what he called "the 'age' of the Fuggers" (corresponding to the first three-quarters of the sixteenth century) and "the 'age' of the Genoese" (1557-1627). But Braudel attributed a very short span to the "'age' of great Jewish merchants," from 1590 to 1621, or 1650 at the latest.⁴⁴ With his idea of the long sixteenth century in mind, Braudel referred to the role played by Jewish merchants in the Venetian trade with the Levant and, later, in the financial system created by Olivares, in which Portuguese New Christian bankers replaced the Genoese from 1627 to 1643. Jonathan Israel, in contrast, argues that Sephardic merchants exerted their greatest influence on international trade from 1650 to 1750 and centered their trading networks in Amsterdam and the Caribbean.⁴⁵

The Atlantic gained prominence in the strategies of the Dutch Sephardim after the period between 1595 and the 1650s, during which they prospered by trading with the Iberian world and the Mediterranean. During the Twelve Years' Truce between Spain and the Netherlands (1609-21), Amsterdam Sephardim imported great quantities of Spanish wool and Brazilian sugar; they also participated intensively in trade in other colonial goods (tobacco, red coral, diamonds, and spices) between Lisbon and the Italian peninsula. The end of the truce in 1621 again raised barriers to trade between Iberia and the Netherlands, although New Christians and Sephardim kept alive financial and commercial ties between

Venice and Spain.⁴⁶ Dutch-Portuguese trade temporarily revived once Portugal regained independence in 1640 and the Spanish embargo on Dutch ships was lifted in 1647. By then, however, the Sephardic merchants of Amsterdam had gradually reoriented their interests away from southern Europe and toward the Dutch and English Caribbean (Surinam, Guyana, Martinique, Jamaica, Barbados, and, above all, Curaçao).⁴⁷ According to Israel, the mid-seventeenth century represents a double turning point because the Dutch Sephardim shifted their activities toward the Atlantic while their participation in the Venetian trade on the Mediterranean vanished after the loss of Crete to the Ottomans (1669).⁴⁸ In Israel's words, the Dutch Sephardim continued to "act as the motor of the western Sephardi world" until the first quarter of the eighteenth century.⁴⁹ They then began to lose steam during the 1720s and 1730s, when the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions launched a vehement persecution against Iberian New Christians, and only a few of those who fled maintained commercial relations with Spain and Portugal.⁵⁰

The chronology and geography outlined by Israel mirror the structural evolution that moved the main commercial routes and financial centers of Europe northward and westward in the course of the seventeenth century, leaving the Mediterranean on the margins. This evolution, however, did not wipe the Mediterranean off the commercial map of the early modern world. Nobody was more cognizant of this than Sephardic merchants based in Livorno and Venice. In the first half of the eighteenth century they continued to be active, albeit on a smaller scale, in some of the commercial channels between Iberia and Italy that their coreligionists based in Amsterdam had controlled a century earlier. They also developed new ties with the French, now the preeminent European power in the Mediterranean. With nearly five thousand resident Sephardim (part of a larger Jewish population), Venice and Livorno together accounted for about one-third of the Western Sephardic diaspora in the world and its numerous commercial houses. This fact did not escape the French as they sought to establish their presence in the eastern Mediterranean. The collaboration with the Sephardim of Livorno proved significant at a time when, although commerce with the Americas grew faster than any other branch of French trade (doubling between 1735 and 1755), France's economic policies focused on Europe and the Mediterranean more than did England's.⁵¹

After the Portuguese circumnavigated the Cape of Good Hope, and more dramatically, after the Dutch and the English entered the Indian Ocean in the early seventeenth century, the Levant ceased to be Europe's main supplier of Asian goods; it became instead a source of raw materials (especially silk and cotton). European commercial and maritime power in the Mediterranean was

reinforced by diplomatic agreements that granted European ships special privileges in Ottoman ports. As a result, Europeans came to dominate the entire commerce between Europe and the Ottoman Empire and even provided most of the shipping services from one Ottoman port to another.⁵² No single European state, however, could ever claim the Mediterranean or any portion of it. In addition, Ottoman authorities continued to exert fiscal, military, and administrative control over most of the coastal economy. In the last twenty or so years historians have added nuance to older views of Ottoman economic stagnation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and pointed to the continued role of the overland caravan trade with Central and South Asia, the endurance and adaptability of local manufacturing production, the weight of the local credit markets, and the interaction of European traders with Muslims and other indigenous minorities in the port cities of the Levant.⁵³ This literature has generated renewed interest in the Mediterranean trade and the process of adaptation to structural changes in international commerce that certain sectors underwent in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁵⁴

The lack of comparative studies makes it difficult to evaluate the degree to which each non-Muslim minority in the Ottoman Empire specialized in certain areas or trades, but they clearly occupied niche markets that were largely complementary.⁵⁵ Greeks were particularly numerous in Smyrna, where they were occupied in the retailing of local products such as straw, lime, and homespun woolsens.⁵⁶ Everywhere across the Mediterranean they also manned ships and served as sailors and captains. Armenians controlled the exportation of raw silk from Iran to the Levant until the Afghan invasions of Iran in 1722 and 1745–56 and the Ottoman-Persian War of 1743–47 disrupted this trade. The bulk of this exporting was then diverted to Russia, while the English increasingly acquired raw silk in Bengal and China. Later in the eighteenth century, Armenians in Smyrna opened a large plant for manufacturing printed color textiles, with five hundred employees, and some families moved to Constantinople and acquired influence in banking and finance.⁵⁷

Iberian Jews who had found a home in the Ottoman Empire became particularly active in the trade with Venice in the 1540s and in the manufacturing of textile cloths in Salonica; many also served as money lenders locally, and a few reached the top of the Ottoman financial world.⁵⁸ In the seventeenth century, the Ottoman Jewish world was deeply shaken not only by the empire's economic difficulties but also by the conversion of the self-proclaimed messiah Sabbatai Sevi to Islam in 1666.⁵⁹ Not long afterward, a small but influential group of Sephardic immigrants, most from Livorno, many from Venice, and a few from Amsterdam and Bordeaux, revitalized some Ottoman communities, and at the

same time generated intense conflicts with local Jewry. Ottoman Jews remained involved in local brokerage and credit, whereas Western Sephardim took charge of international trade in the shadow of European powers, and, in particular, the French.

WESTERN SEPHARDIM AND THE FRENCH IN ALEPPO

The legal status of Western Sephardim in the Ottoman Empire should be understood within the framework of the privileges agreed on between the Porte and European states known in the West as capitulations (*imtiyazāt* in Ottoman Turkish). Capitulations exempted Europeans from paying head taxes and granted them lower customs duties than those paid by Ottoman subjects, though they did not rule out the intermittent imposition of additional fines, called *avaniyas*.⁶⁰ These diplomatic agreements guaranteed their recipients the right to religious worship, protection from arbitrary seizure of their goods, full autonomy in the adjudication of commercial and civil disputes, and ample jurisdiction over criminal cases. In the new capitulations negotiated in 1673, the French Crown negotiated a 3 percent customs duty on the value of all import and export commodities (as had the English) rather than the 5 percent that Venetians paid. The Dutch and the Genoese soon negotiated the same privilege with the sultan, but in the following decades the French secured additional concessions for themselves and slowly but surely emerged as the leading power in the central and eastern Mediterranean.⁶¹

The French capitulations of 1740 repeated the concession made by the sultan with regard to the subjects of states that did not have diplomatic representatives at the Porte: as long as they chose to place themselves under the banner of the French king, they would be considered as Frenchmen by the Ottoman authorities (art. 38). The drafting of this clause bears the imprint of French diplomats. Because the Jews had been expelled from the Kingdom of France (except from Provence and Alsace) in 1394, the Crown preferred that no mention of Jews under French protection appear in the capitulations. The 1740 text instead refers to an outmoded list of non-French subjects active in Mediterranean trade—Portuguese, Sicilian, and Catalan subjects, the inhabitants of Messina and Ancona.⁶² Admittedly, by 1740 the term *Portuguese* could be understood to indicate Sephardic Jews. More significant, the capitulations delegated to the French Crown the power of taking foreigners under its wing.

The capitulations issued to other European rulers included analogous prerogatives.⁶³ And Sephardic traders often took advantage of rivalries between European powers to negotiate advantageous conditions for themselves.⁶⁴ But

the English Levant Company's persistent exclusions of Jews from its monopoly, the weak presence of the Dutch in the Levant after the late seventeenth century, the charging of higher duties by the Ottomans to the Venetians, and the growing commercial influence of Marseilles in the Mediterranean made France the most desirable sponsor for the Sephardim. At the time, Tuscany was unable to negotiate privileges comparable to those bestowed by the French, and the Jews of Livorno flocked to French tutelage in large numbers.⁶⁵

French patronage in the Ottoman Empire meant very concrete advantages. In addition to advantageous customs duties, Sephardic merchants were to enjoy immunity from local civil justice. In practice, the immunity often extended to criminal matters. For example, when Isaac Belilios killed a Muslim caravan conductor in Aleppo in 1744, the Ottoman judge wished he could take him to court, but Belilios was tried by the French consul, who in retaliation imposed a collective fine on the Jews under his protection.⁶⁶ French consular authorities performed an additional function by issuing documents certifying economic transactions that could be used in European courts. In 1735, Gabriel del Rio, a Sephardic merchant of Livorno, wrote in impeccable French to the Chamber of Commerce in Marseilles asking that it peruse its archives in search of the proof that he had paid duties in Aleppo from 1695 to 1714 and asked that they clear him of the false accusations made by several French merchants.⁶⁷ Twice did Ergas and Silvera complain that they had been charged customs duties by the French for the same goods in two Levantine ports, and twice did they submit copies of their receipts and ask the Chamber of Commerce to verify their claims. After intervention by the secretary of state and of the navy, the Crown not only ordered that Ergas and Silvera be reimbursed but also urged the Chamber of Commerce in Marseilles to refrain from committing such abuses for fear of losing the services of the Sephardim.⁶⁸

French merchants and authorities were divided as to whether granting protection to Livornese Jews consolidated or derailed national interests, but all agreed that the concessions were only valid overseas. The so-called free port established in Marseilles by Finance Minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert in 1669 was very different from the one that operated in Livorno: it entailed a mixture of protectionist measures and fiscal exemptions but did not include any toleration for foreigners and non-Catholic minorities. French ships calling at Marseilles paid no customs duties; they only paid small duties of passage and a light charge depending on the ship's provenance and tonnage (*tonelage* and *cottimo*).⁶⁹ These levies applied to the merchandise boarded by French merchants on French ships. An exorbitant 20 percent customs duty was owed on all goods imported by foreign merchants, those arriving on board non-French vessels, those reaching Marseilles via

non-French ports, or those destined for ports other than Marseilles.⁷⁰ Because profit margins in the Levant rarely amounted to more than 20 percent, this tax was a virtual embargo, and Livorno its principal target. In 1686, 85 percent of the Levantine goods paying the 20 percent tax reached Marseilles from the Tuscan port.⁷¹

Designed to promote French exports of woolen cloth made in Languedoc to the Levant, these strict measures nonetheless generated widespread abuse. In principle, if caught having lent their names to any Armenians or Jews who wished to send their commodities directly to Marseilles, French merchants and ship captains in the Levant were punished by the confiscation of their vessels and goods as well as a fine that increased from one thousand to three thousand livres tournois between 1671 and 1687.⁷² As late as 1781, French merchants were threatened "with the most severe penalties" if they lent their names to "Greeks, Jews, Armenians, and other foreigners."⁷³ But the frequency with which these prohibitions were reiterated is merely evidence of recurrent violations.

In 1719 the chancellor of the French consulate in Algiers denounced the growing number of his countrymen who lent their names to Sephardic merchants who wished to sell their goods in Marseilles.⁷⁴ In 1746 the representative of the French nation in Aleppo complained once more about the difficulties of verifying the quality, weight, and measure of the commodities that Jews shipped under the French banner.⁷⁵ A plan was disclosed in 1702 according to which some Jews in Livorno, including Gabriel Medina, Samuel Abraham Lusena, and a member of the Recanati family, allegedly ordered sea captains from Provence to build vessels to sail to the Levant and traffic on their behalf in order to elude the ban on Jews imposed by Marseilles.⁷⁶ Nearly a decade later, Michel Calvo de Silva, an informer for the French authorities in Livorno who identified himself as "a Jew by religion and a Frenchman by virtue of being born in Bayonne," reported to the Chamber of Commerce that the Tuscan authorities had punished some of those involved in this plan but failed to reprimand those who orchestrated it.⁷⁷ Business correspondence of French merchants confirms that all restrictive norms were bypassed regularly.⁷⁸

Acknowledging the gap between norm and practice, a royal decree promulgated in 1688 exempted the ships that called at Italian ports on their way back from the Levant from paying the 20 percent tax.⁷⁹ Although it reiterated the prohibition against foreigners' shipping their goods all the way to Marseilles, this concession implicitly recognized that the French depended on the Jews of Livorno to replenish their return cargo; it also allowed French vessels to call at Messina for the purchase of raw silk. By 1688 it had become common for the French to offer diplomatic protection to Sephardim in the Ottoman Empire, as

a compromise between the Chamber of Commerce's staunch opposition to liberalization and toleration and the Crown's commitment to capturing the largest possible share of the market in the southeastern Mediterranean.

In spite of some diehard enemies of Jews, French consuls for the most part viewed these measures favorably because they gained personally from the trade generated by Sephardim overseas. In 1698–1700, the French consul in Aleppo, Jean-Pierre Blanc, sent a series of reports to Secretary of State Comte de Pontchartrain that attested to the presence of roughly twenty-five “juifs italiens ou espagnols” who had been trading in Aleppo under French protection for at least the preceding fifteen years. Blanc feared losing the Sephardim to English and Dutch competition and raised the specter of the detrimental effects of letting them trade with their coreligionists in Livorno alone.⁸⁰ Four decades later, in 1739–41, Sephardim paid 31 percent of the French customs duties collected in Aleppo.⁸¹

The first half of the eighteenth century was the golden age of the Western Sephardim of Aleppo. They were more numerous and influential here than in any other Ottoman city. Livornese Sephardim began to receive French protection in Aleppo occasionally after 1670, and regular protection began after 1682, the year when they were expelled from Marseilles.⁸² They were fewer in number in Salonica, where the French established a consulate in 1685. Others could be found in Smyrna, Tunis, Algiers, Cairo, and Alexandria.⁸³ We can only speculate about the Sephardim's preference for Aleppo, but it is worth noting that although Smyrna was the busiest Ottoman port for European trade, the Levant Company had a stronghold there. The boom of French trade in Aleppo and the relative lack of competition from the English offered greater opportunities for Sephardic merchants in the Syrian city.

Aleppo was the third largest city in the Ottoman Empire after Constantinople and Cairo. Of the city's two hundred thousand inhabitants, perhaps as many as five thousand were Jews: the majority of them were natives, but recently immigrated Western Sephardim made up an influential minority.⁸⁴ The latter usually outnumbered French merchants in town. In 1698 the consul counted nineteen French merchants, the majority from Marseilles, and twenty-five Sephardim from Italy. In 1711, 20 Jewish merchants from Livorno or Venice were reported to be operating under the French banner. A total of eighty-two French merchants resided in Aleppo from 1711 to 1781, but never more than seventeen were there at one time.⁸⁵

Aleppo ranked near the top of the list of French outposts in the Ottoman Empire (or *échelles* in the terminology of the time) in terms of the value of trade. French trade in Aleppo grew vigorously in the course of the first half of the eigh-

teenth century and continued to expand at a slightly slower pace for the rest of the century, accounting on average for 10 percent of French commerce in the Levant.⁸⁶ In the years 1749–55, between 6.33 and 16.67 percent (for an average of 10.67 percent) of all goods arriving in Marseilles from the Ottoman Empire were shipped out of Alexandretta (or *İskenderun*), the entry port of Aleppo (see table 4.1). The Syrian city did not rival Smyrna in volume, value, and diversity of trade. It specialized in the exporting of raw cotton and cotton yarn and the importing of European finished and colonial goods.⁸⁷ The French were primarily responsible for this new pattern of trade. After the end of the War of the Spanish Succession (1713), French trade in Aleppo largely overtook the English trade, and the Dutch were relegated to a minor role.⁸⁸ Imports of cotton from the Levant to Europe tripled between 1700 and 1760, and those to France alone grew sixfold.⁸⁹ From the 1730s to the 1770s, cotton accounted for more than 50 percent (and sometimes more than 60 percent) of French exports from Aleppo.⁹⁰ The English also contributed to this shift from silk to cotton in the exports from Aleppo, but to a lesser extent, because they relied on the West Indies for their cotton supply and purchased Iranian and Syrian silk in Aleppo.⁹¹ France, in contrast, acquired much of its raw silk in southern Italy.

Commercial statistics gathered by French consuls in Aleppo help clarify the contribution made by Western Sephardim to the trade with Marseilles (see table 4.2 and figure 4.2).⁹² With only two exceptions (1744 and 1748), the French had a positive balance of trade in Aleppo, unlike most *échelles*, during the first half of the eighteenth century. In southern Syria, Crete, and the Aegean islands French merchants were often forced to buy oil and grain with cash. In contrast, Aleppo, Smyrna, and Constantinople absorbed the greatest portion of French textile manufacturing and colonial goods.⁹³ It is true that consular statistics hide the amount of silver coins (mostly Spanish and Mexican pieces of eight) shipped from Marseilles to Aleppo, but it appears that only after 1786 did bullion (now including Austrian thalers) account for a significant portion of French exports to Aleppo.⁹⁴

Precise data about the share of the French trade with Aleppo that was handled by the Sephardim are only available for the years 1743–47. It ranged between 12.79 and 52.96 percent of the imports from Marseilles and between 12 and 31.85 percent of the exports from Aleppo. The percentage was highest at the outbreak of the maritime war between France and England in 1744–45, when French merchants in Marseilles used ships flying neutral Swedish, Venetian, and especially Dutch flags available in Livorno.⁹⁵ Armed conflicts between European states opened up opportunities of which trading diasporas could take advantage. But not everywhere were Sephardim equally mighty. Their role in the French

Table 4.1. Value of French imports from the Ottoman Empire, 1749-55

Source	1749		1750		1751	
	Value	% of Total	Value	% of Total	Value	% of Total
Constantinople	2,146,793	11.10	1,369,591	6.52	996,886	4.56
Smyrna	4,531,162	23.42	5,629,076	26.80	3,775,138	17.26
Alexandretta	3,224,377	16.67	2,035,618	9.69	1,385,025	6.33
Sidon	1,586,227	8.20	2,492,570	11.87	4,517,600	20.66
Tripoli, Lebanon	1,168,745	6.04	606,672	2.89	1,520,391	6.95
Cyprus	581,505	3.01	358,237	1.71	632,534	2.89
Egypt	2,162,505	11.18	2,374,058	11.30	2,746,565	12.56
Salonica	663,566	3.43	2,029,235	9.66	628,622	2.87
Aegean Islands	911,509	4.71	564,070	2.69	2,580,597	11.80
Crete	182,303	0.94	1,066,629	5.08	337,902	1.55
Greek Peninsula	1,635,278	8.45	1,353,087	6.44	1,924,726	8.80
North Africa	554,070	2.86	1,127,411	5.37	824,677	3.77
Total	19,348,040		21,006,254		21,870,663	

Source: CCM, AA1801, 133.

Note: Amounts are stated in Ottoman piasters.

trade with the Levant was supplementary rather than decisive. It consisted in expanding the spectrum of goods that could be boarded on French vessels rather than in shaping French commercial patterns. Overall, though the percentage of French trade with Aleppo carried out by Sephardim was significant, it never reached the proportion that Livornese Jews held in the French trade with Tunis, which led the secretary of state in 1772 to discourage the Chamber of Commerce of Marseilles from enforcing the ban against Jews when a few of them arrived from Tunis to oversee their affairs.⁹⁶ According to Filippini's calculations, Jewish merchants based in Livorno controlled as much as 83 to 94 percent of the exports from the Tuscan port to North Africa but only between 11 and 35 percent of the exports to the Levant between 1765 and 1790.⁹⁷

We do not know exactly why the proportion of Sephardic goods loaded on French vessels to Aleppo was consistently higher than the proportion of their goods shipped back from Aleppo. We cannot exclude the possibility that Sephardic merchants took advantage of French diplomatic protection when importing their commodities to the Levant but then chose alternative navies for

Source	1752		1753		1754		1755	
	Value	% of Total						
Constantinople	686,939	3.09	513,188	2.17	646,173	2.85	929,515	3.98
Smyrna	4,280,905	19.27	5,205,557	21.98	6,553,717	28.89	7,207,385	30.87
Alexandretta	2,412,156	10.86	1,913,162	8.08	2,647,000	11.67	2,699,291	11.56
Sidon	3,845,634	17.31	1,484,661	6.27	1,816,071	8.00	2,175,665	9.32
Tripoli, Lebanon	569,194	2.56	872,041	3.68	790,855	3.49	342,383	1.47
Cyprus	455,968	2.05	1,037,877	4.38	244,430	1.08	614,993	2.63
Egypt	2,701,336	12.16	2,693,261	11.37	2,146,076	9.46	2,785,546	11.93
Salonica	1,452,443	6.54	612,301	2.59	979,437	4.32	1,350,315	5.78
Aegean Islands	2,447,942	11.02	6,702,563	28.30	4,654,009	20.51	1,158,352	4.96
Crete	181,288	0.82	627,511	2.65	231,839	1.02	475,080	2.03
Greek Peninsula	2,418,987	10.89	1,307,660	5.52	1,081,123	4.77	2,110,561	9.04
North Africa	757,102	3.41	710,411	3.00	896,885	3.95	1,500,332	6.43
Total	22,209,894		23,680,193		22,687,615		23,349,418	

their return voyages, especially considering the restrictions on the direct trade with Marseilles. At this point, comparable statistics that might allow clarification of the degree of autonomy and opportunism that this diaspora exerted in choosing between competing naval services and European destinations have not surfaced in the English, Dutch, or Venetian consular records. On the other hand, it is possible that the Sephardim exported more to Aleppo than they imported from there, as French merchants did. If that was the case, their relatives and partners in the Levant were in a good position to settle the imbalance by remitting cash via bills of exchange.

The composition of the French trade with Aleppo illuminates the specific role that Western Sephardim played in this trade (see table 4.3). Predictably, French merchants dominated the exportation of woolen cloth manufactured in Languedoc under a protectionist regime.⁹⁸ They also monopolized the re-exportation to the Levant of colonial commodities from the French Antilles, although the activities of the Ergas and Silvera partnership indicate that Livornese Sephardim also brought goods from the New World to Aleppo, especially those

Table 4.2. French and Sephardic imports to and exports from Aleppo: Totals, 1725-52

	Import				Export			
	French	Sephardim	Total	% traded by Jews	French	Sephardim	Total	% traded by Jews
1725	434,366				274,137			
1726	577,302				253,967			
1727	660,693				245,628			
1728	850,497				389,963			
1729	470,455				252,070			
1730	418,025				202,986			
1731	594,475				277,185			
1732	1,430,535				502,674			
1733	443,282				431,549			
1734	1,021,925				423,424			
1735	1,359,265				172,621			
1736	1,464,379				259,621			
1737	764,894				337,323			
1738	923,923				431,673			
1739	823,975				556,577			
1740	754,108				484,984			
1741	958,281				304,317			
1742	914,633				888,999			
1743	1,494,726	219,252	1,713,978	12.79 %	794,411	108,370	902,781	12.00 %
1744	163,419	183,953	347,372	52.96 %	500,719	128,602	629,321	20.44 %
1745	429,233	253,561	682,794	37.14 %	423,725	198,001	621,726	31.85 %
1746	1,016,975	398,758	1,415,733	28.17 %	459,476	214,732	674,208	31.85 %
1747	649,455	272,213	921,668	29.53 %	541,156	123,685	664,841	18.60 %
1748	397,288				527,203			
1749	1,269,444				967,074			
1750	921,344				764,892			
1751	628,691				449,189			
1752	749,102				598,053			

Source: CCM, AA1801, J.942, 944-953.

Note: Amounts are stated in Ottoman piasters.

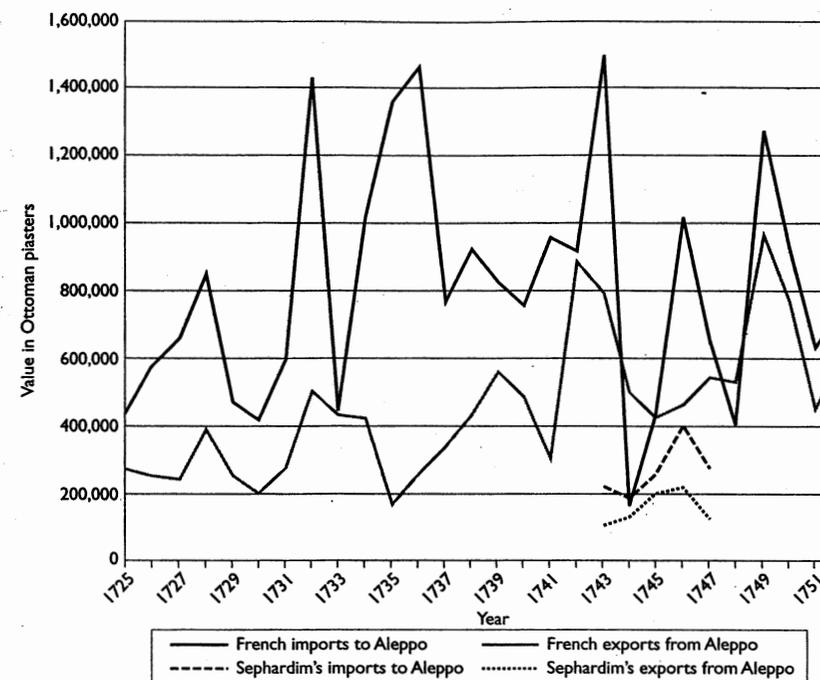


Figure 4.2. French and Sephardic trade in Aleppo, 1725-52.

Sources: CCM, AA1801, J.942, 944-953.

arriving from the Dutch and Iberian colonies in the Americas. Among the imports to Aleppo, Jewish merchants normally dominated in two categories: "foreign goods" and "miscellaneous goods." Little is known about the precise composition of these two categories, but neither is surprising. As one might expect, Sephardim handled a preponderant share of non-French commodities shipped to Aleppo as well as what we can assume were the traditionally diverse items of Mediterranean trade, including coral, ostrich eggs and feathers, leather, paper, mirrors, and other glassware. They also shipped all or most of the raw silk and a significant portion of Asian spices placed on French ships out of Aleppo. Venetian Sephardim alone traded in glass seed beads (*conterie*), a traditional Venetian product that enjoyed unprecedented success in the eighteenth century.⁹⁹ It may be puzzling to find that in these statistics Venetian Sephardim often surpass their coreligionists from Livorno although the Tuscan port was economically more powerful and home to a larger and more prosperous Jewish mercantile community. It is probable that, as noted by the informer Michel de Silva during

Table 4.3. French and Sephardic imports to and exports from Aleppo: Details, 1743-47

	Total	French		Livornese Jews		Venetian Jews		% of Total traded by Sephardim
		Value	% of Total	Value	% of Total	Value	% of Total	
Imports, 1743								
Woolen cloth	691,585	652,082	94.29	19,613	2.84	19,890	2.88	5.71
Miscellaneous goods	162,314	57,999	35.73	47,864	29.49	56,451	34.78	64.27
Imports from the								
French Americas	483,967	483,967	100.00					
Foreign goods	310,943	254,133	81.73	42,228	13.58	14,582	4.69	18.27
Goods via Constanti- nople and Smyrna						18,624	100.00	100.00
Bills of exchange	65,169	46,545	71.42					
Total	1,713,978	1,494,726	87.21	109,705	6.40	109,547	6.39	12.79
Exports, 1743								
Chintz	307,457	293,600	95.49	5,027	1.64	8,830	2.87	4.51
Woven fabrics	19,208	19,208	100.00					
Raw silk	13,582	6,788	49.98	3,630	26.73	3,164	23.30	50.02
Wool thread	33,563	33,563	100.00					
Spices	62,959	45,954	72.99	8,869	14.09	8,136	12.92	27.01
Miscellaneous goods	191,260	156,096	81.61	18,317	9.58	16,847	8.81	18.39
Precious metals and bills of exchange to Cyprus and the coast	274,752	239,202	87.06			35,550	12.94	12.94
Total	902,781	794,411	88.00	35,843	3.97	72,527	8.03	12.00
Imports, 1744								
Woolen cloth	125,850	69,818	55.48	33,152	26.34	22,880	18.18	44.52
Miscellaneous goods	117,861	8,892	7.54	18,065	15.33	90,904	77.13	92.46
Imports from the								
French Americas	55,449	55,449	100.00					
Foreign goods	43,389	16,269	37.47	18,952	43.68	8,177	18.85	62.53
Bills of exchange	13,000	13,000	100.00					
Total	347,372	163,419	47.04	70,169	20.20	113,784	32.76	52.96
Exports, 1744								
Chintz	199,836	190,185	95.17	4,100	2.05	5,551	2.78	4.83
Woven fabrics	10,861	10,861	100.00					
Wool thread	12,765	12,765	100.00					
Spices	19,538	12,700	65.00	4,146	21.22	2,692	13.78	35.00

continued...

Table 4.3. French and Sephardic imports to and exports from Aleppo: Details, 1743-47 continued

	Total	French		Livornese Jews		Venetian Jews		% of Total traded by Sephardim
		Value	% of Total	Value	% of Total	Value	% of Total	
Miscellaneous goods	132,861	98,045	73.80	19,320	14.54	15,496	11.66	26.20
Precious metals and bills of exchange to Cyprus and the coast	267,058	176,163	65.96	5,355	2.01	85,540	32.03	34.04
Total	642,919	500,719	77.88	32,921	5.12	109,279	17.00	22.12
Imports, 1745								
Woolen cloth	330,620	268,364	81.17	11,240	3.40	51,016	15.43	18.83
Miscellaneous goods	174,582	35,810	20.51	41,958	24.03	96,814	55.45	79.49
Imports from the								
French Americas	71,476	71,476	100.00					
Foreign goods	111,028	41,236	37.14	52,533	47.32	17,259	15.54	62.86
Bills of exchange	12,347	12,347	100.00					
Total	682,794	429,233	62.86	105,731	15.49	147,830	21.65	37.14
Exports, 1745								
Chintz	186,790	159,970	85.64	17,685	9.47	9,135	4.89	14.36
Woven fabrics	2,113	2,113	100.00					
Raw silk	3,570					3,570	100.00	100.00
Wool thread	28,741	28,741	100.00					
Spices	39,786	15,836	39.80	10,068	25.31	13,882	34.89	60.20
Miscellaneous goods	115,944	68,565	59.14	26,580	22.92	20,799	17.94	40.86
Bills of exchange and currency to Cyprus and the coast	244,782	148,500	60.67	13,928	5.69	82,354	33.64	39.33
Total	621,726	423,725	68.15	68,261	10.98	129,740	20.87	31.85
Imports, 1746								
Woolen cloth	841,050	688,618	81.88	91,359	10.86	61,073	7.26	18.12
Woven fabrics	26,651					26,651	100.00	100.00
Glass seed-beads	50,687					50,687	100.00	100.00
Miscellaneous goods	130,893	34,876	26.64	64,242	49.08	31,775	24.28	73.36
Imports from the								
French Americas	226,607	226,607	100.00					
Foreign goods	127,119	54,148	42.60	72,971	57.40			57.40
Bills of exchange	12,726	12,726	100.00					
Total	1,415,733	1,016,975	71.83	228,572	16.15	170,186	12.02	28.17

continued...

Table 4.3. French and Sephardic imports to and exports from Aleppo: Details, 1743-47 *continued*

	Total	French		Livornese Jews		Venetian Jews		% of Total traded by Sephardim
		Value	% of Total	Value	% of Total	Value	% of Total	
Exports, 1746								
Chintz	289,082	196,517	67.98	92,565	32.02			32.02
Woven fabrics	15,508	15,508	100.00					
Wool thread	15,236	15,236	100.00					
Spices	29,956	15,693	52.39	14,263	47.61			47.61
Miscellaneous goods	57,841	19,747	34.14	30,381	52.53	7,713	13.33	65.86
Bills of exchange and currency to Cyprus and the coast	266,585	196,775	73.81			69,810	26.19	26.19
Total	674,208	459,476	68.15	137,209	20.35	77,523	11.50	31.85
Imports, 1747								
Woolen cloth	387,053	354,325	91.54	8,643	2.23	24,085	6.22	8.46
Miscellaneous goods	199,495	18,510	9.28	75,491	52.88	105,494	37.84	90.72
Imports from the French Americas	180,756	180,756	100.00					
Foreign goods	101,464	42,964	42.34	49,978	49.26	8,522	8.40	57.66
Bills of exchange	52,900	52,900	100.00					
Total	921,668	649,455	70.47	134,112	14.55	138,101	14.98	29.53
Exports, 1747								
Chintz	261,406	212,924	81.45	46,352	17.73	2,130	1.07	18.80
Raw silk	23,472			15,462	65.87	8,010	34.13	100.00
Woven fabrics and wool	66,705	66,705	100.00					
Spices	50,912	32,282	63.41	8,652	16.99	9,978	19.60	36.59
Miscellaneous goods	159,296	126,195	79.22	28,008	17.58	5,093	3.20	20.78
Bills of exchange and precious metals to Cyprus and the coast	103,050	103,050	100.00					
Total	664,841	541,156	81.40	98,474	14.81	25,211	3.79	18.60

Source: CCM, AA1801, J.942, 944-953.

Note: Amounts are stated in Ottoman piasters.

the War of the Spanish Succession, a number of Sephardic merchants based in Livorno passed themselves off as Venetians when it was more convenient to do so.¹⁰⁰ Considering the hardship of life in Aleppo, it is also conceivable that Venetian Sephardim, who were by and large less affluent, sent their sons and nephews there in greater numbers than the Livornese. In any case, as the correspondence of Ergas and Silvera will demonstrate, Venice continued to hold a central position in Sephardic networks in the eastern Mediterranean.

By the mid-seventeenth century, Livorno replaced Venice as the main Mediterranean hub of European trade and functioned as the link between the Levant and northern Europe. Its port infrastructures, low customs duties, neutrality in warfare, and ad hoc policies designed to attract foreign and Jewish merchants sustained the creation of a bourgeoning emporium. The existing literature about the Western Sephardic diaspora of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries concentrates on its expansion in the Atlantic more than its continued presence in the Mediterranean. This focus is largely justified given the loosening ties between Iberia and the Netherlands after the end of the Twelve Years' Truce (1621), the collapse of the financial system put in place by Olivares (1643), and the diminished Venetian presence in the eastern Mediterranean after the loss of Crete (1669). And yet this conventional portrayal neglects the growth of Livorno, the paramount importance of its Jewish community, the expansion of French trade in the Levant during the eighteenth century, and the connection of the Mediterranean to European transoceanic expansion.

The Medici gave Sephardim a secure basis for their operations in Livorno. At the same time, the grand duchy could only offer them feeble diplomatic protection overseas. Long-distance trade always involves more than the natural encounter of supply and demand. It requires complex infrastructures for the transport of goods, the transmission of information, and the arbitration of contested contracts; it also develops in accordance with (and sometimes in defiance of) agreements between states about who has access to certain markets and what guarantees individual actors can count on for their persons, goods, and investments. Diplomatic accords and not merely technological and organizational constraints conditioned the patterns of exchanges between Christian Europe and the Ottoman Empire in the early modern period. A synergy of interests developed between the Sephardim of Livorno, who lacked a commercial navy and a strong state that could back them up, and the French Crown, which counted on a powerful fleet sailing from Marseilles but lacked personnel and expertise in the Levant.

Sephardic Jews were omnipresent but never dominant in Mediterranean

commerce. As Benjamin Braude remarks, historians have too easily given credence to European observers who inflated the degree of the Jewish presence in Mediterranean commerce because of preconceived notions about Jewish commercial prowess and its opposite in order to stress Muslims' commercial ineptitude. Complaints by European consuls and merchants about these phenomena were almost a refrain and have contributed to this distorted view.¹⁰¹ Many commentaries about the overrepresentation of Jews in the Levantine trade also conflate Ottoman Jews, who assisted Europeans in their local dealings, and Western Sephardim, who engaged in long-distance trade. In Aleppo as in Constantinople and other échelles, the French nation hired Ottoman subjects, and many Jews among them, as translators, brokers, and moneylenders and added them to the rank of protégés. After spending fifteen months in Aleppo in the year 1671–73, the Venetian nobleman Ambrosio Bembo wrote in his travel account that all customs officials in Aleppo were Jewish and were "atrocious thieves, through whose hands pass all business concerning the duties on the Franks, from whom . . . they rob what they want with very great industriousness." In 1741 the French merchants based in Constantinople even claimed to be "under the servitude of the Jews."¹⁰² The European public at the time, and several historians afterward, have taken such complaints literally.

In the second edition of his *Le parfait négociant*, Savary asserted that Jews and Armenians controlled most of the traffic in Livorno.¹⁰³ In Smyrna and other Ottoman ports, French merchants were—according to Savary—at the mercy of Jews and Armenians who lent them money at a rate of interest of 15, 16 or 17 percent.¹⁰⁴ At the turn of the eighteenth century, Joseph Addison, the intellectual and entrepreneur behind the most widely imitated periodical of the republic of letters, *The Spectator*, described the Jews of Livorno as "so great Traffickers, that our English Factors complain they have most of our Country Trade in their Hands."¹⁰⁵ In their *Dictionnaire de commerce*, Savary's sons claimed that the Jews of Livorno handled 98 percent of the Levantine trade in the Tuscan port, leaving a meager 2 percent to the French, the Italians, the Dutch, the English, and the Armenians.¹⁰⁶ Historians have been cautious about using such exaggerated figures but often resort to anecdotal evidence with the purpose of highlighting the role of stateless diasporas in the Mediterranean trade. Michel Mornieau thus generalizes on the basis of a few examples, including the case of a Dutch ship sailing from the Levant in 1768 in which merchandise belonging to Greek, Armenian, and Jewish Ottoman subjects, but registered under Dutch merchants' names, made up three-quarters of the cargo.¹⁰⁷

The French consular statistics, albeit fragmentary, help us assess the extent and characteristics of the Western Sephardim's contribution to French trade in

the Levant in the mid-eighteenth century. They suggest that the Sephardim of Livorno and Venice normally controlled about 12 percent to 30 percent of the overall French trade with Aleppo, and only in 1744, at the outbreak of the naval war between France and Britain in the Mediterranean, did they ship more than 50 percent of the cargos placed on French ships sailing to Aleppo.¹⁰⁸ These percentages should not be taken as absolute numbers but rather as rough benchmarks. On one hand, Sephardim were more influential in the trade with Aleppo than with other Ottoman outposts and in French trade than in the Mediterranean ventures of other European countries. On the other, French consular statistics omit the illicit trade that Sephardim conducted by loading goods on French ships under the name of merchants from Marseilles as well as financial remittances that they made directly to and from Livorno on board English, Dutch, and other vessels.

French consular statistics are especially significant given that French trade with the Levant was on the rise after 1740.¹⁰⁹ Filippini has suggested that during the first three decades of the eighteenth century, French merchants were largely dependent on shipments made by the Jews of Livorno and North Africa to fill up vessels set for the Mediterranean, because French trade had not yet expanded enough to fill the ships.¹¹⁰ The data concerning Aleppo in the mid-1740s show that Western Sephardim continued to hold a significant market share even after France established its primacy in the eastern Mediterranean. More specifically, French statistics clarify that the Sephardim's contribution was rarely the largest and yet it broadened considerably the spectrum of goods traded by the French. The Sephardim temporarily dominated Aleppo's import and export trade only when the law that prohibited foreigners from trading directly between Marseilles and the Levant was lifted from 1781 to 1785.¹¹¹

French merchants and authorities remained wary at best of their commercial relations with the Sephardim, regardless of their profitability. Caught between the need to bolster trade and the need to exclude non-Catholic minorities, the Chamber of Commerce of Marseilles and the French Crown formulated cumbersome norms in order to secure the cooperation of Western Sephardim overseas while keeping them outside the kingdom and minimizing their opportunities for colluding with the Catholic subjects of His Most Christian Majesty. In Aleppo, nonetheless, French merchants and Sephardim interacted constantly. As major economic contributors, the latter made increasing demands on French authorities. They were not satisfied with being allowed to dress like Europeans and wear wigs; they requested symbolic recognition as an organized group and insisted on being included in the public appearances of the French nation.

The place that a corporate group or a diplomatic representative occupied in

civic and religious rituals mirrored their social standing. Never did Jews appear in public ceremonies in Catholic Europe except as victims or to pay homage to sovereign authorities. Sephardim in Aleppo demanded and obtained what would have been inconceivable in the *métropole*. In a letter of 20 July 1739, the French ambassador to Constantinople ordered that Jewish merchants under his king's diplomatic protection join the processions of the French nation on the occasions of its visits to local dignitaries or at the entrance of a French consul; the letter added that Jews should appear after French merchants and before French artisans. French merchants in Aleppo repeatedly expressed their "repugnance" at the idea of marching next to Jews and lamented the derision that they experienced in the eyes of the local population (although they admitted to doing business with Jews on a daily basis and to inviting them to their homes).¹¹² When a new consul was appointed for the post in Aleppo in 1742, the French merchants held him up in a nearby town while they sought to stop Sephardim from participating in ceremonies marking his entrance into the city. They first asked Jews to leave town on the day of the consul's official entry, but they were met with a staunch refusal. They then suggested that the Sephardim appear after the nation's clerks in the procession. As representative of the "European Jewish nation" in Aleppo ("nazione hebraea europea"), Elijah Silvera argued for the right of Western Sephardim to attend public ceremonies on an equal footing with French merchants. In the end, in order to avoid all conflicts, the consul called for the ceremony to take place on Saturday.¹¹³

The alliance between Western Sephardim and France was not a happy marriage. Mutual economic dependence did not ease social barriers or assuage religious intolerance. The Sephardim's only power was to play European consular authorities against one another or threaten to leave their tutelage. Manuel Baruch Carvaglio, son of Abraham, son of Jacob, left Livorno for Aleppo in 1745 with a certificate that promised him French protection. After his arrival he ran a partnership with Moses Rosa. Not quite a year later, Carvaglio accused the French consul of having betrayed all the promises he had made to the Jews of Livorno when, in the previous year, he had curtailed their ability to sell a popular type of cotton textiles (the so-called *tolies ajami* or *d'Aintab*, the base textiles from which chintz was made in Marseilles). Carvaglio also voiced his disdain at the humiliation that his coreligionists endured in French public ceremonies. But French merchants in Aleppo rallied around their consul and offered a less flattering view of Carvaglio, claiming that he had sold out a number of his coreligionists to the British authorities and, in return, received favorable treatment by the British. They accused him of "sedition" and asked for an exemplary punishment ("une punition exemplaire").¹¹⁴

Sephardim, like all merchants, were in competition with one another. Manuel Baruch Carvaglio decided that it was worth risking alienating a group of his coreligionists. He knew that he would be powerless without the protection of a valuable European power, and he played his cards in such a way as to secure better conditions for himself at the British consulate. Others followed him soon afterward. In 1747 the capitulations granted to the Holy Roman Empire under the Treaty of Passarowitz (1718) were extended to Tuscany, which had been under indirect Habsburg rule since 1737. Lacking their own consul in Aleppo, the Habsburgs delegated to the British consulate the diplomatic protection of all Tuscan subjects, including the Jews of Livorno. Initially, many Sephardim were less than pleased with this change imposed from the top.¹¹⁵ And yet a strong protector was all they needed.¹¹⁶

Conditions in the Mediterranean dictated the Sephardim's need for the sponsorship of a powerful state in order to trade with the Ottoman Empire. Tuscan Jews won the diplomatic protection of the French while retaining the distinctive ability to adapt themselves to changing commercial patterns and exploit rivalries between competing states. From their strong basis in Livorno, Jewish merchants succeeded in making themselves indispensable to the French. In other regions, as we will see, diplomatic protection mattered less or was not available, and yet Sephardim such as Ergas and Silvera found alternative ways of organizing their trading networks.

MARRIAGE, DOWRY, INHERITANCE, AND TYPES OF COMMERCIAL ASSOCIATION

The characteristics of long-distance trade in the early modern Mediterranean examined in Chapter 4 help explain the active participation of Jewish merchants in certain branches of the trade between Europe and the Ottoman Empire. With the exception of the English Levant Company (1581–1825), few monopolistic companies licensed by European states operated in the Mediterranean until the *Compagnie Royale d’Afrique* was created in France (1741–93), and even this company only controlled exchanges with North Africa.¹ Investments in the stock market never sustained Mediterranean commerce in the same way in which they helped finance English and Dutch transoceanic ventures. Rather, countless private partnerships (most, but not all, formed by merchants of the same religious or national group) plied the Mediterranean. There was, however, a significant difference between the private partnerships formed by European merchants and those of the Western Sephardim. Dutch, English, French, and Venetian merchants frequently selected their associates and overseas agents from among relatives, but they also sealed medium-term, renewable agreements with non-kin to raise additional capital and sometimes hired salaried employees (“factors”) to serve overseas. Western Sephardim, in contrast, used the most traditional model of a family firm; the general partnership. Unlike limited partnerships, general partnerships had no expiration date, and all their members had mutual agency with full liability.

Being in a family organization did not prevent Sephardic merchants from serving a diverse clientele or working with commission agents with whom they had no personal ties. Like all merchants, they sought to forge opportunistic alliances with the most reliable and worthwhile suppliers and customers regardless of their identity. And yet Sephardim in Livorno did not enter into medium-term

limited liability partnerships with non-Jews until the late eighteenth century, and even then they did so sporadically and for small investments. The social bases of communitarian cosmopolitanism, rather than legal impediments, account for the absence of joint Jewish-Christian commercial ventures and their scarcity in the late eighteenth century.

In order to explain this pattern we need to consider two issues: the advantages and limitations of various types of partnership contracts and the specific kinship structures prevalent among the Western Sephardim in Livorno. That there were links between family and business was hardly peculiar to this group. In fact, this nexus has long been a classic subject of European economic and social history, and it has recently benefited from renewed interest.² But as generations of anthropologists have taught, *family* meant different things not only across time and space but also in various communities that lived side by side. Catholic and Sephardic kinship systems in Livorno were sufficiently different that they had an impact on business organization. I widen my perspective on the partnership of Ergas and Silvera to include the marriage contracts of several of their peers in order to assess the ways in which unique marriage arrangements influenced the structure of Sephardic partnerships.

Many economic historians highlight the incredible organizational diversity of early modern European commerce and question conventional accounts of the transition from family partnerships to chartered joint-stock companies and, eventually, multinational corporations. Little has been written, however, about the way particular kinship structures may help us understand the organization of trading diasporas. This chapter shows how Sephardic merchants in Livorno maintained customs that for the most part had been disused in Italy since the late Middle Ages—namely, consanguineous marriages and betrothal gifts—and how these customs helped them solidify their family partnerships and overcome some of the detrimental effects of their marginal position in Catholic society. It also begins to elucidate the way a business model that revolved around a core of immediate relatives extended itself well beyond this circle to become a vehicle of cross-cultural trade. In so doing, in this and the following chapters I begin to tackle directly the central question of this study, namely, how Sephardic merchants secured the cooperation of relatives, coreligionists, and strangers for the purpose of expanding their trading networks.

MARRIAGE, DOWRY, AND MERCHANTS’ CAPITAL

Kinship structures in the Western Sephardic diaspora differed significantly from those of the Christian population in early modern Europe. Whereas canon

law and Protestant ecclesiastical law prohibited marriage within the fourth and the third degree of consanguinity, respectively (and rarely granted dispensation), consanguineous marriage was the norm among Sephardim.³ In a summa of precepts compiled for the New Christians who were joining the Sephardic congregation in Amsterdam, Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel stated that he regarded marriages between cousins and between uncles and nieces as the most preferable.⁴ His recommendation soon clashed with the prohibition of marriages between cousins and nieces issued by the Estates of Holland in 1656 and again in 1712 (although the reiteration of the ban suggests that many disregarded it). In early modern Italy, in contrast, there were no legal obstacles of this sort because Jewish law prevailed in matters of marriage.⁵ Unions between uncles and nieces and between parallel first cousins were so frequent among the Sephardim of Venice and Livorno that those who wished to avoid them had to leave special instructions for their progeny. Thus, for reasons he did not disclose, in 1640 Abraham Camis alias Lopo de Fonseca threatened to disinherit his son if he married his cousins.⁶ Nonetheless, because Jewish endogamy did not have geographical limitations, it constituted the single most important factor in shaping alliances within this diaspora.

Differences in marriage customs for Christians and Jews went hand in hand with different systems of inheritance and dowry. Whereas primogeniture prevailed across southern Europe, including Tuscany and Venice (and among the upper classes throughout Europe), after the sixteenth century, Jewish families customarily divided their estates equally among all sons and required that sons live on and manage their father's estate together.⁷ The latter provision curbed the risk that partible inheritance would lead to the division of family assets into smaller fractions in each generation. In 1752, for example, Solomon Aghib reminded his three sons that the family patrimony would be ruined if they parted ways and implored them to remain united, at the very least until the youngest of them reached the age of thirty.⁸ Testaments allowed for occasional changes to this practice (such as the favoring of one brother over another where commercial talent was unevenly distributed) when tradition threatened to supersede economic efficiency. After the late seventeenth century some Sephardic merchants also created fideicommissa for part of their assets.⁹ Most often, however, brothers inherited and administered the estate, especially commercial capital, jointly, which explains their preference for general partnerships.

Dowry was another institution that was inseparable from marriage and inheritance. Again we find that Jewish and Christian systems differed markedly, with consequences for the role of women in the formation and transmission of merchant capital. In the Christian marriage system, with the elimination of

the groom's contribution (the dower) after the late Middle Ages, the exchange of assets at the time of marriage comprised almost exclusively a dowry paid by the bride's family to the groom. Patrilineal patterns of inheritance excluded daughters from any claims on their family's estate apart from their dowry, and the dowry was to be returned to the bride's family at the husband's death or in the event of his insolvency.¹⁰ With the exponential inflation of women's dowries in early modern Italy and the progressive retreat of the upper classes from active commerce, moreover, fathers and brothers increasingly paid their daughters' and sisters' dowries in the form of real estate rather than movable assets—a phenomenon that was far less pronounced among Livornese Jews.

According to Jewish law and custom, marriage contracts comprised two main payments—a dowry (*nedynya*) and a dower (*tosefet*)—and a small sum (*mohar*) that varied depending on whether the bride was a virgin or not (widows and divorced women did not receive the mohar).¹¹ Among the Sephardim of Europe, including those of Livorno, the *tosefet* paid by the groom's family normally amounted to 50 percent of the *nedynya*. The two sums were merged to form the totality of the assets managed by the husband.¹² If a woman died before her husband, both the dowry and the dower passed to him. At the husband's death or bankruptcy his widow was entitled to the restitution of the dowry paid by her family as well as the entire 50 percent supplement (or at least half of it if she was childless).¹³ This provision was extremely significant for the preservation of commercial capital because, as we will see in Chapter 10, dowries were shielded from creditors' claims at the time of a partnership's bankruptcy. This provision applied equally to Christian and Jewish merchants. What made it particularly effective for Sephardim was the combined effect of endogamy and large dowries (both dower and dowry were shielded from creditors' claims).

Another custom minimized the risk that large dowries would jeopardize the integrity of family patrimonies. Western Sephardim in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries continued to abide by the Jewish law's prescription of levirate marriage, according to which a childless widow had to marry her deceased husband's oldest brother (provided that he was older than the deceased) and a widower had to marry his late wife's sister. In practice, many of the most well-to-do Sephardim sought to conform to the traditional monogamy of Catholic society. Doing so gave them a greater chance of being respected by the local social and commercial elite. The marriage contracts (*kettubot*) of wealthy Sephardic families from Venice and Livorno sometimes included a clause prohibiting the groom from taking a second spouse at any future time. Sarah Baruch Carvaglio made this demand when her cousins paid the unparalleled dowry of seventeen thousand ducats to her future husband Moses Attias in 1667.¹⁴ The same pre-

scription was recorded when Rebecca Francia married Moses Alvares Vega in 1721. Seven years later, Moses violated it. The massari forced him to divorce Rebecca in partial fulfillment of the nuptial agreement, and a belated halizah ceremony was performed.¹⁵

The performance of a halizah ceremony (or drafting a document called *setar halizah*) was one of the two traditional ways of avoiding levirate marriage. The obligation to perform halizah was serious. In 1754, for example, a widow traveled from Amsterdam across the Atlantic to meet her brother-in-law in order to fulfill this precept.¹⁶ Levirate marriage was not required if the deceased husband had previously divorced his wife. This is why in November 1746, on the brink of death, Moses Ergas divorced his wife Rachel.¹⁷

No available source allows us to measure the frequency of levirate marriages in Livorno, but they must have been sufficiently widespread to alert community leaders, who were concerned about Catholic disapproval of bigamy. In 1671 the Jewish nation prohibited men from marrying a second wife without depositing their first wife's dowry in the nation's coffers—a rule that likely was aimed at discouraging levirate marriages among wealthy merchants.¹⁸ But bigamy did not disappear. When one Solomon Gallico (an Italian Jew) took Miriam Pegna (a Sephardic woman) as his second wife in 1753, two arbiters determined that his first wife, Sarah Vigevano (an Italian Jewess), was required to live with them.¹⁹

These specific practices—large dowries resulting from the 50 percent supplement combined with consanguineous marriages and, on occasion, levirate unions—helped Sephardim solve the two most pressing problems facing all private merchants at the time: how to raise liquid capital and how to ensure its transfer to succeeding generations. Though allowed to invest in real estate, Livornese Sephardim kept most of their investments in movable assets. Unlike their Christian peers, they continued to endow their daughters with dowries consisting for the most part of cash. Profits from trade could thus be passed from one branch of a family to another via marriage, but endogamy and the custom of levirate marriage assured that the funds never went too far.

Surviving records suggest that dowries provided the most consistent influx of capital that Ergas and Silvera received on one-time occasions. As was customary, dowries and dowers were merged and registered in the partnership's account books.²⁰ When Lazzaro and Rebecca Recanati exchanged vows in 1750, they also swore before a Christian notary that both the dowry and dower would be registered in the Recanati partnership's ledgers as a total of six thousand pieces.²¹ A transfer of assets in the amount of six thousand pieces appears to define the boundary between the wealthiest and the middle ranks of Livornese Jews.²² As table 5.1 shows, grooms and brides of the Ergas and Silvera families paid one another sums totaling between forty-five hundred and seventy-five hundred pieces

Table 5.1. Transfers of assets at the marriages of Ergas and Silvera's partners

Date of marriage	Bride	Groom	Dowry	Dower	Total ¹	Nondotal assets ²
1705, 1 April	Blanca, daughter of David del Rio	Moses, son of Abraham Ergas	5,000 ³	2,500	7,500	1,000
1705, 3 June	Esther, daughter of Abraham Ergas	David, son of Isaac Silvera	2,500 (cash) + 500 (trousseau)	1,500	4,500	
1730, 23 August	Esther Rodrigues da Silva	Abraham, son of Moses Ergas	4,000	2,000	6,000	
1735, 24 August	Blanca Rebecca Baruch Carvaglio	David, son of Moses Ergas	4,000 (cash) + 1,500 ducats in the Venice mint ⁴	2,750	6,750	500
1741, 22 February	Deborah, daughter of Moses Ergas	Isaac, son of David Silvera	4,200	2,100	6,300	
Total					31,050	32,550

Source: ASL, CGA: *Atti civili spezzati*, filza 2245, no. 953.

¹Excluded from these totals are the 200 coins of unspecified currency given as a reward for the bride's virginity ("200 monete, prezzo regolato dalla legge o sia uso ebraico per la verginità"). See Chap. 5, n. 11. Amounts are stated in pieces of eight.

²In 1705 the trousseau (or *paraphernalia*) was accounted aside from the dowry. In 1735 it was included. This difference reflects the uncertain legal status of these goods: sometimes they were included in the dowry, sometimes they were not. On the way nondotal assets increasingly came under the husband's control in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Florence, see Kirshner 1991. In Venice, by the early fifteenth century, the trousseau (unlike the dowry) was not to be given back to the wife or her heirs at the dissolution of the marriage and had to be equal to one-third of the dowry sum (Chojnacki 2000: 76–94).

³This kettubah specifies that the dowry was paid in cash to the Ergas and Silvera partnership.

⁴Ergas and Silvera was the recipient of the 3% yearly interest paid by the Venice mint on the 1,500 ducats.

of eight. Two other couples related to these families married with a dowry of four thousand pieces and a dower of two thousand pieces.²³ Dowries are good, if not exact, proxies for family wealth. We should not be surprised, therefore, that David Silvera contributed more expertise than capital to Ergas and Silvera. These were no small sums. In 1654 a seigneurial mansion and a twelve-room house in the most prestigious part of town sold for 4,500 scudi and 1,505 scudi, respectively (about 5,250 and 1,755 pieces of eight, respectively). A century later, around 1746, it was possible to sublet a corner house on the city's main square for 210 pieces per year.²⁴

Very few marriages among Sephardim involved a transfer of assets of more than six thousand pieces. Some Ergases in Livorno were among those whose marriage contracts involved unusually high sums.²⁵ Esther Ergas, Jacob's daughter, brought a dowry of ten thousand pieces in 1715 to Daniel Medina, who contributed another five thousand pieces before the couple resettled in Amsterdam.²⁶ Ten thousand pieces was the value of a five-story house in Via Serristori that some of the Ergases owned in 1745.²⁷ Such a sizeable transfer had been more frequent in the first two generations of Iberian refugees coming to Venice in the previous century. In Venice, a dower of 50 percent was also the norm among New Christians and Sephardim, and in the seventeenth century their dowries competed with and sometimes surpassed the most substantial ones exchanged by local patricians and other well-to-do families.²⁸ Owner of a thriving Jewish business in Venice in the second quarter of the seventeenth century, Joseph Franco d'Almeida gave one of his daughters a dowry of 5,500 ducats and the other 12,000 ducats in cash; he also bequeathed his only surviving son capital of about 25,000 ducats.²⁹

After settling in Venice in the mid-seventeenth century, the Baruch Carvaglios used marriages to link themselves to families that were active in trade there and in Livorno. When Moses and Isaac's partnership was enjoying high profits, they offered the astronomical dowry mentioned above for their niece Sarah to marry Moses Attias in Livorno. Attias paid his fifty percent portion, and the dowry and dower combined amounted to 22,500 Venetian ducats.³⁰ Two generations later, less prosperous but having regained some of their fortune after moving to Livorno, the Carvaglios intermarried with two families with ties to Venice: the Belilios and the Bonfils. These matrimonies were sealed with dowries ranging between 4,600 and 7,000 ducats.³¹ Later in the eighteenth century, when the Carvaglios flourished once again, Esther Belilios moved from Venice to Pisa to join her fiancée in 1767; 10,000 pieces of eight (including the 50 percent owed by the groom and two hundred silver coins) were transferred into the Baruch Carvaglios' account books. The groom's family inserted stipulations in the mar-

riage contract to protect its investment. If Abraham repudiated Esther unjustly, she would be entitled to inherit the whole amount; in all other circumstances, the entire sum (less the two hundred silver coins) would be returned to Abraham or his heirs.³² This provision broke with the custom that entitled a widow to receive both the dowry and the 50 percent supplement. One Isaac Saccuto abided by it in his last will of 1762 though he had to relinquish as much as 10,020 pieces to his wife Grazia Baruch Carvaglio.³³

KINSHIP, CONTRACTS, AND NETWORKS

Unlike marriage contracts, partnership agreements are very rarely found among the archival documents concerning Livornese Jewry. And yet marriage and business were inextricably linked. Among the extensive records of the Tuscan branch of Ergas and Silvera no copy of a contract documenting the establishment of this partnership; its capital investment, or the ways in which partners were to share profits and liability has surfaced. And it is unlikely that such a contract ever existed because it is never mentioned in subsequent notary deeds, testaments, or court proceedings. The absence of either a private or a notarized agreement specifying the length and terms of the association between Moses Ergas and David Silvera was the norm rather an exception among Sephardic merchants in Livorno. Roman law, Jewish law, and mercantile customs all recognized the validity of verbal agreements for establishing a general partnership.³⁴ The few partnership agreements that survive are signed by Sephardim who were not related by blood or affinity ties and yet sought to set up a fixed-term association or by family members who created a fund to invest in temporary or task-specific ventures. Jacob Ergas, for example, represented a partnership in London that he and his brother Moses constituted in 1705 by setting aside a portion of their jointly owned and managed capital. They did so by asking a notary to ratify a private agreement written in Portuguese that they and two witnesses had signed. The agreement spelled out the terms according to which a company named Jacob Son of Raphael Ergas was to be founded in London separately from the joint family business that operated in Livorno as Raphael and Moses Ergas and, after 1709, as Moses Ergas and Sons.³⁵

The majority of their cohort operated what today are called general partnerships on the basis of implicit contracts. Sephardim elsewhere appear to have adopted the same business model. The successful New Christian banker Gabriel de Silva (c. 1683–1763) of Bordeaux, for example, never drew up a formal contract with which to establish his family business.³⁶ In Genoa, too, Jewish merchants signed contracts concerning temporary commercial associations with

limited liability instead of using notaries to establish their family businesses.³⁷ Although further research is necessary, it would appear that Dutch Sephardim also did not use a notary when stipulating partnership contracts with their own kin, although they constantly undersigned a whole variety of notary deeds for freight contracts, marine insurance, powers of attorney, short-term credit agreements, certifications to be used in future litigation, and other types of transactions.³⁸

As substitutes for partnership contracts, marriages permitted businesses to enlist new partners and raise new capital in the form of dowries. These general partnerships did not distinguish between household and business accounting, a practice that Max Weber identified as key to capitalism in its "*uniquely Occidental*" form.³⁹ Instead, Sephardic merchants, as we have seen, incorporated dowries into their companies' capital. Moreover, Ergas and Silvera did not manage a separate fund to which partners and external investors contributed money in addition to the partnership's capital assets and for which each received commensurable shares.⁴⁰ Finally, individual members of the firm of Ergas and Silvera did not run their own business separate from the joint one, as Christian partnerships routinely did at the time. A trusted agent of Ergas and Silvera in Lisbon, the Florentine nobleman Paolo Girolamo Medici, for example, had both a partnership of his own and one with Enea Beroardi and Luigi Niccolini. In 1737–39, he explicitly ordered his suppliers in Brazil to distinguish between shipments charged to his personal account from those for which he was liable along with his two partners.⁴¹

The seemingly backward choice of relying on implicit agreements did not endanger the partners' commitments because marriage alliances were more lasting than commercial ones. In addition, the absence of a formalized contract did not make a partnership any less real or less liable toward third parties. According to universally accepted mercantile convention, the use of a corporate name, in this case Ergas and Silvera, in business letters, account books, bills of lading, and other such records was sufficient evidence of a partnership's existence and recognition of its collective liability before commercial and civil tribunals. As a result, one partner could appear alone before a notary or sign a letter in the name of other partners.⁴² In the terminology of the time, all partners were *socii in solidum* and *ad infinitum*. Following this Roman law institution, each partner was liable for the total amount of any debts incurred by another associate or contracted in the company's name. This full and mutual obligation was occasionally spelled out in business letters, as when the Livorno branch of Ergas and Silvera acknowledged itself accountable "en solidum per dhos nostros/de Aleppo" to someone new to the city.⁴³

Bound in *solidum* to their relatives in Aleppo ("i nostri d'Aleppo" or "nostros Ergas e Silvera de Aleppo," as they called them in their letters), Ergas and Sil-

vera in Livorno could make promises and give orders on their behalf.⁴⁴ Mutual agency was particularly appealing to agents and clients who traded between the northwestern and southeastern shores of the Mediterranean. In 1704 the Livorno branch of Ergas and Silvera informed correspondents in Cyprus that they were familiar with Aleppo and operated a trading company there ("perché siamo di casa").⁴⁵ Four years later they promised a customer in Venice that their relatives in Aleppo would serve him with punctuality and experience. In order to persuade customers and creditors that it was safe to deal with a bilateral partnership, it was necessary to give them evidence that all promises would be honored by either branch.⁴⁶

At times, creditors' confidence in these bilateral partnerships was shaken. In 1756 Abraham Pardo Roques brought a lawsuit against a debtor, Isaac Abendana, before the judges of the Jewish community of Livorno. Pardo Roques claimed that Abendana owed him 625 pieces of eight because Abendana had endorsed a bill of exchange that the Belilios of Venice had drawn on his account. Prevailing rules about the negotiability of bills of exchange made Abendana liable for that sum, but he now denied that he had any obligation to pay it because in the previous year the Belilios of Aleppo had gone bankrupt. Pardo Roques presented the court with excerpts from business letters that he received from the Belilios as well as a declaration signed by ten Livornese merchants in support of his claim that the two Belilios partnerships—Jacob and Joseph Belilios of Venice and Isaac and Joseph Belilios of Aleppo—were actually one or at least were jointly liable. But the massari rejected this proof and ruled against Pardo Roques, arguing that, although they were close relatives, the Belilios of Aleppo and those in Venice constituted two separate partnerships because they operated with two different company names (*ragioni sociali*).⁴⁷ The head judge was Isaac Baruch Carvaglio, who undoubtedly was familiar with the risks of joint liability. It is not known whether the same reasoning was upheld in similar lawsuits adjudicated by civil and Jewish courts in Livorno. It is known, however, that Venetian public magistrates endorsed the opposite interpretation and argued that, because the Belilios were liable for their relatives in Aleppo, their goods ought to be seized, too.⁴⁸ The Jewish authorities in Livorno either chose to ignore this ruling or were not aware of it. In any case, this controversy indicates that creditors of general and bilateral partnerships continued to be exposed to some uncertainty. The Belilios cunningly used two different company names in order to limit their liability should one partner make poor business decisions. Others took the same precaution. Moses Medina ran a partnership in Livorno named Moses and Samuel Medina, one in Aleppo known as Medina e Chaves or Medina e Fano, and one in London called Moses Hayyim Medina.⁴⁹

The high degree of independence that each branch of these Sephardic

partnerships enjoyed was not without risks for their associates, but it also gave them significant advantages over their European competitors in the Levant. Because it took about a month, if not more, for goods and news to travel between Livorno and Aleppo, and because different types of expertise were required to handle commodity trading in the two cities, the autonomy of each branch meant greater rapidity and, in the best cases, greater accuracy in the decision-making process. English traders in the Levant could count on high demand for their broadcloth. And yet their overseas agents were not always in a position to avail themselves of this market advantage. As the correspondence of the Radcliffe Company of London from the 1730s to the 1760s testifies, for example, the agent of their subsidiary branch in Aleppo needed written permission from London in order to make a purchase, and he was thus limited in his ability to seize short-term opportunities.⁵⁰ As a rule, French merchants (*régisseurs*) posted in the Ottoman Empire also depended on the orders of their principals in Marseilles, although they took some leeway for themselves.⁵¹

The general partnership was not the prevalent model of commercial association in early modern Europe and the Mediterranean. In fact, after the sixteenth century there was a move toward limited partnerships across Europe.⁵² Sephardic merchants, too, could have chosen to adopt various types of associations that entailed limited liability, but few did. Particularly common among Christian merchants in Tuscany were *accomandita* (pl. *accomandite*) and *compagnia* (pl. *compagnie*) contracts. The former was a more sophisticated version of the bilateral *commenda* of medieval times. Accomandite always included a clause limiting responsibility for each investor and normally established that profits be shared in proportion to the monetary and work contributions of each party. They usually had an initial duration of three or four years, although they could be renewed.⁵³ These contracts became tools with which Tuscan merchants raised capital among aristocrats as well as investors from a broader social spectrum who shunned direct involvement in distasteful commercial ventures or wanted to diversify.⁵⁴ Several wealthy Florentines, including some noblemen, subsidized the partnership of Paolo Girolamo Medici and Enea Beroardi in Lisbon through accomandite, for example.⁵⁵

Although no legal prescription forbade Tuscan Jews from adopting these types of associations, few did.⁵⁶ Mostly Jews of Italian origin, they used accomandite to run shops or small trades in Florence, Pisa, Arezzo, or Monte San Savino. Jewish merchants based in Livorno and involved in long-distance trade rarely resorted to this stipulations. The few who signed such contracts were normally not related by kinship. In 1717 Jacob Ergas protected his investment of twenty thousand pieces of eight in a partnership with his sons Samuel, David, and Raphael

by signing an accomandita with them. His choice was anomalous, but Jacob must have detected an inclination to litigiousness among sons, who, after his death two years later, began to fight in court over his estate.⁵⁷ An agreement ("*compagnia di negozio in terzo*") signed in 1733 by two brothers and one of their nephews for a commercial partnership was also anomalous insofar as it consisted of a notarized contract that resembled closely an accomandita. Each party contributed one-third of the capital (mostly from dowries), each was entitled to one-third of the profits, and each assumed liability for one-third of the company's debt. The duration of the partnership was set at the unusually long period of twenty years.⁵⁸ Note that the frequency with which Jews sealed accomandite increased in the second half of the eighteenth century, and in the 1770s in particular, when the Sephardic hegemony in the Jewish community of Livorno was waning and marriage alliances likely became less endogamous because of the need to build ties to new Italian and North African families. Eventually, accomandite between Jews and Christians began to appear in the 1770s, but they remained rare.⁵⁹ This fact must be attributed to social and cultural norms. The situation was apparently different in Amsterdam and London, but we still know too little to offer a more systematic comparison.⁶⁰

In Venice, too, most Sephardic merchants ran unlimited family partnerships. There they could draw up a local type of contract called *fraterna* that provided for joint liability among brothers. Special arrangements were only needed when brothers wanted to split unevenly the burden of running a family partnership. Thus, for example, at their father's death in 1642, Solomon and Joseph Franco de Almeida (also called António and Simon Mendes) agreed before a notary to run a *fraterna* to which they contributed 60 and 40 percent, respectively. Their business fared well, and in 1672 Solomon made bequests to his sons for a total of thirty thousand Venetian ducats; this sum was deposited in the public debt.⁶¹

Less common among the business forms adopted by the Livorno and Venice Jews was a contract known as the *compagnia*.⁶² This was a more stable type of association than the accomandita that appeared in the fourteenth century. After a series of failures of Florentine international banks in the 1340s, the *compagnia* emerged as a new business form that linked together multiple autonomous entities under the guidance of one person (as in the case of Francesco Datini, c. 1335–1410) or one family (as in the case of the Medici bank, 1397–1494). This organization has been compared to the modern holding company because it subsumed a network of interconnected branches (some directed by salaried employees and others by junior partners, with varying degrees of independence) under the main house's control. Even this modular organization, however, did not eliminate the risks stemming from the use of unreliable or inept representa-

tives. Eventually, fraudulent and incompetent branch managers weakened the Medici bank, for example.⁶³ The *compagnia*, nonetheless, struck a balance between centralization and limited liability, and so it was adopted by many influential sixteenth-century European merchants, including the Ruizes of Medina del Campo in Spain, the della Failles of Flanders, and the Fuggers and the Welzers of southern Germany.⁶⁴

Why did most of the Sephardim in Livorno choose to operate general partnerships when more secure and centralized business forms were readily available? Institutional and cultural inertia may have played a role, but positive incentives did, too. Their marriage customs and geographic dispersion allowed the Sephardim to deflect several of the weaknesses of general partnerships and exploit their advantages. *Accomandite* helped merchants raise capital but exposed them to investors' whims regarding whether to renew their contributions. *Commende* curtailed dramatically the risks of agency by more closely tying the interests of the traveling agent to those of the principal but were even more limited in time and focus. *Compagnie* had similar benefits and drawbacks, although they were perhaps the most effective of the three types of association. General partnerships entailed full mutual liability, but they also had considerable benefit. Their duration was unlimited and they provided the ability to delegate decisions to an overseas partner—two unbeatable advantages if the partner was capable and trustworthy. Anyone involved in long-distance trade had to weigh the pros and cons of these contracts and determine whether he could gain from general partnerships while also keeping dangers in check.

The Sephardim's geographical reach and their incorporation of social norms regarding marriage and dowry were compelling incentives and abiding guarantees for the fulfillment of the obligations implicit in joint unlimited partnerships. Other Jewish traders, such as those based in Ancona in the seventeenth century, held a more marginal position in the eastern Mediterranean and followed slightly different kinship arrangements. They did not normally pay a 50 percent supplement to their wives' dowries and had a lesser propensity to rely on implicit contracts for family partnerships, preferring to draft detailed private agreements that could later be cited in notary deeds whenever disputes or the need to renegotiate their terms arose.⁶⁵

The highly informal structure of Sephardic partnerships, in other words, was aided by abiding social norms and commanding spatial networks. The ample recourse to general partnership, in turn, did not inhibit Sephardic merchants from building opportunistic relations with non-kin and non-Jews. In fact, partnerships such as Ergas and Silvera attached a very flexible form of agency to a very traditional business model. In the British Atlantic, some family partnerships pros-

pered by controlling the entire range of activities associated with the purchase and sale of specific goods between the colonies and the motherland, drawing on the labor only of partners and salaried employees. But the Sephardim of Livorno thrived as nonspecialized merchants; they sometimes operated in markets where Jews were not dominant or from which they were personally barred from residing. They therefore fared better when they could develop cooperative agency relations with merchants who were neither kin nor direct employees and thus expand their operations.

In Ergas and Silvera's commercial networks we can identify three groups of agents and correspondents. The first group was comprised of Ergas and Silvera's partners, who were also immediate kin. The size of this group expanded and dwindled according to family life cycles (birth, marriage, and death) and to migration. Partners in Aleppo and Livorno worked for one another as resident merchants but did not remunerate one another for their services, and profits and losses were distributed evenly. Following the anthropologist Marshall Sahlins, the relationship among partners can be described as one of "generalized reciprocity" because it was based on mutual liability for which there were no limits in time, quantity or quality.⁶⁶ Barely two years into its existence, in 1706, Ergas and Silvera in Livorno could ask French suppliers in Cyprus to send them a shipment of wool and charge the costs to their relatives in Aleppo, with whom the French merchants had more frequent interactions because of geographical proximity.⁶⁷

Members of the Portuguese nation, which included relatives as well as other Western Sephardim, formed a second group of agents and correspondents to whom Ergas and Silvera appealed on a regular basis. In return for their services, these agents and correspondents received a percentage commission that varied depending on the type of transaction and the location (usually between 0.5 and 2 percent for local brokerage and more for more complex transactions). Ergas and Silvera expected their most immediate coreligionists to assist them over time and occasionally help them free of charge. Again, with Sahlins, we can argue that relations with fellow Western Sephardim were governed by "balanced reciprocity," because each transaction presumed returns of commensurate worth and utility within a finite period, but asymmetric exchanges were tolerated over a short period of time.⁶⁸

The same type of expectations dictated relationships with a third group of Ergas and Silvera's correspondents: merchants who did not belong to the Portuguese nation, whether Jews or non-Jews. Frequency of interaction rather than ethnoreligious affiliation determined the threats and incentives that were deemed most appropriate to ensure a contract's fulfillment, but intense infor-

mation exchanges and fear of seeing one's reputation damaged were, all in all, more effective deterrents than the possibility of being called before a tribunal. As I show in the following chapters, Ergas and Silvera developed robust agency relations with Christian merchants in Lisbon and Hindu agents in Portuguese India with whom they shared neither blood nor communitarian ties and with whom legal threats against malfeasance had little credibility. Contrary to common assumptions according to which strangers require the mediation of a centralized legal system in order to trade together, I suggest that calculative attitudes, shared customary norms regarding business contracts, and multilateral reputation control generated regularities of behavior sufficient to allow for cross-cultural trade as well.

The classification of correspondents that I propose responds to the "anticategorical imperative" of social network analysis, which places patterns of interrelationships and strategic interaction before intrinsic attributes of identity. Contrary to what one might expect, this approach is invoked metaphorically more than it is tested analytically and empirically in the history of early modern trade.⁶⁹ I use it as an analytical tool (rather than a mathematical measure) in order to demonstrate its fruitfulness for the study of trust in cross-cultural economic exchange. Social network analysis permits us to understand cooperation in business as the result of a calculative evaluation of an agent's proficiency and trustworthiness rather than a perceived sense of his sameness. It presumes that networks are dynamic and context-specific rather than coterminous with legal and social groups. When applied to old regime Europe, however, the "anticategorical imperative" that animates social networks analysis ought to acknowledge the corporate divisions and power relations that encroached on economic and social interaction.⁷⁰ There was no legal prohibition in Livorno, for example, against the formation of general partnerships between Jews and non-Jews, but the absence of Jewish-Christian intermarriage and the social distance built into communitarian cosmopolitanism made them nearly inconceivable. Conversely, when Jews and non-Jews developed commercial relations largely based on trust, they did not automatically embrace each other on the basis of all-encompassing mutual respect. As the political theorist Russell Hardin insists, trust does not necessarily imply that the parties involved have all the same interests and values; it can be a matter of degree.⁷¹

The relation between family and capitalism has long been a contentious issue among historians and other social scientists. In recent years some scholars have insisted on the persistence of family firms in European business organization in spite of the triumph of corporate capitalism.⁷² The specter of Max Weber, none-

theless, continues to loom large over these debates. "The market," wrote Weber, "is fundamentally alien to any type of fraternal relationship."⁷³ The depersonalization of market relations, according to the German sociologist, was a uniquely European phenomenon that had its origins in medieval Italian cities. Following in his footsteps, some scholars have found evidence that beginning in the early fifteenth century, family ties began to play a smaller role in the organization of the Tuscan *compagnie*, including the Medici bank, which allowed non-kin to buy shares in a family firm and separated ownership and management.⁷⁴ The economist Avner Greif has resurrected these arguments. For him, the rise of the nuclear family and non-kin, interest-based organizations distinguish medieval Europe from previous and contemporary civilizations. Thus in twelfth-century Genoa new types of legal contracts (notably bilateral *commende*) permitted non-kin to pool resources and maintain limited liability. Greif interprets the use of these contracts as evidence of "individualistic cultural beliefs," which departed from the "collectivist cultural beliefs" of Maghribi Jews and thus marked "a point of bifurcation in the histories of the Muslim and European worlds."⁷⁵

The shift from general to limited liability partnerships did not occur at the same time across regions, groups, and trades. Varying economic conditions and legal institutions shaped the pace and character of this transition. Different family structures, combined with specific dowry and inheritance systems, also had an impact on it. The unlimited partnership among brothers (the *fraterna*) remained the typical form of business association in Venice, especially among patricians who sought ways of maintaining the integrity of the family patrimony, until the community of heirs gave way to primogeniture as the standard inheritance practice during the sixteenth century.⁷⁶ Legal and social conditions account for the persistence of family partnerships in seventeenth-century Sweden.⁷⁷ In spite of the rise of new financial institutions, including the first European stock markets, kinship ties continued to play a major role in the management of long-distance trade and of other large private investments in Amsterdam and London. In Amsterdam, the investments of both kin and non-kin were normally regulated in writing and increasingly took the form of renewable, short-term limited liability associations. David Hancock finds that in the British Atlantic in the eighteenth century, the fastest-growing commercial zone at the time, "blood relation was one possible bond, but not the most important, when building a firm" but also that implicit and open-ended agreements, surprisingly, were more common than formal articles of partnership.⁷⁸

In our eagerness to trace long-term changes we should not obfuscate these variations and the plurality of business forms that coexisted in the early modern period. A line of inquiry that is at once historical and comparative is particularly

fertile for the study of stateless trading diasporas. Rather than simply reasserting the centrality of the family in translocal communities, it allows us to uncover specificities and continuities in the nexus between kinship structure and business organization.

Although fully aware of and entitled to seal *accomandite*, most Sephardim in Livorno worked on the basis of implicit contracts with blood kin and in-laws to form unlimited general partnerships. As legal scholars acknowledge, *accomandite* protected investors from imprudent or poor decisions made by partners but were ill suited to several trading and financial activities that required long-term and complex investments.⁷⁹ The matrimonial practices prevalent among Western Sephardim offset large portions of the risk that a general partnership entailed. Consanguineous marriages, the merging of dowry and dower, and levirate unions facilitated the preservation and transmission of commercial capital along patriarchal lines and linked the interests of in-laws. Mutual agency permitted family partnerships such as Ergas and Silvera to act promptly in a world in which slow communication could be lethal to striking a good bargain. Furthermore, that family partnerships enjoyed greater longevity than did *accomandite* made it possible for a general partnership to overcome short-term crises and strengthen its credit and reputation over time. At the same time, these advantages came with a high price: one dishonest or unskilled partner might, under some circumstances, bring down all the others.

Social rather than legal discrimination played a role in the Sephardim's choice of immediate business partners. The modern theory of the firm assumes that a firm's boundaries are chosen in order to provide the optimal allocation with respect to the parties involved in a transaction; it may, for example, be more convenient to subcontract in some areas and work in partnership in others.⁸⁰ Sephardic merchants did not have this freedom to choose. Social barriers discouraged them from forming partnerships with non-Jews and strongly encouraged them to rely on relatives and coreligionists. They were, however, free to build agency relations with anyone. Sephardic patriarchs were no innovators when it came to family matters. They reproduced social norms that happened to serve them well, for they could use their daughters to expand their networks as well as secure their commercial capital. Yet kinship structures that we readily label traditional did not necessarily restrict the undertakings of Sephardic merchants to a small pool of kin and coreligionists.

In a series of important empirical and theoretical studies, the sociologist Mark Granovetter has sought to demonstrate that "weak ties" (those among non-kin, among individuals who spend little time together and share few or no emotional entanglements) are more likely than are relationships between kin and good

friends ("strong ties") to supply new information and new opportunities.⁸¹ At the same time, sociologists correctly assume that weak ties are more costly and more difficult to monitor because strangers lack social and semiformal incentives to resist the temptation of renegeing on a promise when a competing opportunity for profit emerges. A broad spectrum of personal and social obligations ranging from very strong to very weak ties linked the recipients of Ergas and Silvera's letters. I examine how these obligations worked in different geographical contexts, what supplementary measures tribunals offered when available, and how rhetorical conventions facilitated the communication of credible incentives and threats.

But first I need to place Sephardic partnerships in comparative perspective. Not every diaspora was equally well equipped to mobilize kinship and communitarian organization in order to tame the uncertainties deriving from weak ties. The geographical breadth and the stability that the Western Sephardic diaspora achieved in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries generated effective channels of authority and social control that also empowered its members in their dealings with strangers. Other branches of the Jewish diaspora could not count on the same geographical dispersion or interconnectedness. The business organization of the Costantini brothers (Venetian-Cretan Jews who operated in Crete in the 1630s and migrated to Venice and Ancona in 1649 after the outbreak of the Ottoman-Venetian war for the control of the Greek island) differed in part from that of the Sephardim of Livorno. The Costantini pooled their capital but retained individual responsibility in the partnership. In order to conduct their overseas activities they hired commissioners who had contracts of perpetual mutual agency.⁸² Overall, they proved less able to expand into new markets than were Ergas and Silvera. The geographical range of their operations was confined primarily to the Adriatic and the eastern Mediterranean. Their agents were almost exclusively coreligionists and normally were hired for short-term tasks.⁸³ This modular organization allowed the Costantini to respond quickly to market variations but also had limitations. Ergas and Silvera's participation in a larger network of families whose members extended across the Mediterranean and the Atlantic put them in a better position when it came to dealing with outsiders. The scale and interconnectedness of a trading diaspora mattered a great deal to a firm's ability to ensure the dependability of weak ties.

A brief comparison between Sephardic and Armenian partnerships is yet more revealing. The family firm was at the heart of the commercial organization of Armenians who, after having been forcibly resettled in a neighborhood (New Julfa) of the Iranian capital, Isfahan, by Shah 'Abbās I in 1604–5, formed the most proactive branch of the Armenian diaspora in the seventeenth and eighteenth cen-

turies. Their family partnerships were quite similar to those of the Sephardim. They were often constituted by marriage and were not always ratified by written agreements. Whether the family patrimony was divided equally among all male and female siblings (as prescribed by customary laws) or inherited by the oldest surviving son, the wealthy commercial clans of New Julfa were pressured into living under the same roof. In these extended patriarchal families, brothers worked together in a state of full mutual responsibility after their father's death, hoping to preserve the family firm for succeeding generations. As did Ergas and Silvera, partners could thus trade on their own account or take up obligations on behalf of the family partnership at large.⁸⁴

Unlike Sephardim, however, Julfa Armenians relied on traveling agents more than on commission agents.⁸⁵ Traveling agents were normally selected from a pool of young men who lacked capital of their own and undertook long voyages financed by the commercial elite in New Julfa. A commenda contract stipulated the terms according to which the sedentary partner financed the goods transported and part of the expenses incurred by the traveling agent, who received a proportion of any profit in return for his services. A recent study has found that Iranian Armenian traveling agents were invariably chosen from a closed "coalition" of Julfa families (most belonging to the Armenian Church but some in the Catholic Church, too). This feature makes Julfans more similar to medieval Maghribi Jews than to their Sephardic contemporaries and rivals. Consistent with Greif's findings, available evidence suggests that the Julfa "coalition" was efficient in minimizing the risks of opportunism among its members but less than optimal in its ability to deal with outsiders.⁸⁶

Several factors account for the relative insularity of the business organizations of Iranian Armenians. Their networks were more centralized, with New Julfa functioning as the central node. Moreover, although the overall number of Iranian Armenians involved in long-distance trade, which according to a recent estimate was between one thousand and fifteen hundred, may have been comparable to the total number of Sephardic merchants, their communities in Europe were demographically smaller and consisted essentially of men.⁸⁷ In seventeenth-century Amsterdam, the number of Armenian men never exceeded a hundred at one time.⁸⁸ It is unlikely that there were ever that many in Venice.⁸⁹ Although the rise of Livorno attracted growing numbers of Armenian merchants, only a handful settled there on more than a temporary basis.⁹⁰ Armenian colonies were much larger in the Levant. An Armenian traveler passing by Aleppo in 1613 counted three hundred households of his people there and one hundred in Smyrna.⁹¹ But Ottoman Armenians were not as commercially active as were Safavid Armenians, just as Western Sephardim were more involved in

long-distance trade than were Ottoman Jews. Finally, Sephardim were incomparably more influential than Armenians in the Atlantic, where the latter traded only sporadically.⁹²

In order to oversee commende and other contracts sealed with relatives, couriers, and traveling merchants, Julfa Armenians formed a corporate governance body called the Assembly of Merchants, which was based in New Julfa and acted as their central clearing house. The Assembly of Merchants acted with the ample administrative and jurisdictional power conferred on it by the Safavid rulers to deter malfeasance, although punishment came mostly in the form of reputational sanctions. To members of the Julfa coalition, the assembly and its representatives in the diaspora who worked as judges of "portable courts" offered an effective, well-coordinated, semiformal institution for arbitration. Surviving documentation, however, indicates that these corporate bodies did not monitor dealings between Julfans and Ottoman Armenians (or any other strangers, for that matter). Indeed, business letters written by Julfa Armenians do not include grants of power of attorney or of commission agency to those outside their coalition.⁹³

In truth, little is known about business relations between Armenians and non-Armenians. Scattered evidence indicates that time and again Armenians entered into agreements with Hindus and Muslims, as well as with other Christians, but usually on a temporary basis and for the collection of short-term credit.⁹⁴ Ergas and Silvera dealt in commodities with Armenians in Livorno and traded on their behalf overseas on a few occasions, but, all told, they had limited interactions with Armenians.⁹⁵ Abraham and Jacob Franco in London shipped coral and diamonds to and from Madras on account of David Sceriman, likely the wealthiest Armenian in Livorno, in the 1740s.⁹⁶ The notarial archives of Amsterdam contain numerous deeds showing that Armenians sold Persian silk to Dutch merchants and bought local textiles from them; some even used bottomry loans (mixtures of bills of exchange and insurance policies) to transfer goods and credit between Moscow and the Netherlands.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, it remains unclear whether and how often common commission agency developed between Armenians and non-Armenians, and if it did, how the parties involved protected themselves from opportunism.

Overall, Western Sephardim and Julfa Armenians relied amply on family and communitarian organizations in their commercial endeavors but also adopted different contractual forms (with a preference for family firms and commende among Armenians and for a combination of general partnerships and commission agency among Sephardim). They also developed distinctive governance institutions. Sephardim were prevented from acquiring a centralized overseeing

institution analogous to the Assembly of Merchants in Isfahan. They lived in different sovereign territories, and each community negotiated the forms and reach of its jurisdictional autonomy with local political authorities. At the same time, intense communication between large communities and the habit of contracting marriage alliances with families overseas ensured that distinctive networks of cooperation developed within the Sephardic diaspora and opened multilateral channels of reputational control. Finally, the comparison between Armenians and Sephardim is intriguing because it shows that Sephardim were more fully engaged in cross-cultural trade as I define it in this book than were Armenians. The less formalized and less centralized Sephardic operations relied more on non-kin and strangers as commission agents than Armenian ones did.

That Julfa Armenians were more insular than Sephardim in their business dealings is also at odds with the fact that as Christians they enjoyed several advantages in Europe that were denied to Sephardim. Men from New Julfa, for example, normally married local women whom they left behind while they spent their youth on the road. Armenians in the diaspora (men and women), however, also married non-Armenian Christians in Europe, the Ottoman Empire, and India.⁹⁸ Inter-marriage accounts for the absorption of Armenians into local societies but also likely widened the circles of their business associates. In order to understand the relation between family and business organization in the case of Western Sephardim and Iranian Armenians, in sum, we need to consider not only the types of legal contracts that they used but also the subtle differences in their kinship systems and the way they adapted to shifts in geographic location, demographic consistency, and religious identity. Although the global reach of Iranian Armenians is impressive if we consider that they relied almost exclusively on traveling merchants, their spotty presence in European and Atlantic ports likely undermined their ability to engage in commission agency with strangers. Trading diasporas, in the end, could take many forms and follow different business models.

COMMISSION AGENCY, ECONOMIC INFORMATION, AND THE LEGAL AND SOCIAL FOUNDATIONS OF BUSINESS COOPERATION

Per quello ci dite di darli anticipato aviso, vi diremo, come ben sapete, chi negozia d'un punto all'altro non puol sapere quello gli puol occorere.

[With regard to your request for early information, we will say, as you know well, that those who trade from one distant place to the other never know what might happen to them.]

—Ergas and Silvera to Carlo Niccolò Zignago in Genoa, 1743

All merchants involved in long-distance trade, especially before modern means of transportation, communication, credit rating, and international arbitration came into existence, took great pains to make sure that their agents and correspondents overseas were both competent and reliable. As Ergas and Silvera wrote to another Sephardic merchant in Venice in 1732, what mattered to them most was to be able to rely on a trustworthy and diligent person (“persona de confianza y deligente”).¹ A commission agent was normally rewarded with a percentage of value of the transactions that he conducted on behalf of a third party and for which he assumed full legal responsibility, unlike a salaried employee who received fixed compensation to execute the orders of his employer and carried no liability for them. A reputable agent was one who seized the best available market opportunities for another merchant and served him loyally; he knew when and what to buy and sell, what ships to use in order to minimize the risks of war and piracy, and what exchange rates were most favorable at any given moment. Naturally, he had to repress the temptation to profit instantly from cheating, assuming that future commissions would yield more. A reputable agent was also the best insurance against protracted, costly, and often inconclusive litigation. Going to court was frowned on, as shown by an eminent scholar

of commercial law at the end of the seventeenth century who castigated merchants who, in his words, "abandon[ed] old-time simplicity merely to quibble in court."² It is not surprising that in their last wills, merchants often admonished their heirs to avoid tribunals and use private arbitrators whenever possible; sometimes, they underwrote private agreements prohibiting further legal recourse.³

Commission agency was a contract like no other: it was incomplete by definition and by the parties' choice. As a result, it was also the most difficult contract to uphold in court because of the ample autonomy that it bestowed on the agent. As two sociologists put it, a desirable commission agent delivered "hard-to-specify and hard-to-price resources."⁴ Although it was possible to give specific orders via powers of attorney registered with a notary, generalized agency, that is, the delegation of ample rights to make business decisions, was normally established solely through business correspondence. In many of their letters, merchants thus limited themselves to asking another independent merchant to act on their behalf to the best of his abilities. They would later choose to renew the commission agency or not on the basis of the yield from past transactions and on the experience related by others.

Economic historians have traditionally resorted to business letters to document changes in the velocity with which economic information could be transferred from place to place at different times or to detail specific advances in business techniques, such as the appearance of new partnership contracts or novel financial and insurance systems.⁵ Some scholars have relied on business correspondence to outline what used to be called "the psychology of merchants," that is, their more or less idealized and typified sociological traits as a group.⁶ More recently, economists and economic historians have returned to the study of merchants' letters, this time concentrating on the role of information in pre-modern markets. They are now less preoccupied with the technicalities of its transmission than with its functions in forming relationships, enforcing contracts, and minimizing the risks of being cheated.⁷ Most letters, after all, transmitted information about market conditions without ordering the completion of any specific transactions.⁸ Ergas and Silvera commonly sealed their letters by saying: "We hope that this information will serve you as the standard" ("che la notizia vi serva di regola"). On the basis of the stream of information they received about prices, product availability, exchange rates, and insurance premiums, as well as the political, military, and diplomatic events that affected trade, merchants made decisions about how, where, and when to invest. Business letters, moreover, included direct and indirect information about the solvency and credibility of specific agents. No printed material ever came to fulfill this crucial purpose in the early modern period.

Ergas and Silvera's letter books offer us the opportunity to analyze the workings of agency relations among diverse and discrete merchant communities in and beyond Europe. I compare their letters to contemporary manuscript and edited correspondence, including some letters written by one of their Catholic agents in Lisbon, Paolo Girolamo Medici.⁹ In addition, I draw from the business papers of two Hindu merchants in late eighteenth-century Goa, the brothers Venkatesh and Narayan Mhamai Kamat, who were likely descendents of the Kamats with whom Ergas and Silvera traded for more than three decades earlier in the century and who certainly belonged to the same caste and milieu.¹⁰

This chapter explores the role of information, social networks, and legal institutions in the governance of commission agency. It surveys the tools available to Livornese Sephardim as they screened their agents overseas both within and outside of their religious community. That is, it asks how and to what extent tribunals helped them implement their agency contracts, and how and to what extent social networks provided additional (and sometimes indispensable) instruments with which to choose and monitor commission agents. I pay particular attention to business correspondence, a crucial instrument of long-distance trade, and the functions that it performed in relation to printed material that also disseminated economic information.

TRUST, CONTRACTS, AND COURTS

How could a Sephardic merchant in Livorno trust an agent who was negotiating deals on his behalf in Lisbon, Hamburg, Aleppo, or Goa? Many scholars have long assumed that blood ties and membership in the same ethnoreligious community were effective guarantees against ill-intentioned agents. Considering the diversity of languages and customs that merchants had to master and the uncertainties that they faced, relatives and coreligionists were indeed fundamental resources, not so much because of their natural tendency to cooperate than because they shared a community of meanings and overlapping social ties (they intermarried, belonged to the same congregations, lived next door to one another or had many friends and acquaintances in common), which, taken together, raised expectations of rectitude. The diasporas that were most heavily involved in commerce had the added bonus of having kin and coreligionists spread over vast distances. As the authors of a compelling global history of trade maintain, "trade diasporas remained the most efficient way of organizing commerce across much of Afro-Eurasia until the nineteenth century."¹¹

Blood and community ties, however, gave no assurance of business proficiency. To begin with, family members could be inept. As David Hancock re-

marks in his study of English and Scottish merchants in the Atlantic trade in the eighteenth century, the chance that a less than capable son might take over a family firm is a good reason not to idealize the harmony and effectiveness of private trading networks.¹² Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert finds that Portuguese New Christians, Basques, and Huguenots responded to this perennial challenge by selecting nephews instead of sons to succeed them as leaders of the family business when nephews showed more talent.¹³ At times, deeply felt obligations toward a relative in economic distress could impose an unwelcome burden. More often, marriage alliances were crucial to the rise of merchant dynasties but alone do not account for their success. When, for example, David Gradis (c. 1665–1751), the head of a Sephardic family partnership in Bordeaux, sent one of his sons to Amsterdam in 1723, he instructed him to seek out the help of Joseph Peixotto, a Sephardic banker in the Dutch capital, and explicitly told him to avoid a maternal uncle there who had proved to be an unreliable business partner.¹⁴ Ergas and Silvera, too, when choosing their agents in Amsterdam and London, entrusted their most important businesses not to their kin but to the most proficient Sephardim.

A trading network composed only of relatives and coreligionists would be limited in its geographical scope and economic specialization. Even a global diaspora such as the one formed by Western Sephardic merchants could not count on the presence of coreligionists in every corner of the world, whether as a consequence of legal limitations or of migratory patterns. When another scion of the Gradis family relocated to the French Caribbean, the fragile position of Jews in the region made his ability to trade there dependent largely on his hiring and working in association with royal officials.¹⁵ In order to penetrate the diamond trade in the Portuguese Empire in Asia after the mid-seventeenth century, Ergas and Silvera could no longer rely on the descendants of the Silveras of Lisbon and sought instead to build strong business ties with Hindu traders.

The existence of these cross-cultural networks raises the question of what threats and what incentives governed agency relations between merchants who belonged to different communities and whose access to tribunals and institutional patronage varied greatly. Recent theoretical and historical approaches to this question offer few insights. Avner Greif admits that legal enforcement is particularly difficult “in transactions in which one party has wide latitude in choosing actions (e.g. in agency relationships).”¹⁶ He finds that no agency relations ever developed in the medieval Mediterranean between Maghribi merchants and the many Jews based in southern Italy, although there were no political or legal impediments to such contacts, which would have been commercially advantageous to all parties. Greif’s approach has the merit of demonstrating

that a shared religious identity was insufficient for monitoring business associates; rather, trust developed where channels of communication were numerous enough to permit the diffusion of information about a merchant’s conduct and the enforcement of collective boycotts against those who proved untrustworthy. Greif, however, laments the inefficiency of this system, which confined the range of action of this segment of the Jewish diaspora.¹⁷ In his interpretation, only limited liability contracts and new tribunals backed by the Genoese state starting in the thirteenth century broke the claustrophobia of the Maghribi “community responsibility system.”

Ergas and Silvera were not always in a position to threaten their agents with a lawsuit. And when they were, as when they dealt with Christian merchants in Venice, it would be wrong to assume that a legal threat was more credible or frightening than an economic or social sanction. In fact, legal adjudication could reinforce but did not automatically replace social control, multilateral reputational checks, and economic incentives.

In any case, the sole use of limited liability partnerships cannot be equated with the emergence of impersonal markets. Greif, and others before him, praise commende for introducing a division between labor and capital and for facilitating impersonal exchanges. But the evidence is mixed. Unlike Maghribi Jews and early modern Sephardim, Genoese merchants in the thirteenth century preferred commenda contracts to commission agency and signed some of these contracts with non-Genoese. Like medieval Genoese merchants, Iranian Armenians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries normally hired their traveling agents from among men of lower social and economic status and used commende to seize new opportunities overseas.¹⁸ As seen in the comparison of Sephardic and Armenian merchants, however, the use of commenda agents among the latter minimized the risks of commission agency but also limited the range of available correspondents. Finally, we think that the Assembly of Merchants that monitored agreements between sedentary and traveling Armenians punished fraudulent merchants by damaging their reputation. If this was the case, limited liability partnerships may not have involved individual legal responsibility in Greif’s sense of the term.

Greif’s approach, in sum, has its virtues and its limitations. Whereas it dispenses with culturalist explanations of trust as the by-product of group membership, it draws sweeping culturalist conclusions about “beliefs” from a decontextualized analysis of legal and economic contracts. Furthermore, Greif criticizes the new institutional economic history for paying only a formal tribute to the importance of “both informal constraints (sanctions, taboo, customs, traditions, and codes of conduct), and formal rules (constitutions, laws, property rights)” that

reduce uncertainty and secure property rights.¹⁹ But he, too, emphasizes the inefficiency of social regulatory systems such as the Maghribi coalition and praises the role of Genoese political institutions, although he never shows how these institutions intervened in disputes about property rights or agency relations. Greif suggests that the *lex mercatoria*, an ensemble of legal norms that constituted the shared belief of all merchants whatever their linguistic, ethnic, religious, and legal affiliations, worked as a self-enforcing institution.²⁰ This suggestion allows him to leave unexamined the practice of law in medieval Genoa.

There is no doubt that the customary norms concerning commerce and navigation which developed in medieval Europe and the Mediterranean enhanced the safety of commodity and financial transactions that took place among strangers. After the Rhodian Sea Law of seventh-century Byzantium, the most important medieval codification of the law merchant, the Consulate of the Sea, was first printed in Barcelona in 1494. Some Italian cities (including Genoa, Pisa, and Milan) issued rules concerning commercial disputes in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but it was in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that several continental European states reorganized the doctrine and institutions of the law merchant. New legislation and new tribunals simultaneously made it increasingly homogeneous in various states and more subject to localized processes of institution building.²¹ In 1647 a French lawyer published a translation of the customary norms concerning navigation and commerce that had been in use across northern Europe since the Middle Ages (including the rules of Orléon and Visby).²²

The *Ordonnances du Commerce* of 1673 soon eclipsed the fame of the 1647 work. Issued by Louis XIV, sponsored by Finance Minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert and largely written by Jacques Savary, the *Ordonnances* made up the first comprehensive legislative and administrative regulation of the law merchant emanated by a European state including the establishment of a new hierarchy of tribunals. These new tribunals, in France as elsewhere in continental Europe, continued to rule according to the summary procedure that distinguished commercial law from Roman law. They did not admit lawyers or other legally trained professionals, witnesses, appraisals, written evidence, and the like, and the sentences they passed (the only written records released by such courts) were based solely on the so-called nature of things, the patent truth according to shared notions of equity. These procedures promised fast, affordable, and equitable justice to merchants who often traveled from afar. In order to fulfill this promise, in principle merchants were forbidden from appealing sentences issued by an equity court to higher civil tribunals.

In Tuscany two courts ruled on the basis of the procedures and doctrine of the

law merchant: one in Florence (the Mercanzia) and one in Pisa (the Consoli del mare).²³ The latter was only a few miles from Livorno, but in order to spare merchants from traveling even a short distance, both the tribunal of the Jewish nation (the massari) and the highest municipal court (the Governatore e auditore) incorporated widely accepted customs of commercial law in their rulings.²⁴ In part because all sentences involving sums greater than two hundred lire passed by the governor's court were easily appealed, and in part because exceptions were made to the rule that forbade the appeal of sentences issued by a merchant court, almost any trial conducted in Livorno or Pisa could be appealed to higher tribunals in Florence. There, overlapping jurisdictions ensured that a lawsuit might drag on and that the proverbial virtues of the law merchant—speed and equity—could be weakened. Commercial disputes could be appealed to the regular appeal court in Florence, the Ruota, which ruled according to Roman law and the city's statutes but also incorporated authoritative sources of commercial law. They also could be appealed to the Consulta, a magistrate that heard disputes concerning a variety of matters, or to the Magistrato supremo, a direct emanation of the prince that ruled on the basis of equity.²⁵

The situation was hardly unique to Tuscany. Jurisdictional conflicts were ubiquitous in early modern Europe and its overseas empires, and occurred in towns and cities where specialized commercial courts were meant to expedite justice for local and foreign merchants.²⁶ Litigation could follow multiple paths. In fact, most litigation among merchants was due to unpaid credit and was resolved outside the judicial arena, either with private (written or verbal) agreements or with the help of specialized arbitrators who were recognized by the public authorities. Formal litigation was not only costly and lengthy; it also endangered the secrecy that businessmen always sought and sometimes cast a shadow over their reputation. Moreover, then as today, merchants could choose to accommodate their borrowers for fear of damaging a business relationship that they still perceived to be beneficial or in response to extralegal social pressure. If a lawsuit normally progressed from less to more formalized levels of adjudication, the opposite course or a circular trajectory was also possible. Suspicious of the amicable compromise reached several years earlier by his uncle with his creditors, for example, one Benjamin Sadich petitioned the Supreme Magistrate directly; dissatisfied with its verdict, he took his case to the massari; still unhappy, in 1718 he finally called on a notary to draft a new compromise.²⁷

In 1766 Antonio Botta Adorno, head of the Tuscan government, consulted the governor of Livorno about a request for an appeal he had received from a Jewish merchant from Tripoli, Libya, in a lawsuit against a coreligionist concerning a sale of brocades. The massari had already judged this matter. The governor

encouraged Botta to grant the appeal "because in Tuscany one sentence does not really settle a dispute, and therefore revisions and appeals are conceded as to allow convicts to add further motivations and pursue a second sentence with the appointment of new judges."²⁸ During the Regency (1737-65) the legal and juridical system continued to work as it had under the Medici grand dukes.²⁹ Peter Leopold now aimed at reforming the civil and criminal justice system, but he never succeeded in ending the sequence of appeals. Similar delays, in any case, were hardly peculiar to southern Europe. In his commercial treatise of 1622, Gerard Malynes lamented that "in the Chancery [the Court of Chancery in London] the suits may be prolonged for the life of a man, unless the Law-Merchant be better understood."³⁰

Surviving records from the civil tribunals of Livorno unfortunately do not allow us to conduct a statistical analysis of the types of litigation that were adjudicated, the actors' propensity to seek legal resolution to their disputes, or the magistrates' effectiveness in enforcing property rights and agency contracts. A survey of the civil suits in which one or more members of the Ergas families appeared before the governor's court between 1629 and 1799, however, reveals a clear pattern: the disputes concern inheritance cases, marine insurance contracts, title to real estate, bankruptcies, unpaid credit, settlement of accounts, and bills of exchange. Never do they concern an agency contract as such.³¹ The one role that legal institutions in Livorno played with regard to agency contracts was related to the certification of property rights in notarized powers of attorney. In this case, too, however, it is crucial to clarify the specific functions of each type of powers of attorney, the full and the task-specific.

As an example of the latter, when hiring a local notary to draft a grant of power of attorney to a Hindu trader in Goa, Ergas and Silvera knew that there would never come a day when they could use that deed to bring the Hindu merchant to court in the event that he did not fulfill their expectations in procuring the best deals. But they knew that if the power of attorney specified the transactions that Ergas and Silvera expected the Hindus to carry out, they might one day use the contract to certify their property rights. If the vessel on which their Hindu agent had placed the merchandise owed to Ergas and Silvera went astray, for example, they could more easily obtain payment from the insurers. In 1722-23, anxious about the fate of some diamonds shipped from Lisbon to Livorno, the partners asked their correspondents in Portugal to notarize the passage of a letter that referred to that shipment and to include the value of the merchandise in order to facilitate the search for the missing chest.³² In such instances, powers of attorney that appointed a third party to conduct one or more tasks could be used in court

to verify and enforce property rights in case of a dispute concerning insured cargo, to retrieve goods from a custom house, and so forth.

Full powers of attorney, in contrast, were used to appoint either a commission agent (an action that by this time was usually communicated via letter alone) or, more often, a legal representative (whether among relatives or not). In March 1748, for example, Joseph and Raphael Franco gave full power of attorney to their brothers Abraham and Jacob in London so that they could represent them there.³³ In analogous fashion, when Count Giacomo Sceriman passed by Livorno during his travels in 1717, he stopped at the office of a local notary to write up a generalized grant of power of attorney to his brother Pietro, who resided in Livorno. The document allowed Pietro to act as Giacomo's legal representative and even appoint new deputies.³⁴ A stranger, too, could be entrusted with full power of attorney. In 1710 David Sceriman chose a certain Ferdinando Minucci in Rome to cash out his shares in the local public debt.³⁵

From this distinction between full and task-specific powers of attorney it follows that the decision whether to draft these contracts had less to do with the identity of the actors involved and the degree of their familiarity than with the function of the contract and the goal that a merchant sought to accomplish. Moreover, task-specific powers of attorney did not substitute for agency relations established by correspondence. Their value lay not in their ability to enforce rectitude in agents by means of a legal threat but in their ability to document property rights.

Merchants used a variety of other legal contracts for the purpose of certifying their property rights. Business correspondence had probative value, as did bills of lading. By the early eighteenth century, the latter frequently were available as preprinted forms on which the name of the ship, the captain, and the list of goods registered under a merchant's name were filled out by hand. Privately signed agreements could also attest to the payment of all or parts of one's own debts, including dowry payments.³⁶ Notarized "protests" against dishonored bills of exchange were very common when a merchant could not or did not want to pay a bill. They performed the double function of damaging a debtor's reputation and protecting the beneficiary of a bill from inheriting another merchant's debts (whether the debts resulted from insolvency or from the choice of delaying payment). Finally, insurance policies were among the contracts most frequently appealed in court. Their adjudication was made difficult by the uncertainty that often surrounded knowledge about a ship's location or itinerary. In 1723, for instance, a sentence issued by the massari was appealed before the prince. The owners of a cargo en route from Amsterdam to Livorno that had been lost in a

shipwreck demanded compensation from Manuel Ergas. Following a common practice, Ergas had sold to Daniel and Saul Bonfil the policy that insured the goods. The massari initially absolved Manuel Ergas, but the Bonfils appealed the sentence. Eventually, the prince found Manuel Ergas liable on the grounds that he had sold the policy to the Bonfils once he discovered that the ship had sunk. The judges based their decision on the testimony of several merchants that news might well travel between Livorno and Amsterdam in as little as seventeen days (the time that had passed from the day the ship sank to the day Ergas sold the policy to the Bonfils).³⁷

Mundane cases such as this one must have inspired little confidence in commercial and civil litigation among merchants; seventeen days to cover the distance between Amsterdam and Livorno was an optimistic estimate. Did Manuel Ergas have friends and relatives among the massari who acquitted him in the first judgment?³⁸ Was it worth assembling dubious evidence, such as the claim concerning the travel time, in the hope of reversing a judgment on appeal? To approach the maze of Tuscan tribunals certainly required time and cunning. Did fairness, in the end, always prevail? Merchants had good reasons to do everything possible to minimize the possibility of going to court. These considerations suggest that in approaching the commercial organization of Sephardic merchants, we gain more illuminating insights by examining the variety of resources—ranging from kinship ties and communitarian structures to legal contracts and courts—that they used to secure their relations with overseas agents (whether the latter were coreligionists or not) than by dismissing their social organization as inefficient.

NETWORKS, GROUP DISCIPLINE, AND INFORMATION

The economist Partha Dasgupta summarizes cogently the view that is prevalent among his colleagues when he writes that “networks can be suffocating” because “communitarian institutions can prevent markets from functioning well.”³⁹ Social scientists for whom impersonal exchange represents a universal yardstick of modernity are inclined to interpret this assertion as a metahistorical and predictive truth. For most historians, this quotation has no real meaning outside a specific context in which they must understand the role played by communitarian institutions in market transactions. By choice and by necessity, the *modus operandi* of Sephardic merchants combined what Greif calls individualistic and collectivist beliefs. In the European port cities where Sephardic merchants formed relatively stable and officially recognized communities in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they enjoyed the same civil rights that

Christian merchants did when appearing before a court to settle mercantile disputes and were thus subject to a regime of individual legal responsibility.⁴⁰ This privilege, however, did not preclude them from relying on their kinship and social organization to enforce contracts with coreligionists and strangers alike. Moreover, substantive discrimination prevented Sephardim from building a formal transnational cartel, led them to operate as a set of interconnected partnerships, and discouraged them from engaging in long-term capital ventures with non-Jews. In times of crisis, it also tainted their collective reputation. In spite of these constraints, Sephardim such as Ergas and Silvera developed durable agency relations with strangers. They did so by relying on a varying combination of customary codes of conduct in the mercantile world, institutional support from European states, and the strength of their community organization in Livorno and in the diaspora.

Kinship, social, and institutional ties among Sephardic families created what an anthropologist and early advocate of network analysis, Max Gluckman, called “multiplex relationships,” relations among individuals who are connected to one another by overlapping ties that serve multiple purposes. Multiplex relationships increase occasions for conflict but also create incentives for reciprocity by multiplying the channels of social surveillance.⁴¹ Though denser in the presence of intermarriage and communitarian structures, networks of credit and information did not necessarily replicate the contours of legal, ethnic, linguistic or religious groups. By reconstructing the channels through which information and credit circulated, we can avoid a tautological explanation of trust as a by-product of group membership.

Rarely are networks and institutions mutually exclusive. Nor are networks necessarily exclusivist. I am suggesting that if we think in terms of social networks, we can narrow the gap between essentialist approaches to trust (I trust you because you are a coreligionist) and assumptions about the equalizing effects of legal institutions (I don't trust anyone, but the law will ensure that all the contracts that I sign will be enforced). The concept of social networks allows us to assume that bounded rationality guided merchants but that their strategies were also limited by normative and social constraints, including the logic of communitarian cosmopolitanism. Networks, on the other hand, were not unstructured entities: they were built on legal conventions and rhetorical traditions that offered merchants shared norms and expectations—a point of great importance that Chapter 7 illustrates more thoroughly.

Communication and socioeconomic incentives are at the center of this approach. The extent to which honest behavior was motivated by moral principles is difficult to assess. It likely varied greatly from individual to individual, but

ethical imperatives joined with communitarian pressure to produce social control. In the summa of precepts that I have already had occasion to mention, Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel chastised those who cheated on the value, weight, or measure of any sale—whether the buyer was a coreligionist or a Gentile.⁴² Some ethnoreligious minorities in early modern Europe still exerted strict vigilance over the business conduct of individual members. Among Dutch Mennonites in the seventeenth century, fraud and bankruptcy could result in excommunication.⁴³ In eighteenth-century England, the Society of Friends scrutinized the morality of members who went bankrupt in order to avoid any negative impact on the Quakers' good name. Group discipline, it should be stressed, also influenced outsiders' perceptions and was not a sign only of the closed nature of a group. Jacob Price writes that as a result of their scrutiny, "Quakers had very high 'credit ratings' both in dealing with themselves and with non-Quakers."⁴⁴

In Livorno, adult male members of the Jewish nation were required to share the burden of office holding and joined voluntary religious, educational, and charitable associations. We saw how the Sephardim sought to retain control of these institutions, which, among other things, constituted a potent vehicle of social control beyond one's immediate family. Wealthy merchants were also community leaders, and these two roles occasionally overlapped in the most literal sense. The letter books of Abraham and Isaac da Costa include letters written from Amsterdam to Surinam in their capacity as merchants and others addressed to community leaders in South America in the 1720s.⁴⁵ When in the eighteenth century prosperous Sephardic merchants asked to be excused from serving as elected officials in their communities in Livorno and Amsterdam, they already counted on a solid business reputation or were distancing themselves from commercial activities altogether.

Historians of early modern England have shown the interdependence of economic and social credit in what was arguably the most commercially vibrant society in early modern Europe along with the Netherlands.⁴⁶ This fascinating literature, however, analyzes segments of society that were fairly homogeneous in religious and ethnic terms and thus fails to discuss whether collective stereotypes had an impact on market relations. Collective reputation mattered a great deal to Sephardic merchants and even provided a rationale for the alliances of lay and religious leaders who sought to enforce conformity among Western Sephardic congregations.

A merchant's trustworthiness was not an intrinsic attribute. It was built on tangible information about his past conduct, but it could also suffer from stigma attached to the group to which he belonged (or was understood to belong). Dasgupta concedes that stereotypical views of a group can favor or disfavor its

individual members in their attempt to acquire a reputation as reliable business agents.⁴⁷ Jewish merchants in Christian Europe had to manage their collective self-image not only to avoid real potential lapses (were Jews always honest?) but also to respond to a catalogue of accusations of usury, avarice, malpractice, and a sinister preference for their own kind. For my purposes, the origins and dissemination of such charges matter less than their perpetual resurfacing even in contexts where Sephardic merchants were relatively well integrated. On one occasion, after discovering that a Jew was involved in a robbery, the Venetian authorities searched the entire ghetto, and Rabbi Leon Modena lamented that "when one individual committed a crime, they [Gentiles] would grow angry at the entire community, calling us a band of thieves."⁴⁸ An upsurge of anti-Semitism followed the 1688 fall of the Amsterdam Stock Exchange.⁴⁹ Hoping to prevent similar repercussions, the London Spanish and Portuguese congregation sought to prohibit its members from trading in gold and silver in 1689.⁵⁰ The stock market crash of 1720 gave way to a new and more vicious round of anti-Semitic propaganda, with caricatures and satirical writings mocking Jewish speculators. In 1780 an influential Ashkenazic merchant in London named Jacob Prager complained that the Bank of England charged an additional one percent when discounting bills of exchange drawn on Jews.⁵¹

The main disciplinary tool of community leaders was the right to ban members who transgressed statutory norms. A permanent ban (*herem*) was famously issued against Spinoza in Amsterdam in 1656. More often, temporary bans were used to discourage not only religious dissent but also a vast array of lesser transgressions, including those concerning dietary laws, sexual conduct, disparaging statements to coreligionists, contacts with non-Jews, or improper political pronouncements. Some economic practices were also listed among the misbehaviors that could be punished with excommunication.⁵² In Venice the united Jewish congregations prohibited illicit speculations in gold and silver currencies and forbade members from investing in the city's public debt in 1607.⁵³ That these rules were often ignored is less important than the fact that they were invariably passed in response to government regulations or anti-Semitic incidents and thus signal a profound preoccupation with the collective image of Jews in the marketplace.

Yosef Kaplan, who first studied the *herem* as a lens through which to examine the forms of internal discipline used by Sephardic communities in northern Europe and their relations to local societies, found that in seventeenth-century Amsterdam there existed a group of men of dubious religious observance who were not intimidated by fear of excommunication. By virtue of being excommunicated, however, these men were marginalized (they could not attend service

in the synagogue or be buried in the community's cemetery). Reputable merchants do not appear among this group. They avoided these sanctions at all costs. The extent to which the herem was sanctioned varied from place to place. Excommunication exerted little deterrent power in Amsterdam, where the Sephardim lived side by side with Gentiles and were relatively well accepted. It was more effective in Hamburg, where the Sephardic community was much smaller and lived in a more hostile environment. In London it was infrequently used because many Sephardic merchants lived at the margins of the community. Overall, though economic malpractice was not a primary target of excommunication among Sephardic communities in northern Europe, Kaplan recognizes this tool as crucial to "bolstering the status of the social and economic elite of these communities" and "assuring that those wealthy and well-connected families submitted to collective discipline."⁵⁴

The 1655 statutes of the Jewish community of Livorno threatened to excommunicate those who dared interfere with the loading of any merchandise on board vessels that they had not freighted entirely for themselves or those who lent money to ship captains. Between 1671 and 1694, the Jewish nation prohibited its members (under penalty of excommunication) from trading in counterfeit golden or silver coins and lending sums of less than fifty pieces because these activities harmed the reputation of the entire community.⁵⁵ Revisiting these issues a century later, Jewish leaders listed the infractions that might, among other things, "discredit the commerce of the Jewish nation" and that were therefore punishable with excommunication; they included counterfeiting of coinage, alteration of any commercial drugs, trade in counterfeited coral, hoarding smuggled salt, and dishonest brokerage. After 1740, in addition, excommunication would befall those who did not obtain special permission from the prince to lend to non-Jews outside the regular use of bills of exchange.⁵⁶ The near destruction of the archives of the Livorno synagogue makes it impossible to verify the extent to which these bans were enforced. We know that these rules were widely ignored. But threats of excommunication were not without consequences. In 1702, at the outset of the War of the Spanish Succession, Jewish merchants were threatened with excommunication if they loaded goods on French vessels without official registration of their cargo.⁵⁷ At the end of the war Moses Franco and Jacob Sarmento excommunicated coreligionists who had financed the construction of some French ships.⁵⁸

Unlike their Ottoman counterparts, Western Sephardic merchants normally did not seek the opinion of rabbis to resolve their commercial disputes and ignored religious injunctions against lending and borrowing money at interest.⁵⁹

In 1765 the rabbinic court of Tunis accused one of its members, Joseph Nataf, who had traveled to Livorno for business, of having "abused the trust that his cousins placed in him" (Nataf had, indeed, failed to repay his cousins after he collected their credits in Livorno). Perhaps influenced by the defiant attitudes of his coreligionists in Europe toward religious authority, Nataf's response to the herem was not to repent but to denigrate the Tunisian rabbis in a series of printed pamphlets. In order to avoid any conflicts, the Livorno rabbis remained silent.⁶⁰ As this and other examples indicate, opportunism was a pervasive risk for merchants involved in long-distance trade, and kinship ties did not offer a universal shield against it. The disciplinary measures taken by the massari and the informal pressure exerted by relatives and peers were important tools both for keeping an eye on suspect members and for advancing the collective reputation of Jews in the marketplace. At the same time, the social and economic credit of Sephardic merchants exceeded their immediate community.

MERCHANTS' LETTERS AND COMMISSION AGENCY

Whether in a large city such as Amsterdam or in a smaller one such as Livorno, oral communication mattered a great deal in the forging of a personal reputation. In a town's central square, along the docks, in the exchanges of northern European cities, and in taverns and coffee houses, Jews rubbed elbows with Gentiles, locals with foreigners, upright merchants with dubious speculators. Agreements were sealed at table, business secrets were stolen behind one's back, and gossip proliferated. Faint traces survive of the chitchat that could ruin or make the name of a broker, a merchant, a ship-owner, or a financier. As reported in a surviving petition, merchants in Livorno were fearful of the hearsay ("vociferazioni per la piazza") that could bring "prejudice and discredit" to their business.⁶¹ In addition to face-to-face interactions, the statements of a relative arriving from abroad or the comments of a sea captain or a passenger might add fresh information about a distant merchant, but the reputation of overseas agents was forged primarily through epistolary exchanges.

The most famous and most widely imitated commercial manual of early modern Europe, Jacques Savary's *Le parfait négociant* (first published in Paris in 1675), warned against the risks of commission trade, claiming that "those who do business via commission agency go straight to the poor-house" ("qui fait ses affaires par commission va à l'Hôpital en personne").⁶² Savary, however, knew all too well that the age of Europe's traveling merchants had faded away and recognized that "nothing preserves commerce as much as commissioners and cor-

respondents."⁶³ His choice of wording ("commissioners" and "correspondents") was not casual; it acknowledged the role that letters played in weaving webs of overseas agency relations. As Gerard Malynes had proclaimed a few decades earlier, "a Factor is created by Merchant Letters."⁶⁴ A century later, Daniel Defoe "described a 'correspondent' as someone with whom one had regular business relations, which were marked by extensive letter-writing and long-distance exchange."⁶⁵

A crucial transformation allowed for the increasing significance of business correspondence. After the late Middle Ages, first in Italy, then in Flanders and the Low Countries, documents signed by a merchant (at first only letters and later also ledgers, bills of credit, and all sorts of contracts), unlike any other paper that was not sealed by a public notary, acquired full legal validity and were thus admitted as proof in court. This change allowed merchants to save time and money.⁶⁶ Merchants' manuals took notice of this alteration of legal doctrine and its practical consequences. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, they rarely had mentioned letter writing.⁶⁷ By the early seventeenth century, *Il negoziante* by Giovanni Domenico Peri, the most successful Italian merchants' manual of the time, devoted more than a passing reference to the importance of letter writing. It included short models of business correspondence, and in the chapter devoted to contracts it insisted on the letter's legal value.⁶⁸ The interrelated nature of changes in the practical and legal functions of business letters did not escape Savary. He exhorted merchants to keep copies of all the letters they sent because they could not only review what they had previously written to their correspondents but could also present the copy in court, where it would be treated as if it were the original.⁶⁹

Business letters were used routinely to certify property rights. When, in 1743, their Lisbon correspondents were unable to retrieve diamonds and other goods from the Casa da Índia (the monopolistic institution that governed Portuguese trade with Asia), Ergas and Silvera sent them a copy of the letters and bills of lading that they received from Goa proving that the merchandise belonged to them.⁷⁰ On 16 December 1744, Ergas and Silvera appeared before a notary in Livorno to give power of attorney to Paul Prepaud and Son in Malta to retrieve their cargo from a ship that had unexpectedly ended its voyage there before reaching Livorno.⁷¹ Two days later, they wrote Prepaud and asked him to consider the letter as a power of attorney and to use it to attest to their claims.⁷²

More frequently, letters were substitutes for agency contracts. These were generally very vague and included no penalty for poor conduct. The letters preserved in the Old Cairo Geniza show that Maghribi Jews commonly asked their agents to "do whatever your propitious judgment suggests to you."⁷³ Six or seven

centuries later, Ergas and Silvera routinely delegated powers to their correspondents in nearly identical terms: they asked them to sell their goods at the best price—as if the agents' own interest were at stake ("vendetele al meglio, come se fosse vostro interesse").⁷⁴ It was common for Ergas and Silvera to end their letters with a mixture of assurance, exhortation, and promises of mutual obligation. In 1716, for example, they addressed an agent as follows: "We are confident that you will treat us with great affection and that you will find us ready to treat you in the same way when you give us any orders."⁷⁵ Writing to a Jewish trader in Cochin in 1793, Riccarda Marini, the widow of a Livornese Jewish merchant, reassured him with these words: "It is certain that you will procure the most advantageous sale of my coral and reinvest the proceeds as if you were handling your own goods."⁷⁶ The Kamats followed in analogous fashion when in 1782 they wrote a Dutchman in Bombay that they had confidence ("tomamos confiança") that he would sell their cargo at the best possible price.⁷⁷

Lack of price and quality standardization, high seasonal variability, and the length of time that it took to carry out an order made these open-ended contracts a rational way of operating. Occasionally, a merchant would set the upper or lower limit of the price at which specific commodities should be sold or purchased on his behalf, but it was often impossible to predict in advance the quality and price of the goods available on a distant market. The only real power that a principal had to urge his agents to be honest and efficient was to threaten to interrupt the flow of orders; this threat, too, had to be credible and potentially damaging. The letters of a family of sixteenth-century Genoese merchant-bankers often ended by warning their correspondents always to be trustworthy ("avertendo sempre al ben fidare");⁷⁸ only the influence that this family exerted in international credit circles gave force to their imperative.

More than the immediate reward (the payment of the commission), the prospect of future transactions was an incentive to show honesty and zealous care. Paolo Girolamo Medici closed his letters by declaring himself eager to be honored with further requests by his correspondents.⁷⁹ The same logic made it possible for merchants to ask for favors that came with no monetary compensation but helped them enhance their reputation and possibly enlarge their networks. In 1743 Ergas and Silvera asked a Christian merchant in Marseilles to assist a Livornese Jew traveling to Bayonne; they assured him that they would remember the favor and that the traveler's father, head of a wealthy family business in Livorno, would remain "perpetually obliged."⁸⁰ Contractual obligations expressed in business letters thus ran the gamut between mere favors and abiding commitments.

BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE AND PRINTED ECONOMIC NEWS

Tending to correspondence was a pressing demand and an ordinary fact of life for every merchant. In 1741 Abraham Gradis of Bordeaux assured one of his correspondents that he was personally in charge of his firm's ledgers, which he updated every Sunday, as well as his letter books, on which he worked daily.⁸¹ In fifteenth-century Venice, business correspondence was the heart and soul of commission agency across the Adriatic.⁸² It remained the backbone of European long-distance trade long after private merchants embarked on transoceanic ventures and new printed material relaying economic information began to proliferate in the late sixteenth century.

By the time Ergas and Silvera set up their partnership in 1704, Livorno had become a major center for the production and dissemination of economic information in the Mediterranean and beyond. A printed price list was first produced in the Tuscan port in 1627; lists of exchange rates began to be published in 1663 and appeared biweekly by the mid-eighteenth century.⁸³ In Ergas and Silvera's time, the postal service delivered foreign mail every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; with it came updates of prices, currency exchange rates, insurance premiums, and stock values elsewhere.⁸⁴ Finally, numerous *avvisi*, or manuscript compilations of political and economic news as well as local events, continued to circulate at court and among a large public after the invention of the printing press; *avvisi* about Livorno contained a variety of local news and information about economic activities.⁸⁵ Ergas and Silvera had easy access to these *avvisi*. They also subscribed to various gazettes, some of which they sent to their coreligionists in Aleppo, who eagerly awaited these publications in order to catch up with the "world news."⁸⁶

The availability of these printed sources and other publications specializing in economic information did not signal the end of private business correspondence. In his influential *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Jürgen Habermas argued that the appearance of economic newspapers starting in the late seventeenth century marked the beginning of a new stage in the development of Western capitalism that superseded the period dominated by the exclusive use of private correspondence.⁸⁷ Habermas was interested in linking economic information to the public sphere, something for which periodicals indeed served an important purpose.⁸⁸ Some economic historians, notably John McCusker, have pursued the opposition between printed and manuscript economic sources further with regard to business history alone and have ascribed great significance to the circulation of printed materials in the creation of an open, efficient, and

modern Anglo-Atlantic market economy.⁸⁹ As I assess the specific functions of letters and printed newspapers in the activities of Sephardic merchants, I can only agree with Pierre Jeannin that these two types of sources remained highly complementary more than they evolved sequentially and hierarchically.⁹⁰

In the 1720s London had three daily papers, and by the 1770s it had as many as eight. Hancock has shown how London-based merchants took advantage of these periodicals to advertise the arrival of their cargo, the auctioning of their goods, the availability of their ships, and their affairs more generally. He has also documented how newspapers, correspondence, and personal ties all helped create a wide consumer market for Madeira wine in North America during the eighteenth century.⁹¹ His research thus shows that even in the Anglo-Atlantic commercial world, periodicals brought remarkable innovations in both retail and wholesale marketing but did not render correspondence obsolete. Newspapers, for example, had a greater impact on the integration of financial markets after the creation of the English and Dutch stock markets than in the organization of the private long-distance commodity trade.⁹²

Manuscript and printed sources traveled along the same land and sea routes and were thus susceptible to the same risks and delays. It was common for a printed price sheet to be folded inside a letter. Postal services and overland and sea transportation generally improved from the medieval to the early modern period, but before the railroad, steamship, and telegraph were invented, no significant remedy existed for slow communication.⁹³ The greatest improvements occurred in the British Atlantic, where from the late seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth century new regular courier services carrying packages, personal and business letters, and a growing number of newspapers came into existence.⁹⁴ A ship could sail from London to Boston in less than two months, but the voyage from northern Europe to India usually lasted six to eight months and the return trip seven to nine months in the seventeenth century.⁹⁵ Moreover, navigation between Europe and the Indian Ocean remained subject to the seasonality of wind patterns. European ships left between January and March, in time to catch the southwestern monsoon in eastern Africa, which lasted from April to September; the return voyage around the Cape of Good Hope was timed according to the northeastern monsoon, which extended from October to March. Caution was therefore necessary before accusing an Indian correspondent of malice for delays in his response: even the news of a shipwreck might take a long time to arrive at its destination. The communication on which merchants such as Ergas and Silvera relied was more irregular than that of merchants who plied the Atlantic.

A letter's delay could mean a loss; more often, it was a source of distress. It

took Ergas and Silvera more than a month to find out what had happened to a purse full of diamonds that supposedly had been placed on board a ship from Goa bound for Portugal. Finally, their Italian agent went in person to the Lisbon Customhouse and was able to locate it.⁹⁶ Sometimes, happily, *avvisi* and newspapers could compensate for the lack of letters. Awaiting anxiously any news about three hundred Venetian zecchini that were aboard a ship stranded on its way to Salónica, Abraham Baruch Carvaglio recorded with a notary the news related by an *avviso* according to which the cargo had been salvaged.⁹⁷ At other times, word of mouth was all a merchant could count on to ascertain the fate of his property.⁹⁸ Yet poor transportation could not always be blamed. Their commissioner rather than the *carreira da Índia* (the annual round-trip voyage made by Portuguese ships between Lisbon and Goa) had to be faulted if in 1737 Abraham and Jacob Franco of London still had not been credited for the cargo that had arrived in Lisbon from Macao seventeen years earlier.⁹⁹

Multiple copies could be made of printed sheets; private letters, too, were often shipped along different routes. Ergas and Silvera were accustomed to sending two copies of their letters to Constantinople: one overland via Vienna and one by sea. Letters from Livorno to Marseilles, London, and Amsterdam also traveled either by sea or overland—in the latter case, they could go via Lyon or via Mantua.¹⁰⁰ Ergas and Silvera alternated between hiring private carriers and postal services. They occasionally entrusted precious stones to the postal service, as when they sent a diamond to London “con el coreo” in 1743.¹⁰¹ A regular courier between Venice and Florence that carried correspondence and packages had been in place at least since the fifteenth century. The frequency and regularity of this postal service did not eliminate the risk of fraud. In 1738 Ergas and Silvera accused a courier traveling from Florence to Venice of having stolen some gold (“oro cantarino e lametta”). They were determined to prosecute the accused before the Prince de Craon, plenipotentiary of Tuscany, to force the courier’s supervisor to enforce higher standards of conduct in this crucial service.¹⁰² Finally, when sensitive information was at stake, a letter could be handed in person to its addressee.¹⁰³

Letters fulfilled four purposes for which merchants could not rely on printed sources: as we have seen, they certified contracts and property rights in court; they allowed a merchant to ask and respond to specific questions and concerns that he might have about market conditions; they informed traders about the aptitude and reliability of associates, commissioners, and suppliers; and when necessary, they also assured secrecy.

Avvisi, newspapers, and gazettes were filled with information about the course of military actions, diplomatic negotiations, piracy, and other factors that affected

market fluctuations, but their news was not always fresh or sufficiently precise for merchants to use them as a basis for their decisions. Nor were all periodicals equally dependable in an information market that by the mid-seventeenth century was already saturated. Around 1672 an Amsterdam Sephardi named David de Castro, originally from Tartas in southwestern France, launched a small-sized periodical in Spanish, the *Gazeta de Amsterdam*, for distribution among Jews and New Christians, but the newspaper contained little more than a digest of information that was already available to its intended readership through other means, and it failed to break new ground.¹⁰⁴ What merchants needed was not more newspapers but reliable information. It was to their correspondents that Ergas and Silvera turned in 1741 to establish exactly how the outbreak of the war between Tunis and France, which had “turned the [Mediterranean] sea into a forest of thieves,” would alter the supply of North African coral and possibly the Levantine trade more generally.¹⁰⁵ Earlier that year they had informed Pietro Trevano in Venice that a ship belonging to their friend Belilios was about to arrive from Aleppo carrying ash needed for glass and soap manufacturing at a time when the price of this material was already low and news of its arrival might depress the market further.¹⁰⁶ Only through their correspondence could merchants exchange timely information about the arrival and departure of ships and about their cargoes and thus assess potential competition and opportunities. When their correspondents resided at a reasonable distance, Ergas and Silvera wrote them frequently to determine the most profitable time to buy and sell and precisely what assortment of commodities to exchange.*

Because prices of all commodities in the Levant, including staples such as raw silk or wool, were higher when payments were made in kind, it was particularly important to dispose of merchandise that was most appropriate for barter.¹⁰⁷ Fashions, for example, could change rapidly, affecting the trade of textiles. Printed price sheets were unlikely to convey such detailed and current news, but they did contribute to the standardization of prices in large marketplaces, where they made it difficult to charge a price above the prevailing rate. Not even an epistolary exchange, however, could safeguard merchants from disappointment. In 1724 Ergas and Silvera asked a commercial house in Hamburg to send them a barrel of yellow glass seed beads, about which they provided many details. In order to avoid any confusion, they sent two beads of the kind that interested them to Hamburg and asked for a sample of what was available there. In spite of these precautions, a misunderstanding (“*equiboco*”)—perhaps intentional, perhaps not—arose: the partners complained that they had received beads classified as type 93 instead of 33, as requested.¹⁰⁸ In the summer of 1727 Paolo Girolamo Medici in Lisbon realized that the quality of various types of oil that he

had received from Rio de Janeiro was nowhere near the quality he had agreed on with his correspondents and asked for compensation.¹⁰⁹

In order to minimize the occurrence of such events, merchants sought to screen their correspondents as carefully as possible. Among the most important information that letters helped diffuse was about merchants themselves: this knowledge could either be direct (when, for example, the success or failure of a certain agent was communicated to third parties) or indirect (in the sense that the letter exchange itself constituted a form of reciprocal esteem). Most epistolary collections include both endorsements and indictments of specific agents.¹¹⁰ In 1596 one Hans Thijs of Antwerp wrote his brother in Lübeck advising him against entrusting a consignment of grain to a certain Andries Fagel: "You should not trust Fagel too much, for he has had rye here and forgot to make a profit from it."¹¹¹

By the early eighteenth century, the bankruptcy of large merchant houses appeared in a special section of most London gazettes.¹¹² But by the time a merchant knew of a commissioner's bankruptcy from the pages of a periodical, it was too late to divert his investments; moreover, the bankruptcy of smaller merchants rarely figured in these publications. Only through a good correspondence network could merchants acquire timely news about the solvency of a whole range of distant counterparts. Rich in candid comments about his competitors and filled with rumors, the letters that one Joshua Johnson sent from London to his associates in Maryland in the 1770s testify to the crucial function of business correspondence in disseminating information about merchants' reputation as well as market conditions.¹¹³

The loss of credibility with one correspondent could generate a detrimental domino effect. In 1739 Paolo Girolamo Medici hastened to rectify what he considered to be unjust accusations; he begged a correspondent to "let everyone know" his own version of the events. Still, some relayed to Medici the news that he continued to be spoken ill of. Whether fairly or unfairly, Medici considered himself to be the victim of a denigration campaign. Correspondence was the only tool that he possessed with which to remedy the situation.¹¹⁴ References to the financial standing of merchants and bankers were especially important in the private credit market, especially in the eighteenth century, when bills of exchange were negotiable and frequently were discounted. The solvency of a myriad of medium and small firms that endorsed bills of exchange was sensitive information. Gabriel de Silva expressed gratitude to an Amsterdam correspondent who hastened to write him that two firms on which he relied in Lübeck were considered solid ("sont estimées solides") but that a third one in Hamburg was not so very sound ("la troisième qui étoit d'Hamburg n'est pas grand chose").

In the first five months of 1735, two French bankers from Paris saved de Silva in Bordeaux from disastrous investments by reporting to him fourteen bankruptcies in various parts of Europe.¹¹⁵

Speaking of the commercial organization of Maghribi Jews in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Abraham Udovitch concluded that "business letters were more than just a means of communication; they served as sinews holding together the entire organic structure of medieval Islamic long-distance trade as reflected in the [Old Cairo] Geniza."¹¹⁶ Seven hundred years later, after new navigation routes, regular courier services, and a proliferation of newspapers had integrated the English Atlantic as never before, a British merchant in North America could still write: "I can only say this[,] that if we do not pay strict attention in writing and answering our Letters per every post, we had better leave writing at all and trust all to Chance."¹¹⁷ Business correspondence, that is, did not diminish in importance during the early modern period, and it continued to be the lynchpin of commission agency in long-distance trade.

Commission agency was an indispensable and yet delicate type of contract. A proficient and loyal agent was to provide his principal with services that could not be spelled out in full detail and sometimes could not be anticipated at all. A lazy, incapable, or less than candid agent could be very damaging because recourse to the law was virtually fruitless against incompetence. Short of personal interaction and acquaintances, letters were the most reliable means for merchants to acquire dependable and updated information about market conditions and the qualifications of those whom they wished to hire as agents. No means of communication better helped merchants to promote their own reputation in the eyes of those with whom they sought to enter into business agreements.

Economic theory predicts that as the number of actors involved in long-distance trade grows in size and diversity, the arbitration of a central authority (normally state-sanctioned tribunals offering fair and relatively inexpensive enforcement) replaces systems of informal reputation control that only work within closed groups.¹¹⁸ In concrete historical situations, the optimal size of an informal network is difficult to predict and varies greatly from one case to another. In some branches of early modern commerce, moreover, tribunals either were unavailable or were not the most efficient means to prevent or resolve conflict. Legal discrimination against specific groups and other biases, finally, could prevent or discourage a merchant from going to court. As the legal scholar Lisa Bernstein emphasized, even in the United States today (that is, a context in which the reliability of the legal system is much greater than in the early modern period) merchants might "deliberately leave aspects of their contracting relationship to

be governed, in whole or in part, by extralegal commitments and sanctions. . . . They may be moved to do so by social norms, commercial custom, a concern for relationships, trust, honor, and decency, or for fear of nonlegal sanctions such as reputation damage or termination of a beneficial relationship."¹¹⁹

The development and diffusion of ever more uniform norms regarding shipping, commercial, and financial contracts as well as the interest of European states in reassuring foreign merchants that they ought not fear arbitrary confiscations enhanced cross-cultural trade during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. European maritime customs spread along the routes of European economic influence and colonial domination. In so doing, they provided European merchants and their partners with reasonably clear norms for distinguishing between licit and illicit behavior and generated reasonably predictable expectations of the type of resolution that legal dispute might offer.¹²⁰ Yet the ability of commercial law and tribunals to provide equitable and speedy conflict resolution should not be overestimated or taken for granted. Moreover, of all contracts, commission agency was the most (intentionally) incomplete and therefore the most difficult to enforce by legal means alone. The circulation of economic information in general and of reputation checks in particular helped merchants limit their recourse to formal venues of justice. The exchange of letters allowed Ergas and Silvera and many others like them to weave webs of commercial relations that exceeded the bounds of their immediate circles.

CROSS-CULTURAL TRADE AND THE ETIQUETTE OF MERCHANTS' LETTERS

A common language was a prerequisite for the development of credit relations across vast geographical distances and involving disparate groups. In most port cities, professional translators were thus available for hire. But comprehension alone was not a sufficient condition. Merchants also needed ways to send signals about reputation and pressure their agents into abiding by tacit expectations and explicit agreements so that recourse to the courts would be a last resort. Business letters are the most vivid documents we can use to gauge the communication codes used by merchants in these efforts. And yet historians, and economic historians in particular, have so far only paid scant attention to the discursive conventions that merchants followed in their correspondence.¹

In what follows, I take cues from the work of cultural historians who have studied early modern European epistolary traditions and emphasize the importance of rhetorical norms in business correspondence. Roger Chartier has uncovered the diffusion of a new type of manual of letter writing after the mid-sixteenth century, the *secrétaires* for ordinary people. Small in size and affordable, these secretaries changed forever the way in which large segments of the population wrote letters.² More recently, the literary scholar Eve Tavor Bannet has gone as far as to argue that in the eighteenth century, letter-writing manuals "contributed to forging the nation and the first British empire as much as improved roads and transportation, the institution of the post office and of regular shipping routes, the printing press, and national days of celebration and commemoration."³ None of these studies, however, compare such manuals to extant correspondence.

This chapter focuses on the etiquette of business letter writing that emerged from the overlap of the practical and legal needs of cross-cultural trade and on

the codes of civility that seduced most European merchants in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Again, I turn to the letters of Ergas and Silvera for examples, but I compare them to those of their non-Jewish correspondents and to other extant collections. The uniformity of style in the letters written by a dazzling variety of merchant communities across the world is perhaps the most palpable evidence of the formation of a truly global mercantile culture. At the same time, this etiquette alone was no guarantee that contracts and obligations would be enforced, nor did it dissolve legal and social barriers among those involved in cross-cultural exchange.

A LANGUAGE OF OBLIGATIONS

We know little about the languages that Sephardim spoke at home or of their proficiency in Hebrew. It is certain that the partners of Ergas and Silvera, like most Livornese Sephardic merchants, were fluent in Portuguese, Spanish, and Italian. These three idioms were all Elijah Silvera needed for his business in Aleppo (assuming that he had access to Arabic translators); we can only speculate about any additional linguistic skills that he might have acquired.⁴ Of the 13,670 letters that Ergas and Silvera sent from Livorno, 9,568 (70 percent) are written in Italian and 4,101 in Portuguese. Sometimes, whether because of the identity of the writer or because they could recognize distinctions among the Sephardic diaspora that escape our modern categories, Ergas and Silvera peppered their Portuguese with Spanish words and expressions.⁵ Only one of their letters was written in Hebrew, though Hebrew words are occasionally inserted in reference to religious festivals, to indicate specific legal contracts, or to call someone by name.⁶ The papal bull *Cum nimis absurdum* of 1555 forbade Jews from keeping ledgers and account books in Hebrew if they hoped to use them as proof in a Christian court.⁷ Poor knowledge of Hebrew among Western Sephardic merchants rendered this legal prescription less weighty than it might have been: Ergas and Silvera kept their account books in Portuguese, as did the Baruch Carvaglios and most Sephardim in Livorno.⁸

I write "Italian," "Portuguese," and "Spanish," but recall that European written languages in this epoch were not fully standardized and that most people learned languages phonetically rather than by means of a rigorous education. The syntax, grammar, lexicon, and spelling of Ergas and Silvera's hybrid Italian and Portuguese testify to the multiple influences that converged in the Sephardic culture of Livorno. The Italian in their business correspondence was naturally a version of Tuscan vernacular and for the most part was flawless. Their Portuguese, in contrast, owed much to Italian, especially in terms of grammar

and orthography.⁹ The official records of the Jewish nation in Livorno display the same hybridity. This lack of linguistic purity was a general characteristic of this polyglot diaspora. Appropriately, a linguist and historian who studied the everyday language of Amsterdam Sephardim speaks of a "lexical and syntactical cross-fertilization" in the mixing of Spanish and Portuguese.¹⁰ In addition, everywhere they lived and traveled, Sephardim borrowed words, expressions, grammar, and syntax from local idioms, whether Dutch, French, or Italian.

In choosing what language to use, Ergas and Silvera considered their addressee's identity rather than his place of residence. They thus wrote in Portuguese to all other Sephardim as well as to Hindus in Goa, and in Italian to everyone else—whether to Jewish merchants who were not of Iberian descent or to Christian merchants across Europe and the Ottoman Empire. In Bordeaux Gabriel de Silva used the same criterion. He wrote in Spanish and sometimes in Portuguese to other Sephardim. Because most of his business was done in northern rather than southern Europe, he used French and, more rarely, English with his Christian correspondents (among whom were many Huguenots).¹¹

The ubiquity of Italian in Ergas and Silvera's correspondence is evidence of the continued importance of this idiom as the mercantile language of the Mediterranean. French merchants, for example, were accustomed to converse in Italian vernacular.¹² Meanwhile, Portuguese remained the basis of one of the lingua francas used in the Indian Ocean, even after the rise of British power in the region. So close was the Kamats' association with the Portuguese that when dealing with European merchants, they always referred to themselves by the Portuguese version of their name: Camotim (pl. Camotins). Local merchants, too, sometimes called them by their Portuguese name.¹³ It is not easy to establish whether the Kamats or their clerks drafted the many business letters written in Portuguese, French, and English that survive from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Because several men among the Kamats had served the administration of the Estado da Índia in Goa in various capacities for nearly two centuries, they were fluent in Portuguese. They may also have hired specialized Luso-Indian linguists available in Goa as in other port cities of the region. When these Brahmins became the official representatives of the French in Goa, they had to acquire additional linguistic competence or hire personnel with adequate skills. Whoever wrote letters on their behalf in French and English mastered these languages to near perfection.¹⁴ In a letter dated 1783, the Kamats asked a Jewish trader in Cochin to assist them with the translation of a financial document for a Dutch customer whose language they did not know.¹⁵ By that time, the Dutch influence in the Western Indian Ocean was feeble, and Portuguese, French, and English were sufficient for the Kamats to do business with a variety

of European and Asian merchants, ranging from a French clergyman to an Armenian merchant in Goa.

Not only were the Kamats polyglot, but by virtue of working closely with European agents and authorities they also became versed in their commercial practices. When ordering the payment of a bill of exchange, they added that the interest it bore should be paid according to the prevailing customs ("com seo premio del stillo").¹⁶ In order to ship goods between Lisbon and Goa they regularly bought insurance policies.¹⁷ Their business papers include a variety of other contracts drafted in conformity with European standards of proof: payment receipts, copies of account books, bills of lading, declarations, powers of attorney, arbitration documents, sale contracts, and certifications of contracts and obligations.¹⁸ As their correspondence demonstrates, these Hindu merchants were fully aware that the information included in a business letter constituted legal evidence in any European court, local or overseas.¹⁹

Surviving records from the Portuguese administration in Goa do not allow us to verify what role civil and criminal courts played in the enforcement of business contracts. We know, however, that many of the parties who subscribed to these contracts were not present in Goa, and some, like the Livornese Sephardim, were forbidden to appear before a Portuguese court. The use of shared rhetorical and legal conventions provided merchants such as the Kamats and Ergas and Silvera with a decipherable code of expressions and norms that regularized behaviors and expectations. Emphasizing these shared rhetorical and legal conventions is important if one seeks to map in its entirety what the economist Oliver Williamson calls "the governance mix," that is, the range of informal and formal systems of protecting property rights—systems that can reinforce each other rather than develop in a sequential progression.²⁰

Court decisions, apprenticeship, personal encounters between merchants, and the circulation of published rules reinforced the uniformity of mercantile standards.²¹ Business letter were also means by which these norms of conduct were disseminated. Moreover, they now carried probative value, and agency relations were largely dependent on letter writing. An obligation ("obligo") sealed by letter equaled a formal contract.²² By declaring himself fully repaid and satisfied ("ficando assim pago e satisfeito de todo"), a merchant relinquished his right to pursue his creditor in court. As a consequence, the language of business letters became more and more formulaic during the early modern period. This language of obligations was modeled on a centuries-old vocabulary that articulated social dependence, trustworthiness, and loyalty ("confidenza," "confianza") in terms of affective bonds. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it also

absorbed the new codes of civility and politeness found among European merchants with gentlemanly aspirations.

Ergas and Silvera referred to the Kamats, whom they had likely never met, as their friends ("amici di Goa")²³ in the same way they called perhaps their most trusted agent "el amigo Moseh Haim Cassuto."²⁴ As they assured Cassuto's relatives, they would do anything for their friends ("questo e molto più facciamo per amici").²⁵ As in eighteenth-century England, the term "friendship" encompassed a wide spectrum of meanings and relations, ranging from kinship ties to sentimental relationships, neighborly sociability, occupational connections, political alliances, charitable endeavors, intellectual affinities, spiritual attachments, and economic ties.²⁶ Intimacy was not a prerequisite for a business friendship. In Ergas and Silvera's letters, as in all other collections of business correspondence, "friend" designated a person, whether a partner, a close associate, a commission agent, or someone from a larger entourage of potential buyers and suppliers with whom a merchant entertained regular epistolary and economic exchanges and on whom he could rely, regardless of whether he was a relative, a coreligionist, or a stranger. Of course, commercial society was not emotionless, and friendships in the way we understand them today existed, but rarely do business letters give us clues about the emotional lives of their authors and recipients. Ergas and Silvera's records are particularly spare in terms of personal details. Even when they expressed their condolences to other Sephardim, they did so in extremely formulaic terms.²⁷

The language of friendship, love, and affection was highly utilitarian: it implied reciprocity.²⁸ Affection was synonymous with diligence.²⁹ To recognize someone's love was to persuade him to offer appealing services.³⁰ Reliability was the heart and soul of business friendships. The exchange of favors could reinforce socioeconomic hierarchies or create more egalitarian clientele. In order to promote his own business with a Portuguese merchant in Rio de Janeiro, Paolo Girolamo Medici invoked the friendship of a leading Sephardic diamond dealer in London ("o amigo Benjamin Mendes da Costa").³¹ The two merchants stood on opposite end of the social ladder. Medici had the pedigree; Mendes da Costa had the money. Reliable and well-connected agents in Lisbon were few and far between and, by lending his credibility to Medici, Mendes da Costa could later call in a favor.

Blood or religious ties were not always guarantees of reliability, and new connections had to be explored. When they needed to find new correspondents in London, in 1742 Ergas and Silvera turned to Benjamin Alvarenga because they had great confidence in him ("con Vms tenemos toda la confiansa").³²

They were not related to Giuseppe Giustiniani, a former Jew now converted to Catholicism, or to the Fuà family of Genoa, and yet they placed all their confidence in them.³³ In late-eighteenth century Goa, the Kamats also continued to extend their trust to outsiders: in order to solicit more commissions from a Portuguese merchant, they invoked his continued friendship ("a continuação de sua amestade").³⁴

Letters of recommendation as well as letters of self-introduction were the principal means by which merchants established new contacts and expanded their range or geographical scope. In mid-eighteenth-century France, it was possible to purchase pre-printed forms of letters of self-recommendation—another sign of the complementarities of the manuscript and the printed forms and the high degree of standardization of business communication.³⁵ On recruiting a new commission agent, Ergas and Silvera normally wrote him with the mention of a common friend; they then requested that he carry out a small task, with the promise that more would follow if the first performance proved satisfactory ("sperando che questo precencipio sarà per negotii di maggior importanza").³⁶ Information could be as valuable a commodity as cargo and the sole reason to initiate a new business correspondence. On 1 February 1726 the partners addressed their first letter to Jacob and Joseph Belilios in Venice, with whom they later developed very close business relations: "You should make sure to send us all the good news that you can, and rest assured that we won't fail to reciprocate; you are friends of our friends, and given that you know our relative [Elijah Silvera in Aleppo], we won't indulge in ceremonies; we ask simply that if any additional letters arrive, you would do us the favor of sending them our way."³⁷

Recommending a friend was not without consequences for the sponsor's reputation. In 1727 Ergas and Silvera suggested the name of a merchant house of Tripoli (now in Lebanon) to a coreligionist in Venice who needed to import Syrian ash (an important ingredient of high-quality Venetian glass paste). Instead, the Venetian Jew used another correspondent, and Ergas and Silvera felt compelled to apologize to their friends in Tripoli.³⁸ In January 1785 a Portuguese merchant based in Surat, Feliciano Nogueira, expressed his exasperation to Venkatesh Mhamai Kamat. Kamat's cousin Gorinda Naik appeared to be dissatisfied with a certain Mathias, whom Nogueira had recommended to him. Nogueira claimed no responsibility for Mathias' wrongdoings. He was very angry: he accused Mathias of endangering business negotiations and vowed to make him pay for any damage that his behavior might cause.³⁹ Kamat and Nogueira must have ended their quarrel, because a few years later they traded together again.⁴⁰ To boost their reputation with the Dutch governor of Cochin in 1782, the Kamats gave him the name of a Dutch referee who could vouch

for their conduct, credit, and reputation ("conduta, credito e reputação") and promised to serve him with blind obedience ("cega obediencia").⁴¹ Hoping to work for them, António José Ferreira expressed his gratitude for any order the Kamats might place with him ("cincera gratidão em qualquer coza que me quierão").⁴²

Not all recommendations were unconditional. Philip Henry Stenglin of Hamburg endorsed the request of another banker in his city to be introduced to his long-standing correspondent Gabriel de Silva in Bordeaux but also exhorted him to preserve their friendship and avoid making him feel any "jalousie."⁴³ Nor were letters of recommendation always positive. Before he entrusted a valuable commission to a new agent who had been recommended to him, de Silva asked a trusted friend to discretely double-check his standing.⁴⁴ It follows that not every merchant qualified as a friend. Unreliable or incompetent correspondents were, literally, enemies ("inimigos").⁴⁵ Threats to interrupt all future orders in case of unsatisfactory services are so common as to make it difficult to judge their credibility independent of specific circumstances. More persuasive warnings came in the form of negative characterizations of a correspondent. In 1729 the Antwerp diamond dealer James Dormer was advised not to trust a certain Mr. Compton who was allegedly of dubious character ("le caractère de Mr Compton étant assez connu").⁴⁶

Next to the word *friend*, *God* was among the most frequently used terms in business correspondence. Exclusive to epistolary exchanges among Jews are greetings for Jewish holidays or blessings for family events such as a bar mitzvah or a marriage.⁴⁷ But references to God also fill letters addressed to merchants of other creeds and denominations and thus appear to be just as often rhetorical devices as expressions of religious devotion or identity. Whether writing to other Jews or not, Ergas and Silvera invoked God's assistance against the perils of navigation, in sustaining the good health of their correspondents, or simply as a salutation at the beginning or at the end of a letter.⁴⁸ In 1790 Sabato Coen, a Jewish merchant in Livorno, ended his letter to Gopala Naik, a Hindu of Goa, by asking God to grant his correspondent a long and happy life ("rogo a Deus guarde suas vidas por muitos e felizes anos").⁴⁹ In their letters to European merchants, the Kamats repeated analogous invocations.⁵⁰ From London, Francis and Joseph Salvador sent their Christmas greetings to an English Catholic correspondent in Antwerp, James Dormer, with whom they conducted much business.⁵¹ And yet neither prolonged commercial relations nor formulas for letters did away with stereotypical images of Jewish greediness and exaggerated business prowess. When James Dormer devised a scheme to best the London Sephardim in the purchase of Indian diamonds in 1750, he found a hesitant ally in his English

agent in Amsterdam, who wrote, "The only fear we have is [that] the Jews will fall in the same scheme, and ruin our project for you know very well that wherever they get their paws in, there is no trading against them."⁵²

MODELS AND ETIQUETTE

A comparison of the language of the business letters of Jewish traders found in the Old Cairo Geniza with Ergas and Silvera's correspondence reveals remarkable continuity and significant changes. On the basis of the Geniza records, S. D. Goitein concluded that God was, in that society, the ultimate governor of all destinies.⁵³ Six centuries later, invocations of God were at times purely rhetorical, but they did not imply a cosmopolitan disposition toward strangers as we understand it today.

The language of friendship also shows signs of stability and transformation. Goitein argued that "friendship" was "the organizational backbone of long-distance trade" among Maghribi Jewish merchants of the eleventh and twelfth centuries.⁵⁴ Three hundred years later, the correspondents of the Tuscan merchant Francesco Datini used the term "friend" to designate a reliable business agent.⁵⁵ In 1675, Savary's *Le parfait négociant* continued to maintain that friendship ("amitié") was the bond of business association.⁵⁶ The equation of friend with commission agent also penetrated legislative texts.⁵⁷ In 1769 a highly successful London-based merchant of Scottish origin and the holder of a sizeable stake in the English East India Company, Sir Alexander Grant, wrote in a business letter that "an 'Association in Trade' was 'the very next thing to Matrimony'" because it rested on affinity of disposition and "even friendship and affection."⁵⁸

Despite the continuities in the lexicon of "friendship and affection" from the time of the commercial revival in the medieval Mediterranean to the development of eighteenth-century English commercial society, business letters became both more stylized and more gallant over time. Datini's correspondence displays a much simpler style and has a fresher tone than Ergas and Silvera's. Robert Lopez and Irving Raymond speak of the "immediacy and spontaneity" of medieval business letters—two adjectives that one would hardly use to describe any eighteenth-century epistolary collection.⁵⁹ In addition to legal changes, profound social transformations in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European societies encouraged the aristocratic pretensions of the merchants who traded beyond the limited circles of their own towns. The author of *London Tradesman* (1747) proclaimed that "a Merchant ought to be a Man of an extensive Genius, and his Education genteel."⁶⁰ David Hancock, in tracing the careers of British merchants who invested in eighteenth-century Atlantic commerce, shows

how their economic investments were coupled with a quest for recognition as gentlemen by the landed nobility.⁶¹ If English elites were more open to such quests than those on the Continent, long-standing barriers were partly eroded in France, too. First Savary, then Jean Toubreau (1682), and later the abbé Gabriel François Coyer, in his *La noblesse commerçante* (1756), offered the conceptual and legal rationale for noblemen to invest in productive and commercial activities by replacing pedigree with utility as a source of noble honor.⁶² Even in Italy, where old aristocracies shunned commercial elites, mercantile language was imbued with aristocratic pretensions. Legal and social transformations gave rise to new etiquettes, including the etiquette of business letter writing.

How did merchants acquire proficiency in this etiquette, and how was it disseminated beyond the borders of Europe? No empirical evidence provides a straightforward answer to this question. Formal apprenticeship, oral culture, and printed texts contributed in various proportions to the acquisition and diffusion of specialized knowledge among early modern European merchants. Generally speaking, if the invention of the printing press had a direct impact on business correspondence it was primarily on the codification of the rules according to which merchants ought to compose their letters. Habermas and his followers have largely overlooked this impact, although it is among the most enduring legacies of print culture in the market economy. For one thing, no manuals devoted exclusively to business letter writing existed in the period before the invention of the printing press.⁶³ In the mid-sixteenth century, instructions for writing business correspondence began to appear among the large body of literature that goes under the rubric of *ars mercatoria*, which comprised dictionaries, tables for converting weights and currencies, treatises about bookkeeping, and other practical instructions for merchants, as well as more elaborate introductions to the principles of merchants' law, sweeping histories of European commerce since antiquity, and a variety of eclectic pamphlets. Manuals for business correspondence continued to be published in the nineteenth century, well after the telegraph and the steamship sped up communication and transportation.⁶⁴ The first such manuals were published in Antwerp, at the time when the city was Europe's greatest colonial emporium. Among these was Jean Bourlier's *Lettres communes et familiares*, a compilation of letters in French and Flemish published in octavo format in 1576. Multilingualism and the small format were to become standard features of this genre.⁶⁵

Such manuals grew from two traditions. One was the appearance among the treatises of the *ars mercatoria* of increasing numbers of blueprints of the contracts most frequently used by merchants. One such compilation was the *Amsterdamsche Secretary*, first published anonymously in 1700, which in nineteen

chapters collected the exact phrasing (mostly in Dutch, occasionally in English, French, Latin or Spanish as well) of all sorts of legal formulas that merchants might need to use before civil and criminal court to certify or defend their rights.⁶⁶ Such a booklet likely helped merchants speed up and verify the accuracy of their legal contracts while also instructing notaries about the types of acts that merchants were most interested in. The second tradition had its roots in the medieval and Renaissance treatises concerning familial and diplomatic correspondence, which later evolved into etiquette models for the courtiers and secretaries who drafted the letters of kings, seigneurs, and local dignitaries.⁶⁷ These aristocratic models took on various forms as they spread into larger segments of society. Thus Italian Jewish scholars in the Renaissance assembled analogous compilations in Hebrew that blended the humanist canon of letter writing with biblical quotations.⁶⁸

While fulfilling different purposes, three genres—the model-letters for courtiers, the so-called *secrétaires* for the people, and specialized manuals of business letter writing—overlapped in content and shared a commitment to instill rules of gentility and politesse in all epistolary exchanges; in this sense, business correspondence participated in broader rhetorical and social practices of the time. Some compilations, such as the Italian-German edition of Matthias Kramer's *Il segretario di banco* of 1697, included models for both courtly and business letters.⁶⁹ In the 1760s, *Le secrétaire du cabinet et celui des negocians* assembled models for intimate correspondence (“lettres tendres et passionnées”) as well as business letters (“lettres de commerce”).⁷⁰ About one-third of a French translation of a collection of Italian letters by Annibale Antonini (1702–53) was devoted to merchants' letters, and the rest to propriety and good manners in general (“bienséance”).⁷¹

Other chapbooks contained a variety of model letters for all sorts of social occasions (thank-you notes, congratulations, condolences, solicitations, recommendations, and so forth) as well as a few concerning ordinary business dealings, such as how to solicit a payment, resist pressure from a creditor, or borrow money from a former apprentice. One of the most successful of these chapbooks in the English-speaking world in the eighteenth century, *The Complete Letter-Writer; or, Polite English Secretary*, contained “familiar letters On the most common Occasions in Life” and “A Variety of more elegant Letters for Examples and Improvement of Style, from the best modern Authors.” Samples included “Business, Duty, Amusement, Affection, Courtship, Marriage, Friendship, and a Multiplicity of other Affairs that may require a Letter,” and offered advice “for Stile, and Manner, a Grammar for writing true English, and other necessary Directions.”⁷² Despite functional and class differences, the texts of the ars mer-

catoria, high-brow manuals of letter writing, and chapbooks of correspondence offered many of the same formulas.

Specialized manuals of business letter writing enjoyed a veritable boom in the second half of the eighteenth century and codified the language of obligations that we find in Ergas and Silvera's correspondence; particularly plentiful in England, they could be found across Europe. In conformity to the needs of long-distance and cross-cultural trade, these compilations appeared either in simultaneous translations or as multilingual volumes. In 1782, J. C. Schedel translated into French a manual published in German by Johann Christian Sinapius in that same year.⁷³ Another German publisher issued a French translation of a manual by Johann Carl May (1731–84) that had first appeared in German in 1778.⁷⁴ An anonymous 1763 *Secrétaire des négociants* was published in French and Italian.⁷⁵ *Le secrétaire de banque* appeared in a Spanish-French edition in Paris in 1768 with the explicit intention of helping those with a feeble knowledge of Spanish to correspond in that language.⁷⁶ In 1779 a London public notary compiled a five-language sample of business letters to which he added a vocabulary of mercantile and maritime terms in English, Italian, French, Spanish, and Portuguese. This was a hefty tome of more than four hundred pages, larger in format (15 × 23 cm) than other works, and clearly meant to be read and used at a desk.⁷⁷ It was followed four years later by a similar collection of business letters in as many as seven languages (English, French, German, Italian, Dutch, Spanish, and Portuguese) that appeared in Amsterdam.⁷⁸ Postlethwayt's *Merchant's Public Counting-House*, a very popular publication, could be accused of false advertisement for claiming that its templates relieved merchants of the need to master any foreign languages or possess great erudition.⁷⁹ The fact is that use of these publications grew at a fast pace, and if they did not make traditional apprenticeship irrelevant, they helped standardize the language of business correspondence.

In Livorno, one of these multilingual compilations was printed in the late eighteenth century.⁸⁰ Many others were carried there by booksellers, foreign merchants, and possibly by post. We don't know whether any of these texts ever appeared in Ergas and Silvera's counting house or offered assistance to their clerks.⁸¹ Certainly the partners' correspondence is remarkably similar to the sample letters in these compilations. Understood as the bond of reciprocity and commercial dependability, friendship is a staple of all manuals of business letter writing. In Sinapius's compilation, a Hamburg merchant interrogates an Amsterdam correspondent about the reliability of a third party to whom he is considering making a loan. In order to obtain an independent assessment, he reminds his correspondent of their long friendship (“amitié”) and promises to show his

gratitude on future occasions.⁸² Wiseman also suggested that merchants invoke friendship in order to obtain a frank opinion: "The friendship existing between you and me, makes me hope you will answer my question with the same impartiality I am ready to do yours, in like cases."⁸³

Among the most visible changes in the etiquette of business letter writing from medieval to early modern Europe is the appearance of more and more elaborate greetings and salutations. Whereas in Datini's correspondence these were either absent or very contrived, the manuals of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries offer an ample selection of these formulas. If not as strictly codified and hierarchical as diplomatic correspondence, merchants' letters, too, calibrated their greetings depending on their relationship to the addressee and on his status. They could choose from generic phrases such as "Dear Sir" or "Gentlemen" and more personalized formulas such as "Worthy Friend," "Our overly good friend, Sir," or "Our good friend, Sir."⁸⁴ In the late sixteenth century, the Lisbon correspondents of Simon Ruiz, a notable banker and merchant from Medina del Campo, a small town in the heart of Spain that was then a center of international fairs, reserved the salutation "Muy magnifico señor" for a handful of addressees and greeted most with a simple "Senhor."⁸⁵ Gabriel de Silva also alternated between "Monsieur" and "Monsieur et très cher ami."⁸⁶

Ergas and Silvera closed some of their letters with a standard initialism (V.B.L.M., for "Vi bacio le mani," we kiss your hands) and many more with a stock phrase ("caramente salutandovi," roughly, "with our best wishes"). When writing to his close acquaintances in Florence, Paolo Medici ended his letters with a less deferential formula ("con vero affetto," with true affection) than when he parted from his Genoese correspondents ("bramoso ancor io dell'onore di molti vostri comandi resto per fine," in the end, I am always at your disposal and would be honored to obey your many commands).⁸⁷ The Mhamai Kamats of Goa fully absorbed these protocols. They opened their letters in English with "Sir," "Messieurs," and "Gentlemen,"⁸⁸ addressed their Portuguese correspondents as "Senhores," "Amigos e senhores," "Meu querido senhor," "Meu amigo e senhor," or "Senhor da nossa mayor veneração," and saved the expression "Queridissimo e illustrissimo senhor" for a European official.⁸⁹ The closing of their letters also followed the protocol. For example, they took leave of one Senhor Escalte of Bombay on 28 February 1782 by declaring themselves his humble servants ("os mais umildes servidores").⁹⁰

We do not know whether the Mhamai Kamats ever employed scribes who were native speakers of or were versed in European languages and mercantile practices, people whose services were readily available in places such as Goa, where translators could be recruited from among the native population, the *casados* (Portuguese men who resided overseas and married local women),

and other passers-by. If they did not, how did they come to learn the etiquette of European business correspondence? Did they use any of the many printed models available? No records of their private libraries survive to attest to whether they owned any of the multilanguage dictionaries, grammars, and models of letter writing that might have arrived on board Portuguese ships. Their work in the Portuguese chancellery in Goa as translators of diplomatic correspondence and their daily involvement in long-distance trade offered Brahmin families the necessary acquaintance with European styles of letter writing (see Chapter 8). Later, as the British established their imperial rule over India, an English translation of *Le secrétaire du cabinet* was printed in Calcutta in 1815.⁹¹

As the Hindus in Goa absorbed the conventions of letter writing elaborated in Christian Europe, so did European Jews. The large and eclectic library of Rabbi Semuel Abas, who died in Hamburg in 1691, included the two most popular French letter-writing chapbooks of the time: A. M. de Malherbe's *Le secrétaire de la cour* (in the 1645 edition) and Jean Puget de La Serre's *Le secrétaire à la mode* (in the 1655 edition).⁹² More generally, no such thing as a Sephardic *ars mercatoria* developed in early modern Europe. It was the youngest scion of a Sephardic family of Livorno who left for northern Europe, Abraham Meldola (1754–1826), who translated Sinapius's manual of business letter writing into Spanish and Portuguese in 1782.⁹³ A century earlier, in 1697, a Dutch Sephardi named Jacob de Metz wrote a booklet in Spanish with questions and answers about book-keeping. Hardly an original work, it drew heavily from earlier Dutch and French accounting books and simplified them a great deal.⁹⁴ In 1706, Gabriel de Souza Brito, another Amsterdam Sephardi, published a longer and more elaborate treatise on practical and financial mathematics; once again, large portions of it replicated earlier work, in this case the first Spanish treatise on double-entry bookkeeping, published by a Christian author in 1590.⁹⁵ In Livorno, the exceedingly large library of Rabbi Joseph Attias (nearly 1,250 volumes were put up for sale after his death in 1739) included many classics of the *ars mercatoria*, among them the main seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Italian treatises of commercial law (Ansaldo Ansaldo's *De commercio et mercatura discursus legales*, Giuseppe Lorenzo Maria Casaregi's *Discursus legales de commercio*, and Sigismondo Scaccia's *Tractatus de commerciis et cambio*), an authoritative French work about bills of exchange (Dupuis de la Serra's *Art des lettres de change*), and an early English merchant's manual (Richard Dafforne's *Merchants Mirror* in its second London edition of 1637).⁹⁶

The expression *boa correspondencia* (or its Italian equivalent, *buona corrispondenza*) appears time and again in Ergas and Silvera's business letters to indicate both a reliable letter exchange and a dependable business relation. Its

English equivalent at the time was "a good correspondency."⁹⁷ Ergas and Silvera employed this phrase whether they wrote to their partners in Aleppo, to other Sephardim such the Belilios or Mendes da Costa families, or to a French firm in Cyprus.⁹⁸ When addressing their long-term Hindu agents in Goa, perhaps because of the greater cultural and geographical distance that separated them, the partners did not use this phrase but repeatedly appealed to their reciprocal "correspondence."⁹⁹ The Kamats used similar words when they urged a Portuguese merchant to sustain their mutual and familiar correspondence ("na mutual e familiar correspondencia") or requested the honor of beginning one ("conseguir o honra de sua estimavel correspondencia").¹⁰⁰ At the time, all merchants conversed using this lexicon. When introducing himself to Gabriel de Silva in Bordeaux, André Pels of Amsterdam asked him to address any bills of exchange to Hamburg to their friend ("ami") Philip Henry Stenglin, with whom his company carried on a correspondence ("avec le quel nous sommes en correspondance").¹⁰¹ In his letter to the director of the Compagnie d'Afrique in Marseilles in 1775, an Italian Jew of Livorno called Jacob Bassano pleaded for the delight of his esteemed correspondence (le bonheur de votre très estimable correspondance).¹⁰²

A "good correspondency" was the most rewarding compensation for the many hours every merchant spent at his desk reading, dictating, and writing letters. It was more than a metaphor. It was part of the cost-benefit calculations of the price of trust. When was it advantageous to forgive the debt of a correspondent who might deliver in the future? Ergas and Silvera must have asked themselves this question several times. Once, they shared their reasoning in writing with a close agent: to preserve the good correspondency of a creditor in Mantua named Ottolenghi, they considered it well worth canceling his debt of about seventy-three pieces of eight.¹⁰³ Ottolenghi was an Italian Jew with whom Ergas and Silvera shared no family relations and who belonged to a different community; thus their decision was likely motivated by expectations of future rewards rather than compelled by social obligations. Once initiated, a good correspondency was never a given, because a merchant's trustworthiness could never be assumed. Sometimes it required considerable accommodation. Business letters provided the most important channel through which merchants articulated their calculations, prospects, warnings, and disappointments.

As noted in Chapter 5, not every trading diaspora was engaged in cross-cultural trade to the same extent or according to the same modalities. Iranian Armenians also relied heavily on business letters to give instructions to and exchange information with their traveling agents around the globe. Unlike the correspondence of Ergas and Silvera, however, surviving letters written by wealthy Julfa Arme-

nians in Isfahan, Venice, and elsewhere in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries are composed in a dialect that was incomprehensible to most non-Iranian Armenians. These letters were in fact addressed primarily if not exclusively to commenda partners selected from a restricted pool of families and did not extend to commission agents drawn from other merchant groups.¹⁰⁴

The language of the business correspondence that I have examined is part of the legacy of the association of commerce with communication and love that dates back to classical antiquity. Intellectual historians have studied the heritage and transformation of this idealized association and its crystallization in the eighteenth century, when conversation replaced reasons of state as the cornerstone of commercial society. Conversation in the eighteenth century was both a transformative social practice in the salons of the republic of letters and a figure of speech through which the first theorists of laissez-faire economics—David Hume, Adam Smith, and Condorcet in particular—thought of the market as well as the human condition. Conversation, in these optimistic, if naïve, formulations of economic liberalism, was a genuine, though not always disinterested, exchange through which merchants sought to tame uncertainties and determine equilibrium prices; it was also a vehicle for creating a nondogmatic moral order.¹⁰⁵ In the hands of Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, conversation was one of the ways in which friendship went from being a utilitarian obligation to becoming an ideal of universal "sympathy" toward strangers.¹⁰⁶ It is not a coincidence that this transformation occurred when European, and especially British, involvement in global affairs had reached unprecedented dimensions, inspiring both criticism and enthusiasm. In this sense, the daily operations of merchants who were active in long-distance trade were not disconnected from the realm of ideas. Merchants, moreover, including some Sephardim, constituted a large portion of the intended audience of the new philosophy. But friendship in competitive economic exchanges continued to maintain a strategic and self-interested meaning, even when it was dressed up in the civilizing rhetoric that social conventions required at the time.

The conversation that Ergas and Silvera, Paolo Girolamo Medici, the Mhamai Kamats, and other merchants carried on across cultural and geographical boundaries rested on a highly ritualized etiquette that rendered the terms of exchange comprehensible to all and turned social, economic, and legal credibility into an obligation. Defoe amused himself by listing the misunderstandings that could arise if orders and commissions in business letters to agents who lived in distant lands and spoke different languages were not expressed according to "a kind of a cant in trade, which a tradesman ought to know" and without which merchants "cannot understand one another."¹⁰⁷ This "cant" regularized com-

mercial relations in a world that lacked reliable technology and far-reaching legal institutions. It remained imbued with the lexicon of love, friendship, and reciprocity. But now, in contrast to the Middle Ages, the cherished qualification of "friend" could be extended even to certain infidels. Like their theoretically minded contemporaries, eighteenth-century merchants did not see strangers as a menace. But unlike them, they were concerned with finding a viable means of communicating with strangers for purely utilitarian purposes.

The etiquette of business letters that turned strangers into familiar associates served to signal economic and social credibility. It responded to contemporary mercantile customs as well as canons of civility. In a statement that sounded conventional at the time, Wiseman's *Epistolæ Commerciales* of 1779 opened by proclaiming that "Commerce . . . is the foundation of civil society, and the most necessary principle of true interest and real friendship, serving to unite all men, of [what] trade, country, condition soever they be." Civil society was bound by rules, and only by "strict adherence to various mercantile and technical terms of expression" outlined in the manual, Wiseman argued, could a merchant draft a letter that conformed to his correspondent's expectations. He had to use "circumspection" when jotting down his orders and his commitments in a letter, because they had economic and legal repercussions.¹⁰⁸ A merchant, added another manual, ought to write in a clear and precise manner to avoid making unreliable promises or giving a false image of himself. He was also advised to write in a relaxed ("aisé") style that approached a polite conversation ("approchant de la bonne conversation"). Finally, he ought to answer his letters promptly to enhance his reputation as a precise person ("homme exact") and to be brief, in order to avoid giving his correspondents the impression that he was not busy.¹⁰⁹

As the geographical borders of European trade expanded, merchants who did not originally speak European languages were drawn into this polite conversation. European empires spread norms of business conduct by means of violence and coercion as well as through the lure of market opportunities. Stateless diasporas such as the Sephardim contributed to the dissemination of these business norms. As a result, a cosmopolitan language of trade emerged during the early modern period and helped disparate merchants communicate, often but not always under the aegis of European power. This cosmopolitan language of trade was not coterminous with a cosmopolitan social world. In 1774 the Roux family of Marseilles asked Daudé and Duport in Lyon to consider their recommendation of an affluent Jewish merchant in Livorno named Hayyim Aghib. The correspondents accepted but reminded the Roux that, as good Catholics, they did not like Jews and normally did not do business with them.¹¹⁰ Letters by British merchants who regularly traded with Jews in the distribution of Madeira wine in

the eighteenth century also are punctuated with caricatures of them (a particularly offensive one referred to "all the little mean scrubbing dirty Jews").¹¹¹ Nor did a cosmopolitan etiquette of business letter writing automatically ensure the enforcement of contracts and obligations. In the following chapters I examine how Ergas and Silvera used legal contracts, customary norms, social pressure, and information networks to enforce their contractual obligations and agency relations in regions near and far.

ERGAS AND SILVERA'S HETEROGENEOUS TRADING NETWORKS

From everything I have said so far it should be clear that for Sephardic partnerships, kinship and religious ties were not necessarily inward-looking. Ergas and Silvera skillfully combined legal, rhetorical, economic, and social resources to build bridges to communities beyond their own. This chapter and the next look closely at the principal destinations of their commerce and the variety of business agents with whom they traded in each locality. I pursue two only apparently contradictory aims. I stress the adaptability of a partnership that neither traded solely with coreligionists nor always favored informal modes of governance. As we saw in Chapter 4, Ergas and Silvera's principal axis of trade, that between Livorno and the Levant, was greatly enhanced by the diplomatic protection granted them by the French. With diplomatic protection came naval and consular services and translocal governing institutions that certified property rights. I also emphasize the role of social networks in developing avenues of cross-cultural trade. As an analysis of the language of business letters has revealed the influence of legal transformations on rhetorical conventions, so social networks are not understood as unstructured, informal relations but as relations that incorporated customary mercantile norms and were embedded in community organization.

Overall, I focus on the most remote among the most frequent destinations of Ergas and Silvera's letters (see tables 8.1 and 8.2 and figure 8.1). I thus discuss Aleppo (along with Alexandretta, Cyprus, and other Ottoman ports), Venice, Genoa, Amsterdam, London, Marseilles, Lisbon, and Goa. These localities differed from one another in terms of their distance from Livorno and the assortment of correspondents dealing with Ergas and Silvera. I devote particular attention to Lisbon and Goa, where Ergas and Silvera engaged in cross-cultural

Table 8.1. Destinations of Ergas and Silvera's business letters in alphabetical order, 1704-46

<i>Destination</i>	<i>No. of letters</i>	<i>Destination</i>	<i>No. of letters</i>
Acre	68	Malta	10
Aleppo	514	Mantua	45
Alexandretta (Syria)	46	Marseilles	511
Alexandria	89	Messina	60
Algiers	1	Milan	11
Amsterdam	596	Modena	10
Ancona	5	Naples	56
Barcelona	2	Nice	49
Bayonne	12	Nuremberg	1
Bologna	46	Paris	5
Bordeaux	1	Pisa	29
Brescia	2	Port Mahon (Balearic Islands)	6
Cadiz	2	Portoferraio	2
Cairo	23	Reggio Emilia	460
Carrara	49	Rome	140
Civitavecchia	10	Rotterdam	1
Colle (Tuscany)	3	Roxetta (Egypt)	1
Cyprus	413	Safed	1
Ferrara	23	Sidon (Lebanon)	5
Finale di Modena	3	San Remo (Liguria)	30
Fivizzano (Tuscany)	2	Sarzana (Liguria)	13
Florence	1,459	Siena	1
Geneva	1	Smyrna	196
Genoa	3,588	Salonica	2
Gibraltar	15	Trapani	1
Goa	86	Tripoli (Lybia)	4
Hamburg	19	Tripoli (Lebanon)	10
Constantinople	47	Tunis	15
Leiden	1	Turin	16
Leipzig	1	Venice	4,012
Lisbon	242	Verona	2
Livorno	15	Vienna	12
London	552	Unknown	2
Lucca	15	Total	13,670

Sources: ASF, LCF, 1931, 1935-1939, 1941, 1945, 1953, 1957, 1960.

Table 8.2. Destinations of Ergas and Silveira's business letters, ranked by frequency, 1704-46

Destination	No. of letters	Destination	No. of letters
Venice	4,012	Bayonne	12
Genoa	3,588	Vienna	12
Florence	1,459	Milan	11
Amsterdam	596	Civitavecchia	10
London	552	Malta	10
Aleppo	514	Modena	10
Marseilles	511	Tripoli (Lebanon)	10
Reggio Emilia	460	Port Mahon (Balearic Islands)	6
Cyprus	413	Ancona	5
Lisbon	242	Paris	5
Smyrna	196	Sidon (Lebanon)	5
Rome	140	Tripoli (Lybia)	4
Alexandria	89	Colle (Tuscany)	3
Goa	86	Finale di Modena (Emilia)	3
Acre	68	Barcelona	2
Messina	60	Brescia (Lombardy)	2
Naples	56	Cadiz	2
Carrara	49	Fivizzano (Tuscany)	2
Nice	49	Portoferraio	2
Constantinople	47	Salonica	2
Alexandretta (Syria)	46	Verona	2
Bologna	46	Algiers	1
Mantua	45	Bordeaux	1
San Remo (Liguria)	30	Geneva	1
Pisa	29	Leiden	1
Cairo	23	Leipzig	1
Ferrara	23	Nürnberg	1
Hamburg	19	Rotterdam	1
Turin	16	Roxetta (Egypt)	1
Gibraltar	15	Safed	1
Livorno	15	Siena	1
Lucca	15	Trapani	1
Tunis	15	Unknown	2
Sarzana (Liguria)	13	Total	13,670

Sources: ASF, LCF, 1931, 1935-1939, 1941, 1945, 1953, 1957, 1960.

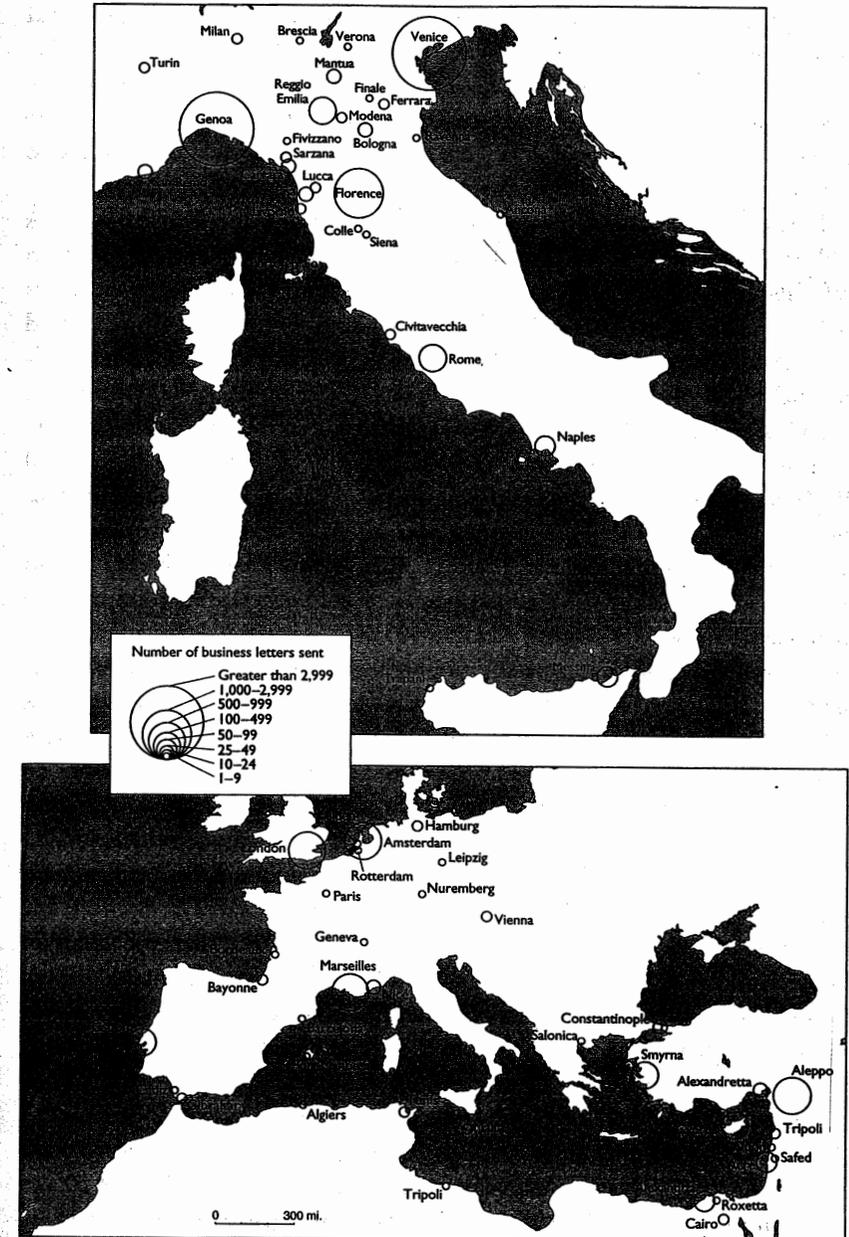


Figure 8.1. Destinations of Ergas and Silveira's letters, 1704-46. Sources: ASF, LCF, 1931, 1935-1939, 1941, 1945, 1953, 1957, 1960.

trade as I have defined it so far (not occasional transactions among strangers but steady commission agency between merchants who shared no "natural" affiliations) and where no overarching legal institutions provided them with effective control over their agents. Moreover, though Lisbon and Goa are less well-known in the secondary literature about eighteenth-century trade, they were central to the business initiatives of the Livornese Sephardim.¹

Kenneth Banks has called the commercial networks of families like the Gradis of Bordeaux, which included relatives in the Caribbean as well as high French officials, "cosmopolitan."² Ergas and Silvera's commission agents were more heterogeneous than the Gradis'. This chapter adds to the effort to understand what exactly "cosmopolitan" meant to merchants who engaged routinely in financial transactions with strangers while facing legal and social constrictions. That is, I project onto the global arena my analysis of communitarian cosmopolitanism. Self-interest was the prime mover of cross-cultural trade; it motivated Sephardim and others to explore new business opportunities. But the ambitions of self-interested merchants encountered legal, social, and cultural obstacles.

Whenever possible, Ergas and Silvera opted for the most capable agents. In Amsterdam and London, however, they only hired other Sephardim because their economic specialization in northern Europe was restricted to a few activities in which Sephardim figured prominently. At the same time, they always preferred influential coreligionists to close kin of dubious proficiency. Similarly, in the Ottoman Empire, they traded almost exclusively with relatives and coreligionists but resorted to dealing with Christians when it was advantageous to do so and offered their services on a regular basis. Venice was an important commodities and financial market as well as a link to the Levant; Livornese Sephardim had many contacts there. Ergas and Silvera relied primarily on coreligionists in Venice but also traded with Christian merchants. Finally, the fact that Jews were expelled from Marseilles, Lisbon, and Goa did not keep Sephardim away. In all three localities, but especially in Lisbon and Goa, Ergas and Silvera developed long-term agency relations with utter strangers.

In what follows I use evidence from their correspondence, notary and other records, and the secondary literature to document the conditions under which this partnership operated in various localities. For each port city examined, I draw attention to the patterns of trade that the partners encountered, to existing policies and prevailing attitudes toward Jews, and to the different groups of commission agents whom Ergas and Silvera hired (relatives, other Western Sephardim, Jews in general, and non-Jews). Among the most interesting finding of this close scrutiny is that, contrary to what we might expect, it does not reveal an automatic correlation between the social and geographical distance of cor-

respondents, on one hand, and the types of institutions that might intervene in the governance of agency relations, on the other. Instead, the mixture of legal enforcement, political protection, and social pressure varied depending on the regions and trades rather than the business agents' identity. Thus, whereas in Amsterdam and Venice Ergas and Silvera could count on tribunals to protect their property rights and settle their disputes with coreligionists and non-Jews, in Lisbon and Goa they were at pains to go to court. That is, I do not find that the intervention of formal institutions was a prerequisite for cross-cultural trade. I am unable to estimate the frequency with which Ergas and Silvera appointed representatives abroad to litigate on their behalf, but recall the distinction made in Chapter 6 between agency contracts and all other types of contracts (marine insurance, bills of lading, written partnership agreements, bills of exchange, powers of attorney, and so forth). Only the latter could be upheld in court. In Chapter 10 I examine the only major lawsuit in which Ergas and Silvera were involved.

Because the number of letters sent to a specific destination is not an exact measure of the number of transactions conducted by Ergas and Silvera, and because it is impossible to conduct a systematic comparison between the transactions registered in their account-books and in their letters, a statistical analysis of this correspondence is of limited utility. A few considerations are nonetheless pertinent. Ergas and Silvera's letter books cover the period from 16 December 1704 to 4 February 1746.³ The bulk of their correspondence is made up of "ordinary" letters treating a variety of subjects; only thirty-seven are "specialized" letters, in this case, copies of bills of exchange.⁴ Though smaller than the largest extant collections of business letters from medieval and early modern Europe, this corpus is nevertheless remarkable in size.⁵ It is a particularly significant addition to the scarce business records of Western Sephardim and New Christians, and it is comparable to those of the Gradis and de Silvas of Bordeaux.⁶ Finally, it details trade in regions such as the Levant and Portuguese India for which scholars normally rely on the official records of European chartered companies more than on private business papers.⁷

The infrastructure of communication is a major reason why the frequency with which a locality appears in Ergas and Silvera's letter books is not a precise mirror of its relevance to the partnership's overall commercial activities. It would have been superfluous to write to Goa more than once a year given that the Portuguese ships that sailed along the Cape of Good Hope only left Lisbon in the first months of the year and took half a year to reach their destination. In contrast, a courier traveled between Livorno, Florence, and Venice several times each week. In addition, the autonomy bestowed on Elijah Silvera in Aleppo ac-

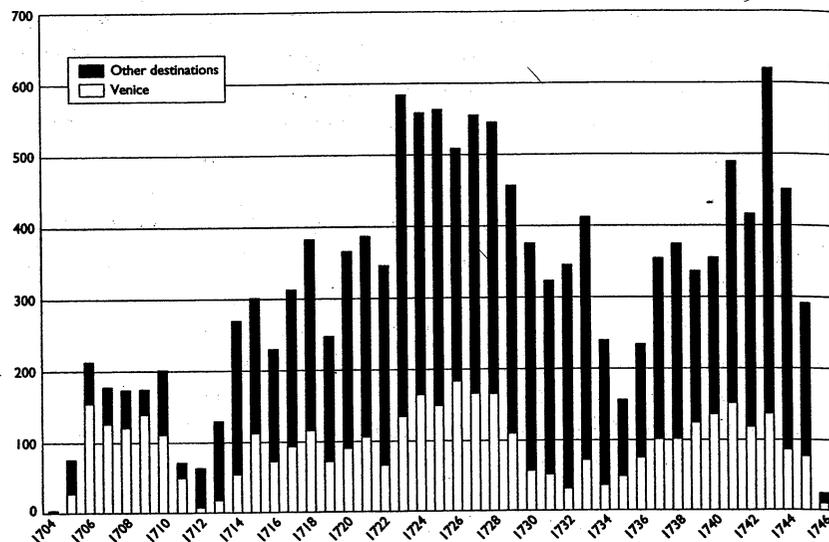


Figure 8.2. Number of letters sent by Ergas and Silvera, 1704-46.

Sources: ASF, LCF, 1931, 1935-1939, 1941, 1945, 1953, 1957, 1960.

counts for the fact that his relatives in Livorno wrote him fewer but longer and more detailed letters than the ones that they sent elsewhere.

It is also difficult to establish whether the number of letters written in a year is a good proxy of the partnership's general well-being. The intensity of correspondence could actually have a negative correlation to trade: the need to retrieve a lost cargo or pursue a recalcitrant correspondent, for example, would generate a rise in letter-writing. Venice, the destination most frequently represented in Ergas and Silvera's correspondence, accounts for between 9 percent (1732) and 80 percent (1709) of the letters they sent every year (for a yearly average of about 30 percent). Figure 8.2 suggests that after a slow beginning, Ergas and Silvera's activities began to take off once the War of the Spanish Succession was over in 1713 and flourished throughout the next fifteen years in conjunction with a favorable period for European trade in the Levant and renewed relations with Portuguese India. This trajectory, at least in the Mediterranean (for which the secondary literature is more abundant), is consistent with English records of high profits from the exportation of Aleppo silk in the years 1712-17.⁸ Despite the shock caused by the financial crisis of 1720, the French also expanded their trade in the Levant between 1715 and 1724.⁹ The crisis of the port of Livorno in

1729-31 seems to have affected Ergas and Silvera as well, although Aleppo suffered less than did Constantinople and Smyrna in those years.¹⁰

In the years 1730-44, the years for which Ergas and Silvera's account books survive, there indeed exists a rough correlation between their financial condition and the pace of their correspondence. From January 1730 to November 1732, the partners handled transactions involving about ninety-six thousand pieces of eight, with an annual surplus of about thirteen hundred pieces after accounting for all partners' living expenses.¹¹ Between 1732 and 1735 their turnover nearly doubled, but they accumulated debts at the same time their outgoing correspondence slowed down.¹² The drop in the number of letters in 1735 coincided with a financial setback that Ergas and Silvera suffered in 1735-37, when their annual budget dropped to about twenty-seven thousand pieces and they ran a deficit.¹³ These were difficult years for the French trade in Aleppo, where as many as eighteen English ships but only four French vessels delivered their cargo in 1736.¹⁴ The death of David Silvera, a founding member of the partnership together with Moses Ergas, may also have caused some trouble, although his son immediately took his place in the company. After 1740, Ergas and Silvera's budget picked up again, with a turnover of between thirty-seven thousand and fifty-five thousand pieces.¹⁵ Their correspondence fluctuated in tandem with their fortunes in the 1740s, if perhaps inflated by the letter writing that accompanied the unfolding of the intricate affair that in fact brought this partnership to an end.

ALEPPO, THE LEVANT, AND NORTH AFRICA

On 22 October 1743, Ergas and Silvera addressed a letter to a Sephardic merchant in Hamburg, Jorge Henrique Janquel, with whom they had never traded before. They presented him with the recommendation of a mutual acquaintance, Daniel Henrique Sousa of Amsterdam. They highlighted the services they could offer Janquel. Their specialty, they wrote, was the Levantine trade, which they carried out mostly by bartering goods on behalf of third parties. So that Janquel knew, they ordinarily shipped raw cotton to Hamburg from Cyprus and Acre, as well as red and blue yarn from Aleppo, various natural dyestuffs, and other Middle Eastern products; in Hamburg they purchased good-quality amber, glass beads, and other goods.¹⁶ In the 1740s Hamburg no longer hosted a thriving Sephardic community, but it surpassed Amsterdam in the Atlantic trade and thus remained a reference point for the Sephardim of southern Europe.¹⁷

Ergas and Silvera were always eager to expand their opportunities to sell Italian and Levantine goods in northern Europe. After the Levant Company became

the target of fierce criticism by London merchants because of its monopoly on British trade in the eastern Mediterranean, in 1744 the House of Commons agreed to open membership in the company to all British subjects for a fee. The Sephardim of Livorno welcomed the news, especially given the sudden rise in the price of Levantine silk in London that year. Ergas and Silvera immediately wrote Benjamin Mendes da Costa in London that they were ready to carry out his orders in Aleppo.¹⁸ The House of Lords soon reaffirmed the monopoly of the Levant Company, which lasted until 1753, in part for fear that British Jews would seize the trade.¹⁹ But the eagerness with which the Sephardim of Livorno rushed to enter this commerce reveals their long experience as intermediaries between northern and southern markets and their readiness to compete with a chartered company.

After the Ottoman conquest in 1516, Aleppo had developed into an administrative capital, a center of learning and culture, a manufacturing town, as well as a regional and international market that stood at the crossroads of major caravan routes connecting it to Baghdad, Damascus, and Tripoli. Aleppo was located about seventy-five miles from the coast. It had long relied on the port facilities of Tripoli when in the late sixteenth century the Ottoman authorities built a new port, Alexandretta (İskenderun), where European ships loaded and unloaded merchandise. Alexandretta was a two-to-five-day trip by mule or camel to Aleppo. So inhospitable was this new settlement, and so dangerous the caravan road to Aleppo because of frequent assaults by local brigands, that very few European merchants and factors resided there; most traveled to Alexandretta from Aleppo on the ships' arrival, and several used pigeons to send information from the port to the town. In the mid-eighteenth century the British consul complained about the lack of officials willing to serve in the port, the poverty of its infrastructure (warehouses included), and the "insalubrity of the air."²⁰ Ergas and Silvera sometimes sent their own emissary to Alexandretta but more often relied on the services of French and Italian brokers.²¹

Among the concrete benefits of being associated with the French in Aleppo was the ability to use their officials to oversee loading and unloading operations in Alexandretta and certify property rights. In 1743 Ergas and Silvera lamented the absence of two bales of cotton that they expected from Alexandretta on a French ship. They believed that the consignment might have erroneously gone to Marseilles and asked the French vice-consul in Alexandretta to inquire with the Chamber of Commerce to determine whether they could retrieve the cotton.²² The French naval services were also of utmost importance to the Livornese Sephardim in Aleppo. Two and a half weeks after a royal edict issued on 4 April 1727 again forbade Jews from trading directly between Aleppo and Mar-

seilles, Ergas and Silvera assured their Amsterdam correspondents that this legislation would not curtail their ability to load goods being sent to and from Aleppo on board French vessels.²³ When they felt mistreated by the French, however, the Livornese Sephardim threatened to turn to the English or the Dutch, and they did so when military and diplomatic conditions made it necessary or advantageous.²⁴ This strategic cosmopolitanism, which nineteenth-century critics would condemn for its lack of national allegiances, was an ordinary matter then:

The merchandise that Ergas and Silvera exchanged in Aleppo did not differ from the standard European exports to the Levant: fine silk textiles woven in Florence, Lucca, Genoa, Reggio Emilia, and elsewhere (*ormesini*, *rasi*, damasks and velvets from Florence and Genoa, French satins, and *tabis* and *moirés* from Napoli and Messina), French and English woolens, dyestuffs (cochineal, indigo, and brazilwood), small quantities of American sugar, Venetian and Dutch glass beads, Venetian mirrors and paper, amber, coral, and lesser amounts of pepper (mostly from British India), nutmeg, and English tin.²⁵ From Aleppo the partners imported cotton yarn and cotton wool, by far the most requested commodities in their letters to the Levant, but also angora wool and various goods including pepper and rice. In spite of the structural change in the international patterns of trade between Europe and Asia that occurred in the early seventeenth century, advantaging the sea route around the Cape of Good Hope, Ergas and Silvera rejoiced at the abundance of South Asian goods that arrived in Aleppo overland and struggled to time their shipments to Aleppo in accordance with the departures of the caravans to Baghdad, Mosul, Basra, and Mecca.²⁶ In 1743 they informed their valued customer Benjamin Mendes da Costa in London of the lively traffic between Aleppo and Surat that was conducted twice a year by caravan, which included overland shipments of coral.²⁷

Silk does not figure prominently in Ergas and Silvera's correspondence. By the early eighteenth century, raw cotton had replaced silk as the major staple exported from Aleppo to Europe. In the course of the sixteenth century, with the decline of the overland spice trade, Aleppo had become the main market for Iranian raw silk, which was the principal European import from the Levant. Armenians figured prominently in this trade until the first half of the eighteenth century, when the exportation of Persian silk was disrupted after the fall of the Safavid rulers in 1722 and the anarchy ensuing from the invasion and rule by Nādir Shāh from 1736 to 1747.²⁸ Europeans began to buy Syrian silk from areas around Antioch, the coastal plains, and Lebanon, thus contributing to the rise of Smyrna.²⁹ Meanwhile, after 1730 the English imported more silk from Bengal and China by ship than from the Levant.³⁰ The declining silk trade was offset by

a spectacular rise in the exportation of cotton cloth and yarn from the Syrian coast. This shift had already begun in the late seventeenth century with the exportation of Levantine common textiles and Indian fine cotton textiles.³¹ But it was in the eighteenth century that raw cotton was loaded in large quantities on board European, and especially French, ships at Syrian ports. The volume of cotton loaded on French vessels in the Levant from 1700 to 1789 increased fivefold.³² Data about the importation of cotton wool and cotton thread to Livorno from 1676 to 1737 show that it increased in the years 1701–5 and peaked in 1728–32.³³ It is not a coincidence that when they began their operations in 1704, Ergas and Silvera entered this trade.

With a well-placed partner in Aleppo, they had little need to correspond with others there; this explains the small fraction of letters (25 out of 514) written from Livorno to Aleppo that are addressed to anyone other than Elijah Silvera.³⁴ Aleppo was the heart of their activities in the Ottoman Empire. Ergas and Silvera had only sporadic contact with Salonica, where textile manufacturing had peaked more than a century earlier. Instead, they traded extensively with the island of Cyprus (where as many as 413 of their letters were sent), which had the finest raw cotton in the region and was a natural stop along the sea route between Livorno and Aleppo.³⁵ In the Levantine ports where Jews were less of a presence than in Aleppo, such as in Cyprus, Tripoli, and Acre, Ergas and Silvera corresponded exclusively with French, English, Dutch, and Italian merchants; they once served the Catholic bishop of Cyprus, who resided in Rome.³⁶ Smyrna was then a more important center of international commerce than Aleppo; it provided easier access to the sea and was a more diversified emporium.³⁷ Jewish traders trafficked regularly between Smyrna, Livorno, and Amsterdam.³⁸ Ergas and Silvera maintained close ties with two well-known Livornese Jews who operated in Smyrna under French protection, Jacob Jesurum and Nunes da Costa.³⁹ The number of Western Sephardim there was smaller than in Aleppo, however, and they were less influential than the Greek Orthodox community.⁴⁰

Constantinople served Ergas and Silvera, as all other European partnerships, primarily as a financial center where they could draw bills of exchange when they needed cash in addition to merchandise for their purchases in the Levant.⁴¹ Few Western Sephardim resided there. The partners' main correspondents in Constantinople were Venetian traders: Gad Conegliano, an Italian Jew, and Domenico Pisani, a Christian. Venetians had deep roots in Constantinople and served other Europeans there.⁴² Indeed, Venice continued to be an essential link to the Levant for Ergas and Silvera and many others.⁴³ Constantinople was also a node of postal service, and some copies of letters to and from Aleppo traveled to the Ottoman capital, whence they were shipped to either Vienna or Naples.⁴⁴

The activities of Ergas and Silvera in North Africa were far less intense and, predictably, depended on agency relations with other Jews, by and large Sephardim operating under French protection, such as the Alameida and Flores families in Alexandria.⁴⁵ While the role of Alexandria as a supplier of mocha coffee and Indian spices had declined due to the influx of American staples, Tunis grew in the eighteenth century as a source of grain, oil, leather, and wool for Europe. The partners relied on two of the most prominent Sephardic merchant houses in Tunis: the Lombrosos and the Camposes. Their involvement in the North African trade, however, was subsidiary. As seen in Chapter 2, a different segment of the Jewish merchant class in Livorno was occupied in this branch.⁴⁶

VENICE

Venice was by far the most frequent destination of Ergas and Silvera's letters. The prominence of the Adriatic port in their networks may appear to contradict the common view that the decline of the Venetian economy after the mid-seventeenth century was coupled with the rise of Livorno as the alternative Italian port and emporium of eastern goods. But in the eyes of merchants like Ergas and Silvera, Venice and Livorno were complementary rather than rival markets. For the Tuscan Sephardim, Venice fulfilled several major functions: in the early eighteenth century, it was still an international center of information, a port with close links to the Levant, and a large entrepôt, as well as a center for the manufacture of luxury goods. It was also a financial capital that offered competing opportunities for negotiating bills of exchange, purchasing marine insurance and sea loans, and investing in the public debt.⁴⁷ In the mid-seventeenth century, Portuguese Jews and New Christians became important agents in the Venetian money market. That was also the time when Ergas and Silvera's predecessors engaged in financial operations in Venice, where they relied on their coreligionists to offer Christian correspondents (such as the Saminiati of Tuscan) credit and currency conversion.⁴⁸ Finally, Venice was both a nearby outlet of rough diamonds imported from India and a place to find skilled stonemasons and jewelers.⁴⁹

Perhaps more significant, Venice remained home to a sizeable Sephardic settlement. The first three decades of the eighteenth century were particularly vexed for its Jewish community: unable to meet the exorbitant financial requests of the government, it went bankrupt in 1735.⁵⁰ Along with the financial crisis came the emigration of many Portuguese families to Livorno as well as to Amsterdam, London, and Hamburg. Some, however, have argued that this bleak picture concerned the administrative base of the Venetian Jews (l'Università

degli Ebrei) but not all of its individual members. The increasing withdrawal of Venetian patricians from commerce left room for greater participation by Jews in the Levantine trade and the grain trade, in some manufacturing businesses in which guild control was lax (such as chemical production), and in the shipping and financial sectors.⁵¹ Although we lack systematic studies of the economic activities of the Jews of Venice during the eighteenth century, there are signs of their continued contribution to the city's economy and commerce.⁵² Many families of Western Sephardim who were active in Mediterranean trade continued to move between Livorno and Venice and to intermarry.

The trajectory of the Ergas family is indicative of both the relative decline and the resilience of the Venetian marketplace and its Jewish community. In the early seventeenth century several members of the Ergas family came to reside in Venice, including the merchant Jacob Ergas.⁵³ At a time when many Sephardim, including members of that family, left for Livorno, Jacob remained in Venice, where he traded in precious stones and worked as a jeweler.⁵⁴ Several trials initiated against him and his son Moses by members of the jewelers' guild between 1637 and 1659 suggest that they posed significant competition.⁵⁵ After Jacob's death sometime in the third quarter of the seventeenth century, David Ergas appeared among the contributing members of the Ponentine nation until 1690, but his tax payments were modest.⁵⁶ When Ergas and Silvera was founded in 1704, therefore, it did not count on any immediate relative in Venice, or at least no one active in long-distance trade. They thus sent Isaac Ergas—brother of Moses, the partnership's founder—to supervise various businesses in Venice.⁵⁷ There Isaac purchased, sold, and bartered silk textiles, precious stones, glassware, and other goods, procured marine insurance for the cargo loaded on ships sailing to Aleppo, and speculated on currency exchanges.⁵⁸

As Ergas and Silvera established a wider network of correspondents in Venice, they routinely used Jewish and Christian agents. Their cooperation with many Christian merchants is an important measure of the Sephardim's ability to penetrate the complexity of Venetian markets.⁵⁹ Ergas and Silvera bought large quantities of glass beads and mirrors, especially small semi-finished mirrors that were sold in bulk in North Africa and the Levant.⁶⁰ They also remained attentive to any new developments in the city's economy. In 1735, on the recommendation of Samuel Nunes Carvaglio, they offered the services of their partners in Aleppo to a newly formed joint-stock company whose primary activity since 1720 had been in the textile sector.⁶¹

Three Sephardic families were Ergas and Silvera's principal agents and suppliers in Venice: the Baruch Carvaglios, the Belilioses, and the Bonfils. All three of these families were connected by marriage and economic ties in Livorno and

Venice and extended their presence to Aleppo. In Chapter 5 I noted that in 1667, at the peak of their commercial success, Moses and Isaac Baruch Carvaglio arranged for their niece to marry into the prosperous Attias family of Livorno. After losing much of their fortune in Venice in the 1680s, more members of the Baruch Carvaglio family looked for alternatives in Livorno. In 1722 Isaac Carvaglio was among those who fled to the Tuscan port during the financial crisis that struck the Jewish community of Venice.⁶² Six years later, his brother Jacob also moved to Tuscany, where he established a prosperous commercial house.⁶³ The grand duke supported the resettlement of this and other Sephardic families and in 1732–33 defended their right not to settle their debts with the Venetian Jewish community in response to attempts made by the Venetian Senate to bring Jewish merchants back to the lagoon.⁶⁴ The close cooperation between the Baruch Carvaglios in Venice and those in Livorno continued through the 1730s, when Jacob, his brother Aaron, and his sons Abraham and Moses were running a large family business with operations in Livorno, Amsterdam, and Venice.⁶⁵ This was also the time when David Ergas married Blanca Rebecca Baruch Carvaglio (see Chapters 1 and 5 and figures 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3).

As did many of their peers, the Baruch Carvaglios sent one of their young scions, Manuel, to Aleppo in 1745. When Manuel died in December 1747 or in early January 1748, his father gave power of attorney to Isaac and Joseph Belilios in Aleppo to administer his son's estate and retrieve any outstanding credits he might have.⁶⁶ The Belilios family had settled in Venice in the early seventeenth century.⁶⁷ A century later, they operated in Venice, Livorno, and Aleppo.⁶⁸ In Livorno, they caucused with the faction that included Isaac Carvaglio in the Jewish nation.⁶⁹ Men and women of the Belilios and the Baruch Carvaglio families intermarried for at least three generations in Livorno, Venice, and Aleppo. In the early eighteenth century, Jacob Belilios married Blanca, daughter of Jacob Baruch Carvaglio, and Blanca's brother, Abraham Baruch Carvaglio, married Sarah Belilios; the latter's daughter, Esther, later married Daniel Saccuto in Aleppo.⁷⁰ Moreover, Isaac and Jacob Belilios worked closely with Elijah Silvera in Aleppo.

Related to the Baruch Carvaglios were the Bonfils. In 1712, Rachel, daughter of Benjamin Nunes Carvaglio and cousin of Isaac Baruch Carvaglio, married Saul Bonfil.⁷¹ Born in Constantinople, where one of his brothers still resided, Saul had arrived in Venice six years earlier.⁷² There he set up a partnership with his brother Daniel that had a branch in Venice and one in Livorno, and they met with considerable success.⁷³ When Saul revised his testament in 1759, he bequeathed to his only son Jacob a generous estate including £4,000 in English East India Company stock.⁷⁴ In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the

Bonfils were the second-wealthiest Jewish merchant family in Venice, after the Treves.⁷⁵

Daniel Bonfil, Joseph and Jacob Belilios, and Jacob Baruch Carvaglio were Ergas and Silvera's principal commission agents in Venice; the Belilioses also became their partners in a risky venture. These three families belonged to the upper crust of Western Sephardic society in the Mediterranean. They were active in the same branches of trade, and their personal destinies crisscrossed constantly as a result of well-planned marriage alliances. These generated significant transfers of capital (via dowries) as well as multifaceted relationships that facilitated the transmission of credit and credibility and lowered monitoring costs. In other ports, Ergas and Silvera could not count on similar connections to other Sephardim and yet were able to develop durable agency relations, in this case, with strangers.

GENOA

The second most frequent destination of Ergas and Silvera's letters was Genoa. This ancient maritime republic no longer competed with Livorno as an emporium, but its geographical position made Genoa a natural port-of-call for ships in the Mediterranean, including all those directed to or from Marseilles and across the Strait of Gibraltar. Its proximity to Livorno made Genoa a major redistribution center for Ergas and Silvera, who reexported silk from southern Italy as well as cotton and other Levantine goods. From Genoa, they imported great quantities of coral and some Brazilian tobacco arriving via Portugal.⁷⁶ Less important to them was the continued role that Genoa played in the eighteenth century as a redistribution center of Spanish silver for the Levantine trade.⁷⁷

The rivalry between Genoa and Livorno was greater than that between Venice and Livorno. In order to steer ships away from Livorno, Genoese authorities passed several laws reducing customs duties for grains and selected merchandise beginning in 1590. But these provisions met with less success than similar ones had in Livorno because the Genoese free port legislation was constantly revised and was never accompanied by adequate incentives to attract foreign merchants. Moreover, Genoa was a satellite in Spain's political orbit until 1654 and thus a target of Spain's enemies in times of war.⁷⁸ In order to protect its share of the market, the Genoese government imposed an additional 10 percent duty on all goods arriving from Livorno after 1715.⁷⁹ Initially, the Tuscan authorities did not retaliate, but given the disastrous consequences of the plague of Marseilles and the bankruptcy of John Law, Livorno imposed an additional tariff on goods arriving from Genoa (coral, tobacco, English cloth, and Indian cotton) in 1722.⁸⁰

In the midst of this tariff war, Livorno's appeal remained stronger than Genoa's because the Tuscan port had a stronger position in the Mediterranean trade. In the summer of 1723, Corsican coral fishermen offered Tuscan authorities a good deal: they would bring their coral directly to Livorno in exchange for an exemption from all remaining customs duties.⁸¹

Genoa's attempts to battle Livorno by favoring the settlement of Jewish traders and other foreign merchants were hesitant and ineffective. In 1622 Armenians were expelled from Marseilles. This gave Genoa the opportunity to attract them two years later, but the conditions of the port were such that this initiative failed. A few Portuguese New Christians responded to the privileges issued for them in 1648 and in 1685.⁸² The Jewish community of Genoa, however, never competed with that of Livorno. In the 1660s it comprised about forty families; this number fell to twenty-two families in 1704-6 and fell further to seventy individuals in 1763, after a financial crisis.⁸³ In economic terms, Jews in Genoa were largely dependent on those in Livorno. The Ergases were among the Sephardim who tightened their connections to Genoa.⁸⁴ Most Jewish merchants and bankers in Genoa, however, remained marginal to the city's economy. Ergas and Silvera therefore often resorted to the services of Christian merchants, some from distinguished aristocratic families, who were active in Livorno and maintained a presence in Iberia. In so doing, they developed ties to non-Jews who were interconnected by commercial and financial networks that spanned from Livorno to Genoa, Lisbon, and Venice.

The coral trade offers an example of the mutual dependence of Christian and Jewish merchants in these cities. In the eighteenth century Genoa was primarily a supplier of raw coral for the factories of Livorno. Ergas and Silvera found a number of regular Jewish agents in Genoa, including Moses Fuà, the partners Meneses and Alvares, Manuel and Joseph da Costa, Lazzaro Sacerdoti, and Jacob Rosas. Not all, however, proved to be capable or reliable. Two Livornese Sephardim now transplanted to Genoa, Moses Baruch Carvaglio and Abraham Lusena, also procured coral for Ergas and Silvera; closer ties with these two agents allowed Ergas and Silvera to keep them on a short leash. Finally, to better oversee their trade, in 1743 Ergas and Silvera appointed Isaac Coen Lusena as their representative in Genoa.⁸⁵ Another member of the Lusena family from Livorno, one who had converted to Catholicism as Giuseppe Giustiniani and moved to Genoa, continued to provide links to Sephardim in Tuscany, including Ergas and Silvera.⁸⁶

Given the instability of Jewish mercantile society in Genoa, Ergas and Silvera enlarged their circle of correspondents to include some of the wealthiest merchant-bankers and aristocratic families in town, especially the Cambiasos,

Lastricos, and Lomellini.⁸⁷ These families commanded considerable fortunes and also offered Ergas and Silvera essential connections to Lisbon, where they exported coral once it had been polished and packaged in Livorno. The brothers Lazzaro Maria and Gianandrea Cambiaso, as we will see, were among Ergas and Silvera's principal agents in Lisbon. So was the Giudice family from Ceruo, a coral fishing village in Liguria. In 1720, Giacomo Giudice had partners and correspondents in Cadiz, Lisbon, Amsterdam, Venice, Livorno, and London.⁸⁸ From his base in Lisbon, one of Ergas and Silvera's loyal agents, Paolo Girolamo Medici, also corresponded with some Cambiasos in Genoa and was acquainted with the same family in Lisbon.⁸⁹ On more than one occasion Ergas and Silvera called on the Cambiasos who ran the family business in Venice.⁹⁰ Finally, the Cambiaso and Giudice partnerships also had branches in Livorno.⁹¹ In short, Livornese Sephardim were eager to work with Christian commission agents and suppliers when they were better positioned in the market than their coreligionists. The presence of a cluster of individuals and families in the nodal points of Ergas and Silvera's commercial networks facilitated this endeavor by creating overlapping channels of information transmission.

AMSTERDAM

Whereas in Venice and Genoa Ergas and Silvera dealt with both Jewish and non-Jewish agents, in Amsterdam and London they only corresponded with other Sephardim.⁹² But seldom did they contact family members there. Jacob Silvera, a cousin of the Silveras of Livorno and Aleppo, resided in the Dutch capital. He occasionally served his cousins but failed to establish himself as a major player.⁹³ Completely absent from Ergas and Silvera's correspondence is Daniel de Medina, Esther Ergas's husband, who had relocated to Amsterdam.⁹⁴ Finally, none of the Ergases of Amsterdam, such as the brothers Moses, Abraham, and Raphael Ergas, who participated in Dutch colonial trade with the East and West Indies until 1732, ever served Ergas and Silvera.⁹⁵

Abraham Ergas once called on his in-laws, Ferdinand and Jacob Rodrigues Silva, who had moved to Amsterdam from Bordeaux or operated a partnership there, for a commission agency, only to be disappointed by their services. In January 1737, Ergas and Silvera shipped them small uncut diamonds weighing a total of fifty carats with the usual request to sell the stones at the best available price. A month and a half later, the Silvas wrote saying that the stones were found to weigh forty-eight rather than fifty carats and to be "very ordinary." So low was the price at which they sold the stones (eight florins per carat) that Ergas and Silvera regretted having to pay a commission and informed them that the

Armenian merchant to whom the diamonds belonged was no longer interested in doing business with them.⁹⁶

Ergas and Silvera turned more frequently to Joseph de los Rios, whose extended family had branches in Livorno, Amsterdam, London, Aleppo, and the Caribbean and who was related to Moses Ergas, the founder of the partnership, through his wife.⁹⁷ They chose other correspondents from the Sephardic merchants of Amsterdam, and especially among those with ties to Livorno or London: Solomon Gomes (cousin of Benjamin Mendes da Costa of London), Jacob and Elijah Nunes Bernal, David Osorio Jr., Joseph Medina and sons, Moses Baruch Carvalho, and Isaac da Costa Attias and sons.⁹⁸

This group of coreligionists was well-placed to deliver the services that Ergas and Silvera sought in Amsterdam. They could place Levantine goods on the market and had a firm footing in the diamond industry.⁹⁹ They could also supply competitive marine insurance policies for Ergas and Silvera and could purchase Dutch lottery tickets for them. The latter provided a safe investment because they yielded a fixed return after a period of twenty years and every year were drawn by lottery to allow a fortunate few to redeem their investment in advance.¹⁰⁰

In the first half of the eighteenth century, Amsterdam lost ground to London as chief European entrepôt and financial center. The most aggressive among the Dutch Sephardim began to redirect part of their investments across the Channel.¹⁰¹ The majority of Amsterdam Sephardim in the meantime had turned their backs on the Mediterranean and, especially after Dutch Brazil was lost to the Portuguese in 1654, had shifted the focus of their operations to the Caribbean, where in 1659 Jews obtained freedom of worship in Curaçao. Investments in the Dutch sugar plantations grew exponentially. Moreover, until the end of the War of the Spanish Succession in 1713, somewhat paradoxically, the fortunes of Amsterdam Sephardim were also tied to the Spanish Crown, to whose imperial domains they supplied great numbers of African slaves.¹⁰²

The Sephardic influence on the Dutch economy declined after 1713, at the same time as Amsterdam's colonial and financial sectors began to lag behind England's. And yet Holland remained important for partnerships such as Ergas and Silvera. First of all, Amsterdam was home both to the largest Sephardic community in Europe and the center of the diamond industry. In addition, the weakness of the Dutch in the Levantine trade left room for Jews to play a role because they had better connections to northern Europe than did the Greeks and the Armenians. Nevertheless, the most prosperous Livornese Sephardim began to look beyond the Dutch capital and toward England. In a 1727 letter to Joseph de los Rios in Amsterdam, Ergas and Silvera called attention to the profits made

by the Francos in exporting Levantine goods to London. They aimed to emulate them, although they never attained the same success. In fact, the two firms were likely rivals rather than allies.¹⁰³

LONDON

In the early eighteenth century, London was asserting its primacy in international trade. Meanwhile, especially after a Dutch sovereign, William of Orange, came to the throne in 1688, its Sephardic settlement had grown from a small colony to a respectable community. A new majestic Spanish and Portuguese synagogue was inaugurated at Bevis Marks in 1701. Most Sephardic families arrived in London from Amsterdam, and the two communities remained highly interdependent. More refugees came from Spain and Portugal, especially during the 1720s, when inquisitorial persecution in Portugal intensified. A smaller contingent of Jewish families from Livorno and Venice sent their scions to London, the Ergas family among them. Ashkenazic refugees from central and eastern Europe grew at a fast pace after the 1690s but did not outnumber the Sephardim until the 1740s.

The Sephardim of London were shippers and ship owners, brokers and financiers, import and export merchants of both commodities and bullion, jewelers and diamond traders, and contractors for the army and navy, as well as notaries, scribes, and doctors. But their contribution to the English economy has often been overestimated, in part as a result of a pamphlet called *Philo-Patria*, written by Joseph Salvador to sponsor an act of Parliament for the naturalization of all Spanish and Portuguese Jews in 1753. Salvador grossly inflated his calculations to argue for the desirability of Sephardic merchants; eventually, his political initiative provoked a popular outcry and generated a backlash. Modern and more reliable estimates indicate that Jews accounted for no more than 1 or 2 percent of English overseas trade.¹⁰⁴ Their contribution was particularly important in the trade with the Caribbean and the Canary Islands but was not comparable to the role of Amsterdam Sephardim in the Dutch Atlantic.¹⁰⁵ Legal constraints, together with demographic and financial limitations, explain this limited impact. The number of licensed Jewish brokers on the Royal Exchange was capped at 12 (of 124) after 1697. There were no restrictions on investments in the Bank of England and the stock market.¹⁰⁶ But as aliens, foreign Sephardim were at a disadvantage in colonial trade. Only the wealthiest among them could undergo the lengthy and expensive process of becoming British subjects.¹⁰⁷

The contrast with Amsterdam, where anybody could trade regardless of nationality and legal status, was startling. There was, however, one branch of En-

glish long-distance trade in which Jews participated vigorously, thanks to special provisions made by the English East India Company: the exchange of Mediterranean coral and Indian diamonds.¹⁰⁸ This trade, which was conducted in close connection with Livorno, accounts for the intensification of Ergas and Silvera's relations with agents in London in the 1740s.

As they strengthened their ties to London, the partners relied on relatives and kin even less than they did in Amsterdam.¹⁰⁹ They never contacted their cousin Jacob Ergas after he returned for good to the English capital. Instead, in 1717 they wrote Diego Mendes, who remained their sole correspondent in London for four years. He bought Levantine raw silk from them, sold them marine insurance policies, and exchanged information with them about commodity prices in England and Aleppo.¹¹⁰ They also purchased lottery tickets (many for only £10 each) but did not, as wealthier (and perhaps more daring) Livornese Sephardim did, invest in the stock market or in the public debt.¹¹¹

In the 1740s, Ergas and Silvera continued to see London as an outlet for Levantine goods and a source of competitive insurance premiums.¹¹² But diamonds became the primary reason for their interest in the English capital. Their customers and agents were established Sephardic merchants such as Judah Supino and sons (after the fall of 1721), Farro and Nunes (after 1732), and Levi Sonsino (in late 1734). Ergas and Silvera wrote to Elijah Nunes Bernal twice (in 1732 and 1734) and to Pereira and Lima once (in 1732). Over time they began to receive commissions from the most prominent members of the community. After 1741 their distant relative Benjamin Mendes da Costa proved an especially powerful ally. Along with Diego Mendes, Judah Supino, Nathan Levi Sonsino, and Elijah Nunes Bernal, he was among the foremost diamond dealers in London.¹¹³ With a deposit of £23,000, he was also the second largest Jewish stockholder of the English East India Company in 1725, after Francis Pereira (who held stocks worth £114,840).¹¹⁴ Da Costa assisted Ergas and Silvera repeatedly in shipping coral to Madras and selling rough diamonds, other precious stones, and jewelry in London. In dealing with him, the partners also gained access to the firm of Francis and Joseph Salvador, which, along with Samuel Gideon's, was the most influential Sephardic merchant house in London.¹¹⁵

In short, after a slow beginning as exporters of Levantine goods to London, in the 1740s Ergas and Silvera turned primarily to trading diamonds there. They were helped by the most affluent Sephardim in Britain, to whom they were not related by blood (and only tenuously by kin in the case of Benjamin Mendes da Costa) but with whom they shared wide and overlapping social networks as well as economic interests, because British Jews remained dependent on their co-religionists in Livorno for the supply of Mediterranean coral. The circulation of

personnel and credit lines between the Sephardic communities of London and Livorno thus intensified and no doubt multiplied the channels of reputation control.¹¹⁶

MARSEILLES

Together with Lisbon and Goa, Marseilles was an important node in Ergas and Silvera's networks where anti-Jewish legislation forced them to deal exclusively with non-Jewish agents and correspondents. Legal discrimination did not preclude the creation of stable relations with non-Jews, but bypassing legal restrictions was easier in Marseilles than in Lisbon and Goa because the Livornese Jews enjoyed French diplomatic patronage in Ottoman entrepôts. Moreover, no Inquisition existed in France. Although Frenchmen were prohibited from lending their names to Jewish merchants who wished to sell their goods in Marseilles, not only did French merchants and ship-owners rely on the Livornese Sephardim in the Levant, but French silk manufacturers were also more dependent on raw silk from southern Italy than were English ones (who supplied themselves in Persia, Syria, and Bengal).¹¹⁷ Large quantities of Italian raw silk was exported via Livorno. Ergas and Silvera, in turn, bought coral and American produce (coffee, indigo, cochineal, indigo, and sugar in particular) in Marseilles that they sold in Livorno and Aleppo.¹¹⁸

Commission agency with Christian merchants in Marseilles was facilitated by the ease with which information flowed on board the French ships that trekked back and forth between Marseilles, Livorno, and the Levant and by the presence of French commercial houses in the same ports. Indeed, all of Ergas and Silvera's correspondents in Marseilles, among whom there were several members of the local commercial establishment, had a stronghold in the Levantine trade. They included François Bres in Cyprus, with whom they began dealing in 1708 and who remained a loyal agent after he moved to Aleppo in 1719.¹¹⁹ Twenty years later, Ergas and Silvera were largely dependent on Honoré Bres in Marseilles. Other correspondents included the Fouquier family and its associates (the Lombards and the Doudons), the Prudent brothers, Louis Mane, and Mathieux Martin, all of whom had commercial houses or agents in Cyprus and some of whom operated in Acre;¹²⁰ the French consul in Smyrna, Jean-André Boule,¹²¹ and other experienced Mediterranean traders such as the Guilhermy family,¹²² Gérard-Hilaire Barrigue,¹²³ the Swiss partners Gampert and Isaac Vernet,¹²⁴ other Protestants such as Gaspar and Nicolas Sollicofre (or Zollikofer),¹²⁵ and the Kicks, a family that had immigrated from Landau.¹²⁶ In 1707 Ergas and Silvera even ventured to offer their commercial services to Joseph Fabre, one

of the foremost merchants and financiers of Marseilles, a former deputy in the Council of Commerce and a high French official at the Porte who still managed the personal affairs of the French ambassador in Constantinople. Fabre had been recommended to them by the French partnership Fabre and Minot of Aleppo, but with a brother in Constantinople, ample contacts throughout the Ottoman Empire as well as a visible position and a reputation to preserve in Marseilles, he never answered the call from the Livornese.¹²⁷

LISBON

After the expulsion from Iberia, Sephardic merchants elsewhere in Europe continued to maintain close commercial relations with Portugal and its dominions but had to use caution to protect their investments there and the lives of New Christians who might be investigated because of their associations with Jews abroad. By the time the Portuguese Inquisition launched its last destructive campaign in the 1720s, most Livornese Jews, Ergas and Silvera among them, dealt with foreign intermediaries rather than descendants of converted Jews when trading with Lisbon. A pool of families from Genoa and Florence with branches in the Portuguese capital and connections in Livorno and Genoa were their favorite agents.

Ergas and Silvera's letters to Lisbon have three consistent characteristics. All concerned exclusively shipments of coral to be forwarded to Goa and asked for returns in Indian diamonds. Nearly all were sent to Italian merchants in the Portuguese capital; only a few reached French and Dutch companies.¹²⁸ Finally, rather than the name Ergas, several pseudonyms appear in this correspondence, including Henrique Silvera, which could pass for a Portuguese Old Christian last name.¹²⁹

In the early eighteenth century, Italians in Lisbon no longer occupied the central economic position that they had held until the mid-sixteenth century. A few nonetheless had adapted to structural changes in international trade and formed a crucial link between Mediterranean and Atlantic markets for the Italian peninsula. In the eighteenth century, moreover, Lisbon was the most important center of exchange between Livorno and Iberia.¹³⁰ At the time, Portugal's wealth derived predominantly from its Brazilian territories and to a lesser extent from the Estado da Índia. At the same time, the Portuguese left commerce with the Mediterranean in the hands of foreign merchants, who imported foodstuffs and manufactured goods and reexported colonial products. Among these foreign merchants, the English had the upper hand thanks to the conditions that they had negotiated after the mid-seventeenth century.¹³¹ In 1711 at least fifty-

nine English commercial houses were active in Lisbon, where they imported luxury goods from Italy, as well as grain and rice from around the Mediterranean in return for Brazilian sugar and tobacco, Indian spices, and American bullion, which they shipped back to Livorno, Genoa, and Venice.¹³² The French never signed a treaty with Portugal; the Dutch were traditionally unpopular in Lisbon, and the Hamburgers lacked a powerful state to back them. As a result, the Italians were able to capture a share of the trade between Portugal and their homelands.

In 1674 the Tuscan government counted twenty private ships and a number of other vessels that reached Lisbon carrying wheat, rice, anise, hazelnuts, raw silk, refined silk cloths, all sorts of draperies, and small quantities of cotton, alum, paper, glass, carpets, wax, and steel.¹³³ In 1728 the Venetian consul in Livorno listed rice, grains, barley, broad beans, paper, Levantine raw silk, and silk textiles from Florence, Bologna, and Genoa as exports from Livorno to Lisbon, and Brazilian sugar, cacao, tea, cinnamon, porcelain, tobacco, and diamonds as imports from Lisbon, stressing the significance of gold smuggled via Genoa and sold to the Florentine mint.¹³⁴ Two years later, an anonymous author noted that the Italians had the biggest commercial houses after the English, and some of them alone handled a larger volume of transactions than the entire French nation. These Italians, he remarked, imported all sorts of silk textiles, paper, grains from Sicily and Sardinia, rice from Venice and the Piedmont, porcelain, glass, and large quantities of rough and polished coral destined for Goa. He also pointed to the sumptuous church of Our Lady of Loreto, home to the congregation of the Italian merchants of Lisbon.¹³⁵

The date and content of this brief anonymous description are of particular significance because little is known about the Italian mercantile community in Lisbon after the mid-sixteenth century. In the fourteenth century and especially in the fifteenth, Italian navigators, merchants, and bankers (mostly Genoese and Tuscan) had contributed financial capital, technical knowledge, and marketing resources to the Portuguese overseas expansion. By the early sixteenth century, however, Italian merchants and financiers in the Portuguese capital were increasingly replaced by Flemish and German competitors such as the Welsers and the Fuggers.¹³⁶ And yet the mid-sixteenth century marked the end of the golden age but not the eclipse of the Italian merchant community in Lisbon.

As its economic influence was waning, this group began to organize its collective identity around a religious institution. In 1521 Pope Leo X (a Medici) granted them permission to organize a congregation and build a church that would represent "Italians" as a corporate nation.¹³⁷ All Italian merchants resident in Lisbon were required to join the confraternity of Loreto and pay to it a

small tax on their imports and exports.¹³⁸ In 1672, as many as ninety-seven men were listed as contributors: 49 were from Genoa, 21 were from Florence, between 4 and 5 each were from Venice, Milan, Rome, and Turin, and only 1 was from Naples.¹³⁹ In 1719, 145 men signed the new statutes of the Loreto congregation.¹⁴⁰

From a legal point of view, of course, no Italian identity existed.¹⁴¹ Individual "Italians" were either naturalized Portuguese or subjects of one of the regional states of the peninsula, in which case they fell under the jurisdiction of their respective consular and diplomatic representatives. The ambiguity of these overlapping identities was reflected in the official terminology, which included both a comprehensive label ("nação italiana") and specific categorizations ("nação genovêsa," "florentina," "milanêsa," and so forth). This ambiguity gave way to tensions between the different national groups for the control of the main offices of the congregation and sometimes tensions between the congregation and the consuls.¹⁴² Even more ambiguous was the relation between the Italian nation as an administrative and fiscal entity and its prerogatives as the religious confraternity based in the church of Loreto, an ambiguity that emerged, for example, when the papal nuncio in Lisbon asked the confraternity to draw up new statutes and the Genoese consul objected that the nuncio lacked jurisdiction to impose such an order.¹⁴³

Although some scholars argue otherwise, not all Italians in Lisbon had been fully assimilated by the fifteenth century.¹⁴⁴ Indeed, some Italian men, like other foreigners, were naturalized by marriage to Portuguese women or by royal privilege; a few joined the ranks of Portuguese nobility, mostly by entering religious orders.¹⁴⁵ The most affluent of these long-term residents had investments in the Portuguese public debt and mercantile companies (such as the *Companhia Geral do Grão-Pará e Maranhão*) or owned real estate.¹⁴⁶ In most cases, however, ties to the homeland were not severed. On the contrary, many Italian merchants continued to carve their niche precisely as intermediaries between Portugal and Italian port cities. Some continued to travel back and forth between Lisbon and their original homeland and remained fluent in both vernacular Portuguese and Italian. The nobleman Paolo Girolamo Medici, a frequent correspondent of Ergas and Silvera in Lisbon, was in close contact with his brother Tommaso Gaetano in Florence, who financed part of Paolo's business.¹⁴⁷ In 1737 he was appointed diplomatic representative of Tuscany in Portugal.¹⁴⁸ Meanwhile, he continued his private mercantile activities in association with another Florentine nobleman in Lisbon, Luigi Niccolini. The latter also occasionally traveled to Florence.¹⁴⁹ A Lisbon agent of Ergas and Silvera, Enea Beroardi, also a nobleman, was born in Florence in 1688 and had two brothers there. After Portugal

declared war on Spain and France in 1704, Beroardi left Lisbon for five years and tended to his affairs in Genoa.¹⁵⁰ On returning to Lisbon, he ran a partnership with Paolo Girolamo Medici from 1722 to 1737 that traded with Italy, Portuguese India, Brazil, and Spanish America.¹⁵¹ Unmarried and with no children, he left most of his possessions to his nephew Neri Dragomani in Florence.¹⁵² Other correspondents of Ergas and Silvera in Lisbon included the Ravara family from Genoa; they, too, had roots in Portugal but had relatives and possessions at home.¹⁵³ Frequently, Ergas and Silvera also relied on the services of the Cambiaso family in Lisbon, who were among their correspondents in Genoa.

The existence of these interconnected, translocal networks enhanced the ability of merchants who belonged to separate communities to develop reliable commission agency relations in a context in which business ties between New Christians and Jews were unsafe and perhaps undesirable. Ergas and Silvera's investments in Lisbon were confined to the exchange of coral and diamonds, but their agents there were involved in a number of other financial and commercial enterprises, which enhanced their appeal to the Livornese Sephardim. Moreover, by choosing to operate with a plurality of agents in the same port city, in Lisbon as elsewhere, Ergas and Silvera were in a position to pit one against the other, favoring competition and promoting conformity. Finally, and most important, their Genoese and Florentine correspondents in Lisbon had multiple and overlapping ties to Livorno and Genoa. They were thus at pains to escape ostracism by disappointed Sephardim.

GOA

Folded in the envelopes that Ergas and Silvera sent to Lisbon were a total of eighty-six letters to be dispatched to the capital of Portuguese India on board the ships of the *carreira da Índia*. This correspondence, too, was concerned with the barter of coral and diamonds, but this time the letters were addressed to Hindu merchants, all members of the preeminent Saraswat caste. The choice of these correspondents was dictated by the prominent role to which the Saraswats had risen in Goa's economy, including certain branches of long-distance trade, after the New Christians had been decimated by the Inquisition.

Until the early seventeenth century, members of the Silvera family had had their own merchant house in Goa, whence they remitted large quantities of diamonds to Lisbon. A hundred years later they had no personal ties there. A tribunal of the Inquisition was set up in Goa in 1560; it increasingly targeted New Christians, who had actively participated in Portuguese commercial and diplomatic ventures in the Indian Ocean despite a 1532 law that forbade them

from moving to India. Repression by the state and the church intensified in the 1620s.¹⁵⁴ With the support of the Portuguese Crown, Jesuits and other religious orders attempted to convert the native population as well. But the small number of apt Portuguese residents and the declining military and economic power of the Portuguese in Asia made it nearly impossible to enforce legislation that discriminated against non-Christians in all economic activities. In about 1635 a Portuguese author estimated that 70 percent of the investments in Goa's seaborne trade belonged to non-Christians, the majority of whom were Hindus.¹⁵⁵ At about the same time, while deprived of freedom of religious practice and excluded from high political posts, Hindus controlled between 80 and 90 percent of the Portuguese revenues collected on nonagricultural income in Goa and its environs. About half of these revenues were collected by the Saraswat caste alone.¹⁵⁶ The Saraswats also proved indispensable to the Portuguese, serving as diplomats in negotiations with Indian rulers, especially when the Marathas threatened the existence of Goa in the 1680s and again in the 1740s.¹⁵⁷

In the first half of the eighteenth century, Goa showed signs of economic decline. As they remarked on the city's loss of power and grandeur, European travelers in the late seventeenth century were also struck by the role played by Hindus. In 1674 the abbé Carré wrote, "The Portuguese formerly believed that it would be a sacrilege . . . if Hindus or heathens were allowed to live here. . . . But this Viceroy's predecessor [Conde de San Vicente, who died in 1668] considered that the town was going to rack and ruin for lack of merchants and traders, so he permitted the entry of Hindus and merchants of the country to re-establish commerce."¹⁵⁸

Today scholars agree that the decline of the *Estado da Índia* was accompanied by the expansion of private trade carried out by Hindu merchants and financiers, especially the Banians of Gujarat and the Brahmins of Goa.¹⁵⁹ There is less consensus about the nature and consequences of the cooperation between Indian and European traders more generally. Holden Furber and others have called the period prior to British imperial control of the Indian subcontinent an "age of partnership" between Europeans and local merchants.¹⁶⁰ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, in contrast, points to the escalation of violence that Europeans brought with them during what he calls the "age of contained conflict."¹⁶¹ Other scholars lament the fact that Indian merchants who mediated between local textile producers and the European chartered companies lost their independence more than did other native weavers.¹⁶² The documents I examine do not offer conclusive evidence but suggest that the Saraswats, indeed, depended in large part on the European presence in eighteenth-century Goa. At the same time, Jewish and European merchants were equally if not more dependent on the ex-

expertise and credit of these Hindu merchants and vulnerable to their handling of their affairs.

In the capital of the Estado da Índia, Ergas and Silvera's most regular agents were Gopala and his sons Fondu and Nilea Camotim. Probably the wealthiest family in town at the time, the Camotins served the Portuguese as translators, diplomatic advisors, state contractors for pepper, salt, tobacco leaves, and snuff, suppliers of the fort, customs and tax collectors, suppliers of ships, and brokers; they also traded in slaves and a variety of goods with Europeans and neighboring coastal powers.¹⁶³ Men of the Camotim family commanded such great social standing that they dared to hire Christian porters to carry them around on litters—a practice that threatened colonial hierarchies and that, in 1731, resulted in the excommunication of Christian porters by the Archbishop of Goa.¹⁶⁴ Other members of the Saraswat caste also traded with Ergas and Silvera.¹⁶⁵ In Goa as in Lisbon, then, though with less information about local economic conditions and the creditworthiness of each agent, the partners relied on agents who were likely to know a lot about each other and among whom competition might provide incentives to act honestly in spite of the great distance and asymmetry of information that separated them from Livorno.

In return for the coral that they sent to Goa, Ergas and Silvera asked for Indian diamonds or, if those were unavailable, rubies, cotton textiles, and local products (indigo, shellac, coffee, pepper, other spices, and drugs).¹⁶⁶ In the worst years, such as 1743, they received textiles worth three times more than the diamonds placed on the same ship.¹⁶⁷

These were trying times for Goa and its overseas trade. In addition to the challenge to Portuguese commercial activities that came from other European powers, the surrounding region came under attack by the Marathas in 1736. In March 1739, the house of Fondu Camotim was looted by a crowd of soldiers and priests, who robbed him of a huge sum in cash, diamonds, gold ornaments, and fine cloth. Six months later, Camotim protested the additional losses that he had suffered as a result of the interruption of navigation during the war. In 1742 he still lamented the consequences for his business of the Marathas' victory.¹⁶⁸ As military disruption weakened the diamond trade in Goa, the Sephardim in Livorno increasingly began to ship their coral to Madras, which was under British control. Ergas and Silvera's correspondence suggests that military events and changing balances of power in the Indian Ocean rather than their Hindu agents' incompetence or unreliability in Goa account for this shift. By exchanging letters regularly with a select group of merchants in Portuguese India whose personal ties and credit relations extended to several other Sephardim, the partners could reasonably expect to be treated competently and fairly by commission

agents whom they would likely never meet and who had no social obligations to them.

The economic activities and business strategies pursued by Ergas and Silvera resembled closely those of their Jewish peers in Livorno.¹⁶⁹ They, unlike the Sephardim of Amsterdam, were only indirectly involved in the rise of Atlantic commerce. The Mediterranean was the core though not the outer limit of their activity. From Aleppo and Cyprus, Ergas and Silvera exported mainly cotton yarn and cloth, which they sold to foreign merchants in Livorno or reexported to northern Europe together with other Levantine and Italian products. To Aleppo they shipped varied cargoes of manufactured goods and some colonial products. Their involvement in the exchanges with North Africa was much smaller. Via the exchange of coral and diamonds, they kept alive ancient links between the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean.

The opportunities for a trading diaspora such as the Sephardim to penetrate new markets were not infinite. But the absence or weak presence of coreligionists in a port city or the hostility of a sovereign government did not discourage them as long as they could carve out a niche and find reliable agents. Close scrutiny of Ergas and Silvera's commercial networks shows a remarkable heterogeneity in their commodity specialization and in the forms of institutional protection that they received. They traded in regions where they secured the necessary diplomatic sponsorship of a European state (the Levant) as well as in destinations (Lisbon and Goa) where state protection was weak. In spite of this diversity, the formal and substantive ways in which commission agency worked was the same everywhere.

Nowhere a dominant force, Ergas and Silvera inserted themselves in intensively Sephardic networks, but in nearby ports such as Venice and Genoa they carried out a more diversified trade than in the distant capitals of northern Europe. In Venice and Genoa they relied on coreligionists who were well placed to deliver the services they required, but they engaged in durable agency relations with Christian merchants as well. To Venetian traders the Livornese Sephardim offered representation in Levantine markets in return for the supply of goods such as paper and glass that were in high demand in Aleppo and financial intermediation. Genoa functioned not only as a center where to acquire coral and sell Levantine goods, but also as a major port-of-call for all ships that carried goods from the Atlantic trade, including sugar and tobacco. Moreover, the Genoese with whom Ergas and Silvera traded also had family and commercial ties to Lisbon. In this and other instances, multiplex relationships linked members of discrete merchant communities across vast distances.

In the early eighteenth century London began to replace Amsterdam as the principal site of interest for the Livornese Sephardim in northern Europe. There, Sephardic merchants and financiers held a more marginal economic position than in Amsterdam but exerted great influence on at least one key sector, which they developed in connection with their coreligionists in Livorno: the importation of coral beads destined for South Asian markets. Ergas and Silvera trafficked with the most prominent Sephardim of the English capital. Multiplex relationships were even thicker among the cluster of Sephardim with links to Livorno, Aleppo, Amsterdam, and London and made it possible for Ergas and Silvera to rely on coreligionists who had expertise, connections, and capital that their sons and nephews, had they moved to northern Europe, might never have acquired.

This chapter has illustrated the established position of a broad range of commission agents who served Ergas and Silvera in Lisbon and Goa. In Chapter 9, I explain the way in which the partners succeeded in developing prolonged business relations with Hindus who also served many other Sephardim in Livorno. The global interdependence of Sephardic merchants involved in the exchange of coral and diamonds was such that, although they never acquired a formal corporate structure, they were equipped to deal with outsiders. The Silvera family, now based in Livorno and Aleppo, no longer had relatives in Goa or elsewhere in South Asia and the Far East after the Inquisition drove New Christians from Portuguese India. Nor could Ergas and Silvera enjoy any protection from the Portuguese state. And yet a combination of strong ties among Sephardim and weak ties to Hindus in Goa permitted Ergas and Silvera to enlarge the financial and geographical scope of their activities.

The heterogeneity of their correspondents was not an exception in the Sephardic diaspora in the eighteenth century. At the beginning of his career, Gabriel de Silva raised capital for his bank from relatives and other members of the converso community in Bordeaux. Like Ergas and Silvera, de Silva made consistent use of his kin and coreligionists. On several occasions he was assisted by his cousin in London, the influential Benjamin Mendes da Costa. In 1758, de Silva asked him if he could use his name to purchase annuities of the Bank of England worth six thousand livres tournois to avoid any legal complications during the war between France and England.¹⁷⁰ Soon, however, he came to enlarge the circle of his correspondents to include Roman Catholics, numerous French Calvinists, and other European Protestants, with a special preference for the powerful Huguenot bankers of Paris. As his credit operations expanded from 1730 to 1760, the proportion of non-Jews among de Silva's correspondents also grew and, by 1760, they became predominant (with twenty-five Christians

and twelve Sephardim). When doing business in Bilbao, Cadiz, and Madrid, he preferred to rely on capable Frenchmen rather than on New Christians, whether because the Inquisition had by then dismantled converso networks, because the risk of doing business with crypto-Jews was too great, or because Frenchmen in the region were more proficient.¹⁷¹

Unlike the members of the firm of Ergas and Silvera, Gabriel de Silva remained at the margins of the Jewish community even after the Crown allowed the official practice of Judaism in the southwest of France. His loose affiliation with the Jews of Bordeaux was the result of local conditions and likely facilitated his relations with Christian customers, and in particular the Parisian and provincial aristocracy. Religious difference, however, did not preclude business cooperation. Contemporaries of de Silva, the Gradis family of Bordeaux embraced Judaism openly and yet acted in partnership with Christian merchants or hired Christian commission agents as part of their thriving mercantile activities in the Caribbean and in New France in the 1740s and 1750s. In Canada, they trafficked with an experienced Jesuit while the Society of Jesus continued to advocate the legitimacy of forced baptisms such as those endured by the Gradises' ancestors.¹⁷² For Ergas and Silvera, the heterogeneity of commission agents and weakness of legal enforcement were at their highest in the exchange of Mediterranean coral and Indian diamonds that they conducted via Lisbon and Goa.

THE EXCHANGE OF MEDITERRANEAN CORAL AND INDIAN DIAMONDS

La pêche de Corail a été très-mauvaise cette année dans cet endroit [Civitavecchia], ce qui a causé un grand prejudice à plusieurs Marchands Juifs de Livourne, qui suivent cette branche de commerce.

[This year coral fishing has yielded very little here [in Civitavecchia], a fact that has worked to the detriment of the numerous Jewish merchants of Livorno, who are engaged in this branch of trade.]

— *Gazette du commerce de l'agriculture et des finances* (4 July 1765)

None of the [European] companies that exercised an exclusive privilege beyond the Cape of Good Hope had any concern in the trade of diamonds; which was always left to private merchants, and by degrees fell intirely into the hands of the English, or the Jews and Armenians that lived under their protection.

— *Abbé Raynal*

Eighteenth-century commentators unfailingly noted the widespread involvement of Livornese Jews in the trading of both Mediterranean coral and Indian diamonds. Today the connection between the two and the importance of coral for the Mediterranean economy are largely forgotten. Early modern trade with the East Indies is generally associated with the powerful European companies importing spices and textiles. With the degradation of the coral reefs and the marginalization of the Mediterranean in the scholarly literature concerning eighteenth-century commerce, the subject has been relegated to a few specialists. This chapter describes the organization of coral fishing and manufacturing,

as well as the European trade in Indian diamonds. It also seeks to explain the role that Livornese Jews played in this international barter. Through a narrative about the exchange of these goods, I revisit three dimensions of the debate about the role of trading diasporas in early modern commerce: the niche specialization of minority groups, the degree of closeness and openness of "ethnic economic networks," and the relation between trading diasporas and state-sponsored commercial organizations.

The central theme of this chapter remains cross-cultural trade. No branch of long-distance commerce at the time was for the faint of heart, but technological constraints, the instability of supply and demand, and weak ties between the merchant communities involved in it make the exchange of coral and diamonds the premier example of the way commission agency functioned and the role that monopolistic European companies could and could not play in diminishing its risks. Ergas and Silvera's correspondence offers us a unique source of information about the mechanisms of agency relations between Sephardim in Livorno, Catholic agents in Lisbon, and Hindu merchant-brokers in Goa. It also helps us understand the factors that influenced the shift from Portuguese to English domination of the Indian diamond trade in the 1740s.

MEDITERRANEAN CORAL: FISHING, PROCESSING, AND TRADING

Until the nineteenth century, red coral was a Mediterranean specialty; to a lesser extent it was fished in the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf.¹ The Romans discovered the profitability of exporting coral to Asia, and Maghribi Jews continued this trade in the Middle Ages.² In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Venetian and Genoese merchants shipped coral to the Levant, where it was exchanged for spices and other goods. Genoa, in particular, benefited from its control of the island of Tabarca (off the coast of Tunis), rich in coral fisheries, which was a fief of the Lomellini family from 1542 to 1741.³ So prominent were merchants from Florence and Genoa in the coral trade that they obtained large contracts from the Portuguese Crown after the 1440s.⁴ The profitability of coral was such that Marseilles established a monopolistic company for the sole purpose of fishing coral in 1553 and battled with the beys and the sultan to maintain its influence along the North African coast.⁵

Mediterranean coral fisheries acquired new importance with the expansion of European trade in the Indian Ocean. As one of the few European commodities that was accepted in return for Asian goods, red coral was in high demand. Portuguese ships directed to Goa were loaded with precious metals (West African

gold and American silver) and nonprecious metals (copper, lead, tin, quicksilver, and mercury) but also coral, alum, wine, olive oil, and fine silk textiles such as damasks and taffetas. Jacques de Coutre (1577–1640), a soldier of Flemish origin in the Estado da Índia, noted the variety of coral (in round shapes and branches, processed and raw) arriving in Goa on board Portuguese ships. In smaller quantities, coral was also used to purchase slaves in West Africa. In 1728 the Venetian consul in Livorno mentioned that some coral was shipped as far north as the fair of Archangel, on the White Sea.⁶

But most Mediterranean coral ended up in India and the Himalayas, where it was used in traditional jewelry. In Asia as in Europe, coral was at the bottom of the hierarchy of precious stones, but in Asia it had a symbolic value that stimulated a burgeoning trade. Already Marco Polo had noticed the appeal of coral in Kashmir.⁷ A seventeenth-century European expert claimed that coral in India was worth as much as Indian pearls were worth in Europe.⁸ Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (1605–89), a French Huguenot jeweler and a widely traveled authority on precious stones, noted that coral was used as an ornament in India, especially in the northern and mountain regions, and added that in Japan large coral beads were preferred to precious stones and were used to decorate garments.⁹ Raynal noted that in Madras, more than forty thousand people were employed “in arranging and selling coral and glass-ware, with which the women in the interior parts of the country adorn their hair, or make necklaces or bracelets.”¹⁰ If the number of workers suggested by Raynal cannot be verified, it confirms the perceived importance of coral in Indian markets.

For once, the impressions of European travelers were not out of proportion. Demand for Mediterranean coral grew rapidly in the seventeenth century, causing coral prices in Liguria to increase fourfold between 1600 and 1700.¹¹ In the eighteenth century, coral fishing in the Mediterranean became the object of fierce competition among European states.¹² With new interest in coral, scientific knowledge also improved. In 1751 a French traveler and naturalist named Jean-André Peyssonnel finally established that coral was an insect and not, as everyone believed, a plant.¹³

In the Mediterranean, coral reefs could be found along the coasts of Algeria, Tunisia, Liguria, Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily, Calabria, and Campania, near the Balearic Islands, the Cape of Quires in Catalonia, and the islands of Hyères off Provence, along the shores of Tuscany and Civitavecchia (north of Rome), along parts of the Dalmatian coast, and in some Ionian and Aegean waters. Exploited at unprecedented rates, the rich fisheries along the North African coast began to be depleted in the late seventeenth century. In 1714 Ergas and Silvera could only obtain Tunisian coral of lesser quality.¹⁴ With demand on the rise, new patterns

of coral fishing and trade emerged in the eighteenth century. The small town of Torre del Greco, near Naples, began to supply growing numbers of men for this strenuous job.¹⁵ In the meantime, Livorno was responsible for most of the coral production and linked this trade to the transoceanic economy.

Beginning in the mid-seventeenth century Livorno emerged as the world's center of coral trading and manufacturing. The barriers that the old coral workers' guild in Genoa began to raise against Livorno beginning in the 1620s are evidence of the growing threat raised by the Tuscan port.¹⁶ The concentration of all steps in the chain of production (from the financing of fishing to the exporting of the polished product) in one locality helped a cluster of small firms, which the Sephardim came to dominate, to benefit from economies of scale. Through spontaneous coordination and competition and, to a lesser extent, through the support of the state, Livorno became a leading center of economic activity concerning coral. The concentration of raw material, labor, expertise, and marketing lowered transaction costs for all investors. This sector thus developed into an example of so-called industrial districts, rather than developing along the lines of vertical integration and large-scale enterprise.¹⁷

Every year, from April to September, hundreds of fishermen from the poorest coastal villages in the regions of Naples and Genoa and from the islands of Corsica and Sardinia went to sea. The technology that they used for coral fishing was virtually the same as in antiquity. Each boat carried a wooden cross to which nets were attached. When approaching a coral reef, the fishermen lowered the cross to the bottom of the sea; when it ran aground on a reef, they moved the boat in all directions to uproot the coral branches that were caught in the nets (see figure 9.1). More often than not one of them had to dive to adjust the net. Each boat normally carried seven men, working as oarsmen and fishermen. Tavernier speaks of two hundred coral boats leaving from the coast of Genoa; on the island of Tabarca alone, thirty-five to forty-five boats were employed in coral fishing every year. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, up to four hundred coral boats used to sail off Torre del Greco for the season.¹⁸

Every October and November, at the end of the fishing season, hundreds of boats unloaded their coral in Livorno. Merchant-producers, their agents, and their brokers waited for them along the docks, ready to engage in bargaining or to inspect the cargo of the vessels that they had financed months earlier. This seasonal market was referred to as “the coral fair of Livorno.” Its volume of trade was considerable. In 1759 it was calculated that every year fishermen from Torre del Greco, Santa Margherita (Liguria), and Ajaccio (Corsica) brought coral from Sardinia and Corsica to Livorno that, once polished, was worth at least two hundred thousand pieces of eight.¹⁹ More coral arrived from North Africa, and some

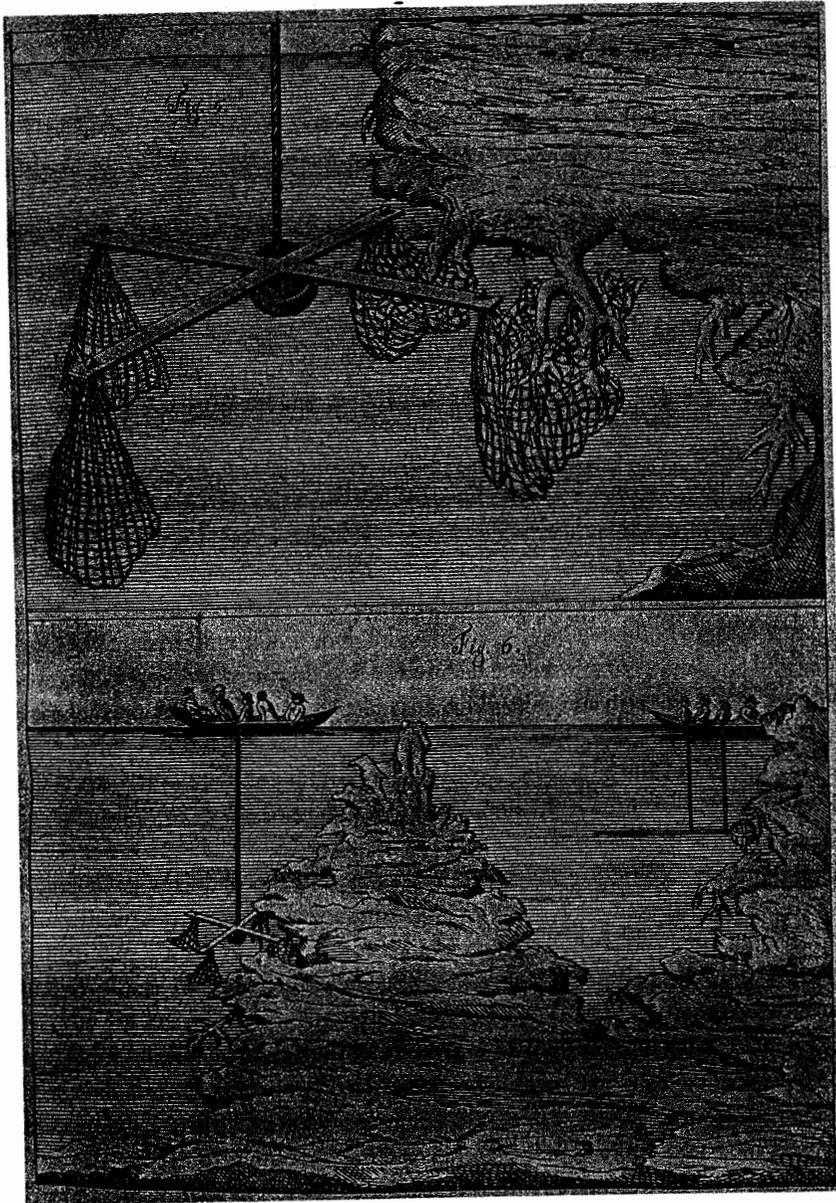


Figure 9.1. Fishing for coral in the Mediterranean in the eighteenth century. Source: Giovanni Francesco Pivati, *Nuovo dizionario scientifico e curioso sacro-profano* (Venice: Milocco, 1746–51), vol. 2, table 54. Credit: Department of Special Collections, Memorial Library, University of Wisconsin—Madison.

was bought in the regions where it was produced. Only small quantities were still acquired off the islands of Giglio and Gorgona, in Tuscan waters.²⁰

The coral fair fulfilled two essential functions. First, it enforced quality standards through competition, expertise, and government regulation. Contemporary taxonomy recognized an incredible variety of coral depending on color, shape, quality, assortment, and stage of processing. Experts recognized as many as fourteen different shades of red coral.²¹ As a result, great expertise was required in order to estimate the value and quality of different kinds of coral. Fraud was always a possibility. In 1679, 1683, and 1707, the Tuscan authorities fined those who sold low-quality coral (“coralli falsi”).²² In order to uphold the highest possible standards, and thus to enhance the reputation of the trade in Livorno, the port’s authorities allowed only specialized brokers to negotiate at the fair.²³

Second, the seasonal market facilitated the circulation of credit between merchant-producers, boat managers or owners, and fishermen. Owners or managers of the boats needed access to credit to pay for the vessels’ equipment and protection as well as the fishermen’s salaries. They usually pulled together about ten boats and hired a galleon to keep pirates and other bandits at bay. Merchant-producers advanced the sums needed to man the boats and pay their fleets and expected to be repaid at the end of the following season, when they knew the boats would return to Livorno. Ships’ captains normally borrowed money in the form of sea loans. In 1735, for example, a Jewish partnership (Joseph and Raphael Franco), an Armenian merchant (David Sceriman), and a Catholic trader (Giovanni Valenti Berardi) complained to French diplomatic representatives about the seizure of several Neapolitan coral boats off Cap d’Agde (in Languedoc), claiming that they were entitled to the ships’ cargo because they had financed those expeditions.²⁴

Once offloaded, coral branches of all forms and colors were funneled to the many workshops in town to be cut, made into beads of different sizes and shapes, and strung in various assortments. Immediately after the second livornina was issued in 1593, the grand dukes granted a consortium of merchants from Genoa, Pisa, Florence, and Marseilles a five-year monopoly for the manufacturing of coral in Livorno. The Genoese entrepreneur behind this consortium also invested 2,000 scudi in coral fishing off the coast of Sardinia. Several other Genoese, French, and Portuguese investors negotiated special privileges to set up their coral businesses in Livorno in the following years. Some worked with an agent in Lisbon named António Dies Franco, perhaps a New Christian, to whom they shipped large quantities of coral in exchange for colonial commodities. In 1636 Pier Giovanni Boccardi, a Genoese, employed about twenty workers in Pisa.²⁵ That the Genoese coral workers’ guild forbade members from

leaving town after Boccardi went to Pisa is evidence that Tuscan manufacturers now threatened Genoa's position in the sector.²⁶ In the course of the seventeenth century the entire economic cycle of the coral trade (harvest, transformation, and distribution) came to be concentrated in Livorno in a way in which it never had been in Genoa or in Marseilles.

If we can trust the impressions of several visitors and observers, in the absence of more solid data, coral was the most important industry in eighteenth-century Livorno. In 1725 the German traveler Georg Christoph Martini described the phases through which raw coral passed in its transformation into beads and trinkets. In 1728 Montesquieu remarked on the industry during his visit to the Tuscan port.²⁷ In the same year, the Venetian consul in Livorno counted as many as twenty coral workshops, where some masters from Sicily and Genoa worked together with numerous poor local men and women.²⁸ The Habsburg-Lorraine rulers continued to safeguard coral fishing and manufacturing in Tuscany.²⁹ Giuseppe Gorani, who resided in Livorno in 1779–80 and again in 1790, claimed that coral was the most profitable industry in town and that it required a highly skilled workforce. In 1810, when Livorno had plunged into economic depression, the coral workshops employed 1,340 and processed forty thousand kilograms of raw coral. The five largest plants belonged to Jews; one of them, headed by the Errera brothers, employed 12 workers on-site and 400 more who performed the work in their homes.³⁰

Although Genoese immigrants initially launched coral manufacturing in Tuscany, Jews and, to a lesser extent, Armenians came to dominate it. David Sceriman opened a coral plant in the first years of the eighteenth century; in 1723 it was listed as one of the most important in Livorno. In the 1720s an Armenian named Rustan also managed a coral workshop. But the Armenian community in Livorno was considerably smaller than the Jewish nation and had weaker ties with both Portugal and England, the two countries that were most heavily involved in the exportation of coral to India. As a result, Armenians in Livorno never acquired the same influence that Jews did in the coral trade.³¹

After the mid-seventeenth century, Jews, and Sephardim in particular, invested more and more in coral trade and manufacturing. In the 1660s the Sulema family invested eleven thousand pieces of eight in a partnership formed to trade in coral and made a 40 percent profit in two years.³² At his death in 1687, seventy-nine pounds of coral were found in Isaac Gutierrez Gomez's warehouse.³³ In the 1720s the Franco and the Attias families owned and managed the two most important coral workshops; they continued in the business for decades. Attias's coral factory was so key to the city's economy that when visiting Livorno in 1739, Grand Duke Francis Stephen stopped there for a visit.

In 1776 Grand Duke Peter Leopold did the same.³⁴ Jacob Gutierrez Pegna and Abraham Pegna ran a smaller coral workshop in the 1730s.³⁵ Among the eighty-one Jewish brokers licensed in Livorno in 1770, seven specialized in coral.³⁶ In 1787 the three major coral plants in Livorno were owned by Jewish families: the Coens, the Carmys, and the Villareales.³⁷ Ten years later, twelve of the eighteen coral traders and four of the five coral manufacturers in Livorno were Jewish.³⁸

We know virtually nothing about the internal organization of these coral workshops, in large part because of the absence of craft guilds—institutions that kept many records about preindustrial arts and trades. Records of litigation offer some detail about the capital and organization of one of these firms. In November 1743, Moses Baruch Carvaglio opened a coral workshop in the Jewish neighborhood of Pisa in partnership with Abraham Lusena and his son Samuel. The Baruch Carvaglios provided the capital to set up the business, and the Lusenas, who had strong ties to Genoa and the coral trade, put their labor and expertise to work.³⁹ In order to procure the raw material it needed, the partnership regularly gave substantial advances to coral fishermen in Liguria.⁴⁰ Part of their processed coral was shipped directly to Sephardic dealers in London including Joseph and Francis Salvador, Benjamin Mendes da Costa, and Nathan and Jacob Levi Sossino.⁴¹ On the death of Moses Baruch Carvaglio in 1762, the business passed to his nephew Jacob, who obtained more funds to finance the coral firm from his brother-in-law, Jacob Ergas. The Carvaglio-Lusena plant operated until 1764. In the course of two decades it had sold an amount of coral worth more than 418,000 pieces of eight, and by the time it closed it probably employed about fifty workers (two and one-half times the number hired by Boccardi a century earlier).⁴²

Ergas and Silvera invested in a sector in which Sephardim were predominant and thus capitalized on existing economic organization, widespread knowledge, and personal networks that linked them to other merchant-producers.⁴³ They procured their coral using all three methods of long-distance commerce that since the time of Max Weber have usually been described as sequential rather than synchronic stages of capitalist development: local fairs, the consignment trade, and exchange by sample.⁴⁴ Their correspondence suggests that they bought most of their raw coral in Genoa, some in Tunis, and only a little in Marseilles. Faced with an upsurge of orders from London in 1743, Ergas and Silvera dispatched an emissary named Isaac Coen Lusena to Genoa with detailed instructions about what to buy and an order to inspect carefully any bundle of coral before paying for it.⁴⁵ In a market strained by growing demand, it took Lusena nearly a month to seal a deal in Genoa, and he could not bring another one to a happy conclusion.⁴⁶ Before ordering large quantities from commission

agents, the partners sometimes asked to see samples of the types and qualities available to verify that they met their standards.⁴⁷ Sample trading worked more effectively when distances were short, as with Genoa and Livorno. The risk of being cheated nonetheless persisted. In 1745 Abraham Ergas took his Genoese supplier, Giacomo Gazzo, to court for alleged fraud in the sale of some lots of coral.⁴⁸

We know less about how Ergas and Silvera acquired raw and polished coral in Livorno. They do not seem to have owned or managed a coral manufacturing plant, although occasionally they may have hired workers on their own to turn raw coral into polished beads. In 1715 they protested to a supplier in Genoa about the quality of part of his shipment, which some women workers ("le laboranti") deemed inadequate.⁴⁹ Other local merchant-producers furnished them with polished coral.⁵⁰

Once finished, each batch of coral was wrapped in paper. Most packages were shipped to faraway destinations.⁵¹ Ergas and Silvera dispatched part of their coral to Venice and Aleppo, two traditional markets where emeralds, rubies, and other precious stones still arrived via the Asian caravan routes.⁵² They sent smaller quantities to Amsterdam because by that time the Dutch East India Company had little interest in coral.⁵³ Other Ergases in Livorno sent coral beads to North Africa for the trans-Saharan markets, but that trade had declined in importance.⁵⁴ Almost all of the coral processed in Livorno was placed on board ships bound for Lisbon and London.

THE EUROPEAN COMMERCE IN INDIAN DIAMONDS, C. 1600–1730

Until 1728, when the first diamond shipment reached Lisbon from Brazil, the Indian subcontinent was the largest known repository of rough diamonds, with the island of Borneo playing a much smaller role in the trade.⁵⁵ The most significant Indian diamond mines were located in Golconda, a region that came under Mughal control in 1687 (see figure 9.2). The emperor hired private entrepreneurs to seek diamonds in exchange for a fixed fee but kept for himself (or at least sought to keep for himself) all stones that weighed more than a fixed measure. European commentators gave different equivalences for this measure, but it was probably around ten carats.⁵⁶ The Portuguese became interested in diamonds when they first arrived in India. Garcia da Orta (c. 1499–1569) left one of the earliest descriptions of Indian diamonds in his bestseller *Colóquios dos simples e drogas e cousas medicinais da Índia* (Conversations on the simples, drugs, and medical substances of India, 1563).⁵⁷ A century later, after having

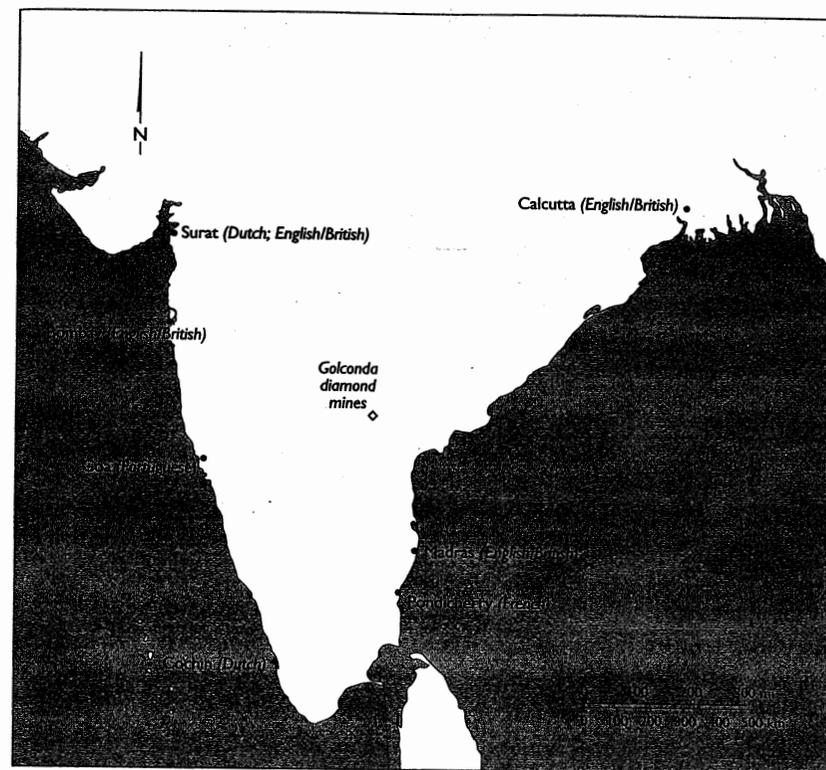


Figure 9.2. Principal European settlements in India in the first half of the eighteenth century

traveled to India six times between 1638 and 1668 in order to purchase precious stones, Tavernier drafted a more detailed account that became a classic.⁵⁸

During the Middle Ages, Indian diamonds and precious stones were shipped to Europe via the Levant. Most were cut and polished in Venice; some were sent on to Antwerp, Lisbon, and Paris. In the sixteenth century, the Portuguese imported mostly pearls from the Red Sea but also began to compete with Venice by carrying diamonds from the East along the sea route.⁵⁹ On ships traveling between Goa and Lisbon, the Portuguese made room for the so-called liberty chests (*caixas de liberdade*), that is, containers of a standard measure in which some officers were allowed to bring back specific goods, including diamonds, wholly or partly duty-free.⁶⁰ Diamonds were placed in minute wooden boxes wrapped in cotton cloth and sealed with wax that were called *bizalhos* (sometimes rendered in English as "bisalts"); alternatively, they were placed inside

leather purses called *bulsas*.⁶¹ Throughout the seventeenth century, and perhaps later, Goa was Europe's main supplier of uncut diamonds.⁶²

The regime of the liberty chests and the ease with which precious stones could be smuggled make it difficult to assess the overall volume of the trade. James Boyajian calculates that between 1580 and 1640, diamonds, rubies, sapphires, and pearls comprised on average 14 percent of the total value of the *carreira da Índia's* return cargo.⁶³ Although the Portuguese Crown for the most part enforced a strict monopoly on the trade of spices and Asian goods more generally, it allowed for private trade in diamonds and precious stones. This choice was likely a pragmatic response to smuggling. It also had the result of attracting the investments of trading diasporas that could coordinate the intercontinental trade in precious stones more easily than could individual private merchants. It is not surprising that Boyajian finds that, although officially banned from all Portuguese territories, Sephardic Jews and New Christians were active in this domain. In the 1670s European travelers described the Martin brothers, two French Jews, as among the wealthiest merchants in Goa and as leading dealers in Golconda.⁶⁴

A major challenge to the Portuguese involvement in the diamond trade after the mid-seventeenth century came not from the Dutch but from the English. Following the Portuguese example, the English East India Company, after its reorganization in the 1660s, put in place a system of "privileges," which allowed naval officers to purchase limited amounts of import goods (except pepper and calicoes) outside the company's monopoly. Private merchants who wanted to bring precious stones from India to England could now do so, and after 1664 they could count on low customs duties. These privileges varied with rank. Before 1793 they included the exportation of "coral, amber, coral-beads, pearls, emeralds, and any sort of precious stones" worth sums varying from £2,000 for a captain to £200 for a second mate.⁶⁵ The East India Company also encouraged investments in the diamond trade by allowing private merchants to lend money in the form of sea loans to ship's officers who used it to purchase precious stones.⁶⁶

These policies helped channel investments in private trade in diamonds away from Lisbon and toward London, although a 1662 agreement negotiated as part of the marriage between Charles II of England and the Portuguese Infanta encouraged the East India Company to carry out its diamond trade via Goa.⁶⁷ After 1681, when Sir Josiah Child was elected chairman of the Court of Directors, and in the years following the 1688 revolution, further steps were taken to liberalize the diamond trade. It is not surprising that these deliberations ignited incendiary debates about the position of Jews in British commerce.⁶⁸

The East India Company's regulation of the coral trade mirrored that of the diamond trade. The company's first shipment of coral to Coromandel dates to 1624. At the time, Thomas Mun, later the author of a classic work about mercantilism, supervised the company's purchase of coral in Livorno.⁶⁹ In the following decades the company left this stage of the process to private traders, and Jewish merchants in the Tuscan port played the most significant role because they also controlled local production. In 1675 the exportation of coral beads from London was permitted on the purchase of a license and the payment of transportation fees (fixed at 1 percent for company's stockholders and 2 percent for others). When the company was reorganized in 1709, broader concessions were made to allow private merchants to board on Indiamen "all sorts of corall, corall beads, amber, amber beads, pearl, emeralds, or any other sort of precious stones" as long as they brought home diamonds and a handful of valuable medicinal and aromatic substances (musk, ambergris, and bezoar).⁷⁰ In 1715 the Court of Directors recommended that the company's General Court permit the exportation of silver for the purchase of diamonds in India. In 1720 all restrictions on the exportation of coral, silver, and precious stones, as well as on the importation of diamonds, were lifted. Finally, in 1732, Parliament abolished all customs duties on the importation of diamonds and other precious stones.⁷¹ This act further enhanced London's position as the world's premier market for uncut diamonds.

Gedalia Yogeve calculates that between 1711 and 1796, 50 percent of the total value of Indian diamonds imported to England was handled by Jews, and another 5 percent was handled by joint partnerships between Jews and non-Jews. Moreover, between 1750 and 1775, 75.7 percent of the licenses for coral imports issued by the East India Company went to Jewish traders.⁷² No single reason explains the overrepresentation of Jews in this branch of Anglo-Asian trade. Historians usually explain it by arguing that communities living under threat of expulsion preferred to trade in small, precious objects and that legal barriers prevented non-Catholic minorities from entering craft guilds but made exceptions for some trades, including precious stonecutting and jewelry making. But there is more to the story. The Sephardim, not unlike the Armenians, possessed several of the characteristics required to operate in the erratic global market in diamonds: secrecy, high-level coordination and integration, access to information and long-term credit across vast distances, and the ability to adapt to the changing geographical patterns of the trade. Their family firms, moreover, could transmit expertise in the absence of a formal apprenticeship system.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the European geography of the Western Sephardic diaspora both shaped and was influenced by the geography of the coral and diamond trade. While Livorno supplanted Marseilles and

Genoa as the main center of coral trading and manufacturing, Amsterdam replaced Antwerp as the main center of diamond cutting and polishing.⁷³ Dutch Sephardim eventually controlled the diamond industry and employed growing numbers of Ashkenazic refugees; only in the second half of the eighteenth century did a few Ashkenazim amass sufficient capital to challenge the Sephardic predominance and establish their own diamond firms.⁷⁴ A long tradition in the jewelry trade and a continued Jewish presence kept Venice on the map as well.⁷⁵ Ergas and Silvera thus shipped uncut diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and pearls to Venice.⁷⁶ Once London emerged as the world market for rough diamonds in the late seventeenth century, entrepreneurial Sephardim were ready to move there. At the same time, the close integration of the Jewish communities of London and Amsterdam and the high concentration of diamond polishers and cutters in Amsterdam explain why the English capital did not develop an important diamond industry.⁷⁷

Relative to their numbers, Armenians were also overrepresented in the European diamond trade.⁷⁸ For most of the seventeenth century, they remained particularly influential in the caravan and Levantine routes. In the 1670s a French envoy to Surat noted that Jews and Armenians controlled the purchase and sale of diamonds there, but the latter restricted their trade to Persia because of the difficulty they encountered in shipping precious stones to Europe.⁷⁹ Between 1688 and 1697 an agreement signed with the East India Company helped Armenians gain a firmer footing in South Asia. As noted in Chapter 5, however, their presence in Europe never rivaled that of the Sephardim. Even with a galaxy of small colonies abroad and a myriad of traveling merchants, most Iranian Armenians maintained their home in Isfahan. In the second quarter of the eighteenth century, moreover, they suffered a major setback. In the 1740s, precisely when London gained predominance as a hub of international commerce and as the world capital of the diamond trade, hardly any Armenians could be found there.⁸⁰ Part of the continued role played by Armenians, however, derived from the fact that some precious stones, and the most expensive ones in particular, were sold by cultivating personal connections to a select clientele rather than by controlling large shares of the market.

European sources are frustratingly vague about the ways in which merchants acquired diamonds in India. Traveling to Persia in 1672, Jean Chardin described a version of silent trade in which buyers and sellers bargained by hand gestures alone. Tavernier reported that Hindu and Muslim diamond brokers in India followed the same custom. Similar descriptions are repeated in later accounts, but their veracity is questionable.⁸¹ Ergas and Silvera's letters shed no light on how their Brahmin agents procured precious stones and what factors influenced

the stones' price. We know, however, that the vast majority of Indian diamonds that arrived in Europe were uncut and unpolished because Indian cuts were not highly desirable in Europe. In 1717 Ergas and Silvera explicitly asked their suppliers in Goa to send uncut rubies alone ("rubinos gresos sem lavorar").⁸²

The quality of rough diamonds was difficult to determine, especially when stones were large. Although the lack of standardization characterized all commodity trades in the preindustrial period, price differentials between precious stones were particularly stark. In principle, the price of a rough diamond could be calculated according to a simple law: it matched the square of its weight multiplied by the price of the weight unit.⁸³ "This rule, however,"—by an expert's admission—"is by no means in general use. . . . For estimating the value of peculiarly fine diamonds, there is no fixed standard."⁸⁴ A manual offering "practical directions for purchasing diamonds" in India stressed that "the value of rough diamonds is extremely uncertain: weight and size alone will not direct in this matter; they ever give place to quality and shape. Experience and practice are the only means that can lead to a certainty."⁸⁵ The sale of small stones at regular fairs and the creation of diamond auctions in Amsterdam and London after the mid-seventeenth century only helped standardize prices to a limited extent. At these auctions parcels of small uncut diamonds were often sold unopened. This practice tested buyers' openness to risk. Diamond prices were so erratic that in 1721 a wealthy Livornese Sephardic merchant, David Sulema, defended himself against the accusation of having cheated on a barter of turbans for pearls and jewels by citing the opinions of jurists and theologians who excluded precious stones from the rule of "just price," which punished all price variations that exceeded by fifty percent the commonly agreed-on price (*laesio ultra dimidiam iusti pretii*).⁸⁶

According to available official statistics regarding the trade handled by the English East India Company, diamonds made up about 14 percent of the value of official Asian imports to England during the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century.⁸⁷ These figures ignore contraband as well as lawful imports from Brazil, Amsterdam, and Lisbon and imports shipped via Iran.⁸⁸ Evidence of the profits generated by the exchange of coral and diamonds is haphazard. The impression to be gathered from a variety of sources is that it was a potentially lucrative but risky business. In the 1660s–80s a profit margin of 40–60 percent was common for Indian diamonds sold in London.⁸⁹ In September 1686 an English informer for the Medici grand duke estimated that English factors in Surat made a 100 percent profit on sales of diamonds in Europe in the course of eighteen months, but only a few months later he noticed an increase in prices in India that would likely curtail profits.⁹⁰ Whereas in the 1740s a Jewish partnership importing dia-

monds from Madras to London earned profits of between 28 and 124 percent (46 percent on average), in the following decade the coral shipped by Moses Mendes da Costa of London to India yielded a profit of only about 18 percent.⁹¹ In 1766 a Livornese merchant estimated that there was at least a 20–25 percent profit on the trade in coral and diamonds carried out by Jews between Livorno and Madras via London, but the basis of his calculations is unknown. In 1784 the French captain Pierre Blanchard earned an extraordinary 244 percent profit on his shipment of coral to Goa.⁹² Ergas and Silvera's correspondence and account books do not allow us to calculate their profits on individual transactions because credits in Goa and London were settled over time and through barter. Their bankruptcy, however, is a telling reminder of the risks involved in the trading of large diamonds.

A CROSS-CULTURAL COALITION AT WORK

In late January 1713, soon after the military confrontations of the War of the Spanish Succession ended, Ergas and Silvera shipped 48.4 pounds of polished beads of porous, low-quality coral to Barducci, Giudici, and Perini, a partnership of Genoese merchants in Lisbon that a Portuguese merchant called "very rich and with a large business in Livorno."⁹³ Their cousins Abraham and Manuel de Mora, alias Bonaventura and Lopes de Morales, had recommended the Lisbon firm to Ergas and Silvera.⁹⁴ In the letter that accompanied the coral, the Sephardim requested that the Lisbon agents place the coral on board the next *carreira da Índia* in order for it to be delivered to Gopala and Nilea Camotim in Goa. A second letter, addressed to the Camotins, ordered them to ship diamonds back to Lisbon; they would accept high-quality textiles in return for their coral only if diamonds were not available. Barducci, Giudici, and Perini would ensure that the diamonds (and other merchandise) reached Livorno. Ergas and Silvera also asked the Camotins to keep them informed about current prices of all types of coral and other goods arriving in Goa from Livorno and Venice.⁹⁵

Ergas and Silvera had made a tentative entry into this specialized intercontinental barter with Goa in 1710.⁹⁶ They were now determined to join their co-religionists in what appeared to be a profitable business in spite of its structural uncertainty. It normally took two to three years to complete a transaction. The Indian monsoons determined the timing of these exchanges. Ergas and Silvera's shipment of January 1713 went well: their returns were ready to be shipped back from Goa in the fall of 1714.⁹⁷ At other times the wait could be longer. Only in June 1717 were Ergas and Silvera informed that they should expect to receive diamonds in exchange for a shipment of coral that they had sent two years

earlier.⁹⁸ Thus, they could never predict exactly the value or even the nature of the commodities that they would receive. For this reason, they only once bothered to include the monetary value of the parcels of coral shipped to Goa when they copied the bills of lading at the bottom of their letters.⁹⁹ They knew that the price of coral in Goa would fluctuate from year to year depending on the fishing season in the Mediterranean, the arrival of European ships, and the local supply of diamonds. All they could ask of their correspondents was to sell the coral in keeping with their reputation and as soon as possible ("com toda reputação e brevidade"). And if the market was not favorable one year, they instructed the Camotins, they should wait until the next convoy of Portuguese ships arrived to complete their payments.¹⁰⁰

In a typical letter to the Camotins, Ergas and Silvera wrote: "We see that you received from the said ship our box of rough and polished coral numbered 1 . . . and that so far you have not been able to sell it for the reasons that you told us. We hope that by now, thanks to God and your good diligence, the coral has sold to our great advantage and that market conditions will improve so that we can continue to benefit from your favors. . . . We see from your letter that you gave us credit and sent us this year . . . a parcel of diamonds numbered 11 that is worth 472:31 xerafins. You tell us that the diamonds are legal merchandise and of good quality; we will be pleased to find them as you say . . . and we will give you credit for these xerafins."¹⁰¹

How could credit relations work when information was so vague and infrequently received? What inspired the Livornese to give such autonomy in decision making to their agents in Goa? And what prevented the latter from embezzling the merchandise or cheating on the quantity and quality of the goods that they were expected to send back and ignoring Ergas and Silvera's solicitations? Indeed, the heterogeneity of the trading communities involved in the barter that connected Livorno to Portuguese India is at least as startling as the objects that were exchanged, especially considering that Jews were banned from the Portuguese overseas territories, that communications between India and the Mediterranean were sparse, and that no single political and legal authority could arbitrate conflicts between traders. And yet after they sent their first shipment of coral to Goa with the help of Barducci, Giudici, and Perini in 1713, Ergas and Silvera continued to order diamonds from their Hindu agents there for the next twenty-one years.

The shared conventions of letter-writing combined with the customary norms of maritime law and the intensive circulation of information about the merchandise's quality, prices, and availability created effective informal and semiformal governance institutions that prompted even agents who were incredibly distant

geographically and culturally to abide by their promises. The concentration of the Sephardic diaspora in coral and diamond trading was crucial to the ability of individual firms such as Ergas and Silvera to engage in cross-cultural trade.

In several letters Ergas and Silvera expressed a clear perception that the fate of diamond shipments from Asia bound Western Sephardim together. In April 1722, on hearing news of the seizure of the Portuguese ship *Nossa Senhora do Cabo* off the Mascarene Islands, the partners at first feared that the diamonds that it carried would never be recovered. In the letters reporting the event to Abraham Lusena in Genoa, they asked God to have pity on the numerous merchants "of our nation" who risked such a loss "here," meaning in Livorno, and in Amsterdam ("que el Dio tenga piedad y restaure a los perdientes que bastantes ai de nostra nación aqui y Amsterdam").¹⁰² Two decades later, in 1743, Ergas and Silvera thanked God that the trade of coral and diamonds was by and large in the hands of their "nation," which now extended to London as well ("es de dar gracia a Deus que este negocio este la maior parte en nostra nación").¹⁰³ The geographical dispersion and interconnectedness of the Sephardim were assets for such merchants when they sought to establish trading relations with outsiders. Writing to the Camotins in 1724, Ergas and Silvera promised to recommend them to their friends in Bahia, London, and elsewhere if the returns in diamonds from Goa proved satisfactory.¹⁰⁴

Three specific features transformed occasional dealings between Jews in Livorno, Italians in Lisbon, and Hindus in Goa into a stable cross-cultural network. Longevity provided a collective memory of the past conduct of individual members and provided those who wished to enter with a pool of backers willing to vouch for them. With perhaps twenty partnerships in Livorno, about half that number in Lisbon, and four or five families in Goa forming the core of this network at any one time, participants were numerous enough to mobilize useful information and deter misconduct but not so numerous that it was possible to cheat one and trade with another. That the Sephardim of Livorno were so well connected to their coreligionists in London and elsewhere who also had an interest in the exchange of coral and diamonds augmented the incentives of those dealing with them to deliver the best possible services. Finally, the social cohesion and internal organization of each group of participants enabled the policing of individuals via institutionalized surveillance mechanisms and peer pressure.

Relations between the Sephardic diaspora in the Italian peninsula and Italian merchants in Lisbon (in particular, Florentines and Genoese) dated back to the settlement of Iberian refugees in Venice and Livorno. In the late sixteenth century, Portuguese New Christians in Venice acted as brokers for Italian traders in

Lisbon.¹⁰⁵ Among the services offered by the Italians in the Portuguese capital in the following decades were some pertaining to the diamond trade with Goa. In 1623 Francesco Morelli and Jacomo Tati, Italian merchants based in Lisbon, corresponded with Felipe Henriques of Amsterdam, likely a New Christian. A scion of an Italian family trading in Portugal, Morelli mentioned a consignment of coral shipped to Goa and two parcels of diamonds sent to Venice in his testament of 1629.¹⁰⁶ As early as the 1620s the Ergas family had imported Indian diamonds from Lisbon and shipped them to Venice.¹⁰⁷

In the course of the seventeenth century, the Sephardim of Livorno intensified their involvement in this segment of Portuguese commerce with India and depended more and more on the Italians in Lisbon. In the 1740s, as London gained preeminence, the Lisbon connection weakened but did not disappear. Saul Bonfil considered using an English merchant (Francis Morris) in Lisbon but soon turned to his familiar Genoese agents, Giovanni Andrea and Francesco Cambiaso, to retrieve diamonds of his that were arriving from Goa in 1750.¹⁰⁸ In 1756 Esther Nunes, widow of a Sephardi merchant in Livorno, charged Luigi Niccolini in Lisbon with recovering precious stones and other goods shipped to her by the Naik family of Goa.¹⁰⁹ In 1765 several Jewish traders of Livorno, including Raphael Ergas, son of Manuel, were still shipping coral to Goa.¹¹⁰ When Raphael drafted his will in 1770, he ordered the settlement of any outstanding credits among his "correspondents from the Indies Goa tho [sic] Levant."¹¹¹

Powers of attorney registered in Livorno reveal that the same pool of Italian merchants (and occasionally French ones) in Lisbon and the Saraswats of Goa who corresponded with Ergas and Silvera also regularly served many other Sephardim in the Tuscan port in the first half of the eighteenth century.¹¹² Although the influential Franco family had relocated some of its younger members to London and Madras in order to enter the English diamond trade, between 1710 and 1730 it continued to trade diamonds via Lisbon. There it appointed as its legal representatives several Florentines and Genoese, including Paolo Girolamo Medici and Lazzaro Maria Cambiaso.¹¹³ From 1723 to 1745 three Italian commercial houses of Lisbon—those of the Medici, the Niccolini, and the Cambiasos—acted as intermediaries for Manuel Ergas, Abraham de Mora, Samuel Ergas and partners, Manuel Felice Sonsino, and Salvatore Benedetto in Livorno.¹¹⁴ In 1717 Abraham Sulema, alias Francisco Vais, began to trade in coral and diamonds with Goa. Initially he relied on two Portuguese, Agostinho Carvalho da Costa and Francisco Gaetano da Costa, perhaps of New Christian descent. After two years Sulema had already started to trade with Hindu merchants. In 1720 he revoked the power of attorney assigned to the da Costas in favor of Medici and Beroardi and the Ravara family of Lisbon, who thereafter

acted as his agents in the Portuguese capital.¹¹⁵ Sulema also occasionally asked Ergas and Silvera to ship coral to Goa on his behalf.¹¹⁶

The same agents in Lisbon and in Goa also had direct contacts with the rest of the Western Sephardic diaspora. The Camotins shipped diamonds to António Gabriel Nunes in Amsterdam in 1706 and to Jacob Pereira in 1727.¹¹⁷ In 1704 Gaspar and Manuel Mendes of Amsterdam gave power of attorney to Antonio Manzoni of Lisbon, entrusting him with claiming their diamonds from the customs house and shipping them to Amsterdam.¹¹⁸ Twelve years later, Giacomo Manzoni performed the same function for Jacob do Padro of Amsterdam.¹¹⁹ In 1734 Medici and Beroardi were referred to as "amigos" in the business letters of the Colaço firm that operated in Amsterdam and Bayonne.¹²⁰ By taking the unusual route of shipping coral to the Cambiasos in Lisbon via Amsterdam, in 1722 Ergas and Silvera introduced their agent in the Dutch capital, Joseph de los Rios, to the cross-cultural network that linked them to Lisbon and Goa.¹²¹ That the Cambiasos also served Christian merchants in Livorno added overlapping channels through which information circulated between the two cities.¹²²

Sephardic diamond dealers in London normally relied on their connections with British India, but after the discovery of the Brazilian mines—and until the Portuguese declared a state monopoly on the mines in 1740—merchants rushed to find agents in Lisbon who might procure either Indian or Brazilian diamonds. They turned to many influential English merchants in the Portuguese capital.¹²³ But they did not forget the Italians. As soon as parcels of Brazilian diamonds started pouring into Lisbon in 1728, Francis Salvador Jr., Abraham and Jacob Franco, and Benjamin Mendes da Costa began to ask Paolo Girolamo Medici to purchase cut and rough stones on their behalf.¹²⁴

Not all merchants were equally competent or virtuous. From Ergas and Silvera's letters we learn that certain addressees were dismissed after a disappointing performance, irrespective of religious affiliation. In 1715 Ergas and Silvera ordered Lazzaro Sacerdote in Genoa to ship them high-quality coral in assorted small sizes and assured him that they would pay up to 12.5 pieces of eight per pound. The price was high, and after having paid it, they found that the coral that Sacerdote sent them was of poor quality. Three weeks later they ordered another 150 pounds of coral from Sacerdote, this time on condition that it reach them immediately. In Livorno ships were ready to set sail for Lisbon, and any delays would cause them to miss the seasonal journey of the fleet that was about to leave Lisbon for India. Sacerdote failed them again: it took him two months to send them some coral, and by the time the cargo arrived in Livorno, it was too late to be put on the Portuguese convoy.¹²⁵ After two such blows, Ergas and

Silvera never traded with Lazzaro Sacerdote again, although they once bought a small shipment of Indian cotton textiles from him and repeatedly requested that he keep them updated on the availability of coral in 1731–32.¹²⁶ Sacerdote was a coreligionist, though not a Sephardi. If not intentionally fraudulent, he was certainly less than competent.

Available documents do not permit us to verify whether Ergas and Silvera defamed Sacerdote, but it may not be a coincidence that notary records in Genoa show that he did not do business with any Sephardim in Livorno after 1715.¹²⁷ That Ergas and Silvera returned to Sacerdote after more than fifteen years with a request for information and a small purchase, taking no major risks and obtaining something from him, is also unsurprising. Business letters from different corners of the world indicate that appeasement was a common way of coping with unsatisfactory agents. This attitude is evident from sets of correspondence as diverse as that of a prominent family of sixteenth-century Genoese merchant-bankers, the Brignole, a Swedish partnership and its agents in Amsterdam in the 1750s, and the Mhamai Kamats in late eighteenth-century Goa.¹²⁸ Cognizant that there was virtually no legal recourse against substandard commission agency, merchants learned to forget outstanding credits and squeeze what they could from their correspondents.

One searches in vain for loud outcries against fraudulent agents in Ergas and Silvera's correspondence, but they did not hold back when they felt let down. Because their letter books are the only ones that survive in Livorno, it is impossible to verify whether the disappearance of an unreliable agent from among their correspondents also led to that agent's ostracism by other Sephardim. But as the Geniza records and various early modern collections of business letters demonstrate, merchants learned to balance grievance and accommodation.¹²⁹ In 1724, for example, the Sephardim questioned the prices at which the Camotins had valued their coral in the previous year and threatened to withhold future orders. It was an early warning. Three years later, they nagged Gopala and Fondu Camotim about the lack of return cargo and news from Nilea, Gopala's son and Fondu's brother. Simultaneously, they also wrote Lazzaro Maria Cambiaso in Lisbon inquiring about the opinion that "friends" of his who recently had returned from Goa held of this particular member of the Camotim clan.¹³⁰ In 1729 they were informed that a parcel of diamonds that the Camotins had sent to Lisbon for them was valued at one hundred thousand réis less than their receipt claimed it should have been. Ergas and Silvera ordered their correspondents in Lisbon to interrogate João Gonçalves dos Santos, the captain of a Portuguese ship recently returned from Goa, who had transported the bialho.¹³¹

FROM LISBON TO LONDON:
THE DIAMOND TRADE WITH INDIA IN THE 1740s

Encouraged by the regulations issued by the East India Company between 1664 and 1732, many Sephardim in Livorno began to shift the main axis of their trade in diamonds and coral away from the Lisbon-Goa route and toward the London-Madras connection. Madras, where the English built Fort St. George and a trading post in 1639-40, was closer to the diamond mines of Golconda than was Goa. As Alexander Hamilton, an English traveler, noted, it was preferable to acquire stones at the mines, where they were duty-free, than to buy them in Madras. After 1650 the English also opened up a market for coral in Madras. Beginning in 1670, London Jews were active in the diamond trade with the Coromandel Coast, and from the middle of the 1680s onward a few relocated to Fort St. George. Diamond dealers of the caliber of Jean Chardin and Thomas Pitt made frequent use of the Sephardim who moved there. And in 1731 Indian merchants attested to the particular knowledge that some Jews had of the local diamond mines.¹³² The influence of Jewish merchants in this branch was such that in 1687, for the first time in the history of a European political institution, Sir Josiah Child conceived of including a Jewish representative in the municipal council ruling the East India Company's colony in Madras.¹³³

After the 1680s Madras became increasingly important as a supplier of rough diamonds, but this was a gradual process with many significant elements besides the growing power of the English in the Indian Ocean. In the midst of the decline of the Portuguese empire in India, Goa retained a key function as a center of the diamond trade until 1730.¹³⁴ It was in Goa in the late seventeenth century that Tavernier did his most extensive business in Asia, buying diamonds, rubies, sapphires, topazes, and other stones.¹³⁵ Manuel Levy Duarte (1631-1714), a Portuguese Jew who was active in the Amsterdam jewelry trade, had most of his rough diamonds shipped from Goa to Holland via Lisbon or Livorno. Less frequently he and his associate acquired stones from crews and passengers of the English Indiamen or invested in partnerships consisting of Sephardic Jews who sent agents to buy diamonds directly in Madras and Surat.¹³⁶

In the 1730s the worldwide trade in rough diamonds was in turmoil. Brazilian diamonds inundated the European markets and drove prices down. The eruption of political unrest and famine in Coromandel added to the turbulence.¹³⁷ In 1730 Ergas and Silvera blamed their correspondents in Goa for sending diamonds of lower quality and higher prices than those arriving from Madras and Surat. They simultaneously informed their Lisbon intermediaries that they

would consider decreasing the amount of coral they shipped to Goa unless they were satisfied with the prices and quality of Portuguese diamonds at a time when the demand for coral was growing in London.¹³⁸ It was not the first time that the partners threatened to suspend their orders, but the Camotins now knew the pressure was real. In 1731 for the first time in nearly twenty years, they did not receive letters from Livorno. It is true that the demand for coral in London was also low that year, but Madras was emerging as a serious competitor to Goa.¹³⁹

After the Portuguese Crown subcontracted the extraction of Brazilian diamonds in 1740 and their distribution in Europe to cartels of foreign investors in 1753, the diamond market resumed its previous course and actually expanded for another half-century.¹⁴⁰ A large influx of Brazilian stones also affected the Livornese Sephardim, who were cut off from this trade. In the summer of 1742, Ergas and Silvera expressed anxiety about the imminent arrival of shipments of Brazilian diamonds in London, fearing that they would cause a fall in prices as they had done a year earlier.¹⁴¹ Overall, however, the Asian diamond trade picked up again after 1740, in part because many believed Indian stones to be of higher quality than the Brazilian ones, to the point where rumors circulated that Brazilian diamonds were being sold as Indian stones.¹⁴²

At this time Ergas and Silvera began to privilege London and Madras instead of Lisbon and Goa. Structural changes in intercontinental trade rather than the failure of commission agency in the Livorno-Lisbon-Goa circuit account for this shift. The British routes around the Cape of Good Hope were not necessarily cheaper than the Portuguese ones, but they were considerably more reliable.¹⁴³ The East India Company also facilitated the transmission of private credit to and from British India by endorsing its employees' bills of exchange. In 1731 English officials at Fort St. George were instructed to draw bills on the agents of the coral merchants at the company's headquarters in London. These agents would then reinvest the money in additional shipments of coral to India.¹⁴⁴ Rarely, however, did Ergas and Silvera accept returns in the form of bills of exchange rather than diamonds for their coral consignments in London.¹⁴⁵ When dealing with their Goa correspondents, they refused altogether to receive bills of exchange or sea loans in return for their coral.¹⁴⁶ After the Marathas conquered the territories north of Goa in 1740, the capital of Portuguese India further declined.¹⁴⁷ In 1741 Ergas and Silvera declared themselves satisfied with their returns from Madras.¹⁴⁸ It was a good year for the diamond trade, and a *bizalho* arrived from Goa, too.¹⁴⁹

Lisbon did not suddenly disappear from the procurement networks of the Livornese Sephardim. English Indiamen often called there to buy or smuggle

coral, diamonds, and gold.¹⁵⁰ But in the 1740s Ergas and Silvera intensified their correspondence with London and enlarged the range of their correspondents there to include prominent diamond dealers such as Benjamin Alvarenga and Benjamin Mendes da Costa. But the Jewish community living under British tutelage in Madras was small. After Solomon Salomons died at Fort St. George in 1754, Raphael Ergas had to search beyond his coreligionists and eventually appointed John Walsch and Henry Van Sittart to retrieve a case of coral that Judah Supino and Joseph Salvador had shipped from London to Madras on his behalf.¹⁵¹ The quality and quantity of diamonds available in Madras from year to year were no easier to predict than they had been in Goa, and information reached Livorno after it reached London. In 1745 Ergas and Silvera anxiously waited the arrival of a British convoy that had left Fort St. George carrying a parcel of diamonds whose value was recorded in the East India Company's ledgers but unknown to them.¹⁵² Finally, mediation services in Madras were not necessarily cheaper than in Goa. English officials based in Madras who were engaged in the Asian trade customarily received a 7 percent commission. The London Sephardim could charge as little as 1 percent for simple local transactions. If they followed the Portuguese route instead, Ergas and Silvera had to pay the Camotins a 5.5 percent commission and the Italian agents in Lisbon 3 percent commission.¹⁵³ Thus the London-Madras route ensured a 0.5 percent saving in commission fees at best. But these rates varied with the types of services provided and oscillated from time to time. They cannot by themselves account for the reorientation of the coral and diamond trade.

Most important, the East India Company helped stabilize channels of communication and credit with India but did not control the supply and demand of coral and diamonds. Although we lack consistent data with which to chart variations in the prices of these items, the evidence points to significant fluctuations. A growth in demand led to a rise in price in 1743–44. Genoese coral fishing in Tabarca, already in decline in the early eighteenth century, was interrupted after the Bey of Tunis gained control of the island in 1741.¹⁵⁴ Price increases affected cheaper kinds of coral more than expensive ones. In 1743 the best coral could be bought in Genoa for 14–15 pieces of eight per pound. The following year, the same type cost 15 to 15.75 pieces per pound.¹⁵⁵ In the summer of 1744 Ergas and Silvera struggled to fill Mendes da Costa's order for 2,500–3,000 pieces' worth of coral. Having exhausted their usual Genoese supply, they turned to Marseilles.¹⁵⁶ The outbreak of a maritime war between England and France in 1744 and the French occupation of Madras in 1746–48, however, slowed the diamond trade: insurance costs rose, coral prices fell, and precious stones had to

be sent from Livorno to London overland.¹⁵⁷ Once again, international politics affected the operations of trading diasporas, which were particularly vulnerable to militarized campaigns for commercial supremacy.

After the Marathas attacked Goa in 1739, the Portuguese Crown appealed to New Christian and Sephardic merchant-bankers for a loan of ninety million réis (about 125,000 pieces of eight) to finance a military counteroffensive in India. The state bonds that were issued in Lisbon referred to "the money that is borrowed from the merchants of this Kingdom, Livorno, and Amsterdam" ("o dinheiro que se toma por empréstimo aos mercadores do Reyno, Leorne e Amsterdão")—an expression that unmistakably alluded to Portuguese New Christians and Jews. But their identity had to remain undisclosed in order to avoid compromising the government and exposing them to the Inquisition at a time when the latter was actively persecuting New Christians. And the money had to be made available in Goa. Once again it fell to a select group of Italians in Lisbon to provide the link between the Sephardic diaspora and the Camotins of Goa. In 1742 Giovanni Battista Ravara, Enea Beroardi, and Lazzaro Maria and Gianandrea Cambiaso—among Ergas and Silvera's most reliable correspondents in Lisbon—bought the state bonds issued with the loan made by the Iberian Jews and transferred the sums to Goa.¹⁵⁸

The association between these groups—the Western Sephardim, the Italians in Lisbon, and the Saraswats in Goa—was more than occasional. In some ways it resembled what Avner Greif calls a "coalition." As in the case of Maghribi Jews of the medieval era, self-interest was the motor of economic cooperation. And, as among the Maghribis, information circulating by letter, more than ethical imperatives or legal threats, enhanced collaboration among distant agents. But in this case, a combination of legal and rhetorical conventions as well as social means of enforcement allowed agency relations to work across geographical and cultural boundaries. Local merchants and brokers in Goa adopted European customary and written norms governing contractual relations in long-distance trade. They also adopted European letter-writing protocols. These conventions provided regularities of behavior that obliged strangers just as they did coreligionists.

Ergas and Silvera did not share a religious affiliation with their agents in Goa, and certainly would not have arranged for their sisters and daughters to marry them. Most likely they never met the person whom they called *Fondu Camotim*. Assimilation was not a precondition for these groups to use social and economic pressure as tools to enhance market relations.¹⁵⁹ Rather, the circulation of busi-

ness news and the internal discipline imposed by each community facilitated the development of economic ties with outsiders. Although individual legal responsibility was the norm in European tribunals, collective reputation still mattered a great deal. Sephardic merchants used matrimonial alliances, communitarian institutions, correspondence, and a variety of daily encounters to keep an eye on one another. In Christian Europe, they were also attentive to their public image, and lay leaders sought to scrutinize and sanction dishonest business practices as much as they could. The confraternity of Our Lady of Loreto in Lisbon did not have autonomous power to police the members who jeopardized its good name, but it wielded social control informally and through its corporate organization. The sources are less explicit about the form of surveillance exerted by the Saraswats, but references in Ergas and Silvera's correspondence suggest, predictably, that families (and perhaps larger bodies, too) were not indifferent to the reputation of their members.

The heterogeneity of the Sephardic-Italian-Hindu coalition is rich in implications for the ways in which we conceive the relationship between community and market in the early modern period (even if we cannot verify that all Sephardim boycotted every agent who let one of them down). Most historians have applied Greif's concept of "coalition" to other single, closed groups. In her studies of the Greek mercantile diaspora in the Black Sea during the nineteenth century, for example, Ioanna Pepelasis Minoglou illustrates how a variety of business and contractual relations with outsiders (about which we still know too little) coexisted with informal relations within a closed ethnoreligious community. In so doing, she demonstrates the persistence of coalitions as Greif defines them well beyond the medieval period and emphasizes their efficiency.¹⁶⁰ The evidence I have uncovered concerning the networks linking Livorno, Lisbon, and Goa invites us to push the frontier of historical studies of trading diasporas further: we cease to see kinship and ethnic networks as inherently backward and claustrophobic, and we examine the interplay of collective reputational control and individual legal responsibility.

A high degree of cultural adaptation was necessary in order for cross-cultural trade to work. Hindu merchants learned European languages, ways of doing business, and letter-writing etiquette. The Sephardim in Livorno acquired even greater personal and cultural familiarity with the Tuscan and Genoese traders of Lisbon whose relatives and peers they met daily at home. But the social boundaries between these communities were not blurred as a result of their fiduciary relations. Between communitarianism and individualism as conventionally understood, between assimilation and segregation, lay different forms of integration of social networks and competitive markets, including one in which the

structures of communitarian cosmopolitanism were not obstacles to intergroup economic cooperation.

In the 1730s the cross-cultural coalition linking Livorno, Lisbon, and Goa began to fade not because its forms of governance collapsed but because the trade route through London and Madras offered better opportunities. This shift was neither sudden nor complete, and a few Livornese Sephardim continued to use the same pool of intermediaries in Lisbon and Goa, at least sporadically. Meanwhile, the English East India Company passed regulations that, if they did not mention Sephardim explicitly, aimed at attracting them into its orbit. It provided them with advantageous customs rates, more reliable naval services, and greater coordination in the transfer of credit and information. Not even the British, however, could shield the Sephardim from the volatility of supply of Mediterranean coral and Indian diamonds.

The forms of cooperation that developed between the Sephardim of Livorno and the East India Company are reminiscent of the relationship between the French and the Sephardim in the Ottoman Empire in the first half of the eighteenth century. Both the company and the French Crown recognized the role that Sephardic merchants played in selected branches of trade and sought to capitalize on their expertise while charting new territories and asserting their primacy in those areas. As the French benefited from the goods that Sephardic merchants loaded on their ships to and from the Levant, so the English were eager to channel the Mediterranean coral trade toward London and, for that, they depended on the Sephardim. The Sephardic diaspora, in turn, readily took advantage of the services (ranging from naval power to access to new markets to certification registry) that these state institutions put at their disposal. Despite the mutual interest that governed these alliances, asymmetry of power and mistrust persisted. Joseph Salvador was a very influential stockholder of the East India Company, but he could never be elected to the company's Court of Directors.¹⁶¹

The gradual transition of the barter of Mediterranean coral and Indian diamonds from Portuguese to British hands did not entail a complete transformation from a traditional (informal and collectivist) to a modern (formal and individualistic) business organization. The institutional innovations of the East India Company may have curbed opportunism among its overseas employees and thus also helped the Sephardim who traded with Madras, but agency relations between London and Livorno remained utterly informal.¹⁶² References to the intervention of legal institutions in the letters that Ergas and Silvera sent to London, Lisbon, and Goa are few and far between. Moreover, they only concern the certification of bills of lading and the consignment of goods. Powers

of attorney and copies of business letters fulfilled this function, as detailed in Chapter 6. It was complicated for trading partners to oversee the quality of the work performed by commission agents. Whether dealing with coreligionists in London or Hindus in Goa, social and economic incentives were more effective than legal threats. This explains the silence about legal disputes in most business correspondence.¹⁶³ Chapter 10 offers further evidence of the limited effectiveness of tribunals when contracts between merchants were incomplete.

THE "BIG DIAMOND AFFAIR": MERCHANTS ON TRIAL

In 1737 a Persian Jew named Agah Menasseh, son of Messiah Misdrachi of Hamdan, in western Iran, traveled to Aleppo carrying a sixty-carat diamond that he owned along with two other Persian Jews.¹ An important market for gemstones and jewels, as well as a commercial center that linked Europe to Asia, Aleppo was a likely destination for anyone from Iran seeking to sell such a stone. The diamond's size, on the other hand, was extraordinary. Elijah Silvera, the head of Ergas and Silvera in Aleppo, knew something about precious stones and was an acknowledged leader of the Western Sephardic community in the Ottoman city.² When he saw the stone he must have dreamt about huge profits. Silvera, who had the power to act on behalf of his partners in Livorno, signed a contract with Menasseh on 3 Kislev 5449 (15 November 1738) in which he agreed to lend a considerable sum to the Persian in exchange for transporting the stone to Italy and putting it up for sale. The contract (*shetar*), written in Hebrew, was drafted and endorsed as prescribed by Jewish law.³ In order to raise the capital necessary to borrow the stone, Silvera enlisted Isaac Belilios. This choice seemed wise: they both had long experience trading in precious stones; because of their relatives in Venice and Livorno, they were in a better position than was Menasseh to have the diamond cut and placed on the European market; and Ergas and Silvera had been trading with the Belilios of Venice for years.⁴

The venture showed early signs of failure. When they received the diamond in Livorno, Ergas and Silvera hired a Florentine artisan to cut and polish it under their strict surveillance. They also had some copies made in glass, as was customary, which they used to approach potential buyers in London, Amsterdam, Paris, Madrid, Naples, and elsewhere. Contrary to their initial expectations, Ergas and Silvera waited in vain for an attractive offer. They came to fear that the mini-

mum price set by their partners in Aleppo for the stone—130,000 pieces—was "extravagant."⁵ After a year and a half spent in futile attempts to sell it at the proposed price, all parties agreed on the necessity of a change in strategy.

A new contract was drafted on 5 Tamuz 5500 (30 June 1740) in Aleppo. This time it was stipulated that the Tuscan branch of Ergas and Silvera would carry the stone on a "tour of the seven provinces," that is, to seven European destinations. The first three were Paris, Amsterdam, and London; if necessary, four more destinations would be determined at a later stage.⁶ Most of the clauses of the initial agreement were reiterated. The Sephardim kept the stone as collateral, lent Menasseh 35,600 pieces of Aleppo (equivalent to about 21,500 pieces of Livorno), and took on the freight and insurance costs of shipping the diamond from Aleppo to Livorno. Menasseh retained veto power over any decisions about the diamond's sale. Ergas and Silvera would pay the expenses of the tour but would be able to deduct these expenses once the diamond was sold. Both the partnership of Isaac and Joseph Belilios and that of Ergas and Silvera were to receive a 1 percent commission on the final sale price, and Ergas and Silvera alone would be paid a fixed amount of 75,000 pieces of Aleppo (about 45,000 pieces of eight in Livorno) in return for their advance, labor, and time. To protect their investment, Ergas and Silvera demanded that, in the unlikely event that the stone did not sell by 1 Kislev 5501 (20 November 1740), Menasseh would repay his entire loan (21,500 pieces) plus half of the amount due to them at sale, for a total of 44,000 pieces of eight.

Thus began the saga of what came to be known in the Tuscan documents as *l'affare del diamante grosso*, or the "big diamond affair."⁷ Because Paris, Amsterdam, and London were the most important marketplaces for diamonds in the world, neither Ergas and Silvera nor Menasseh bothered specifying in the contract what locations were to be visited next because it was improbable that no buyers would be found in the three capital cities. The result was a patently incomplete contract.

Some legal contracts are more complete than others, but none can ever cover every single eventuality. In most cases, it is simply too time-consuming and expensive to draft a clause for all contingencies. Sometimes, as in the case of the big diamond affair, unforeseen circumstances arise after the contract is drafted. More cynical parties may be drawn to withhold information purposefully to twist an article or two to their advantage.⁸ In the preceding chapters I have focused on commission agency, among the most incomplete of all contract types, and purposefully so. It is presumed that a distant agent acted in the principal's best interests and performed his services to the best of his abilities; in exchange, the principal offered not only a small remuneration in the form of a percentage of

the transaction negotiated on his behalf but also his unconditional "friendship," which came with the promise of fulfilling future obligations. In contrast, the diamond affair involved a detailed if not airtight contract that could be brought before a tribunal in the event that a party infringed any of its terms. But in order to bring the stipulated agreement to a conclusion, this contract required the goodwill of all parties. This case thus highlights yet another tension between trust and legal enforcement.

As the economist Partha Dasgupta puts it, "trust covers expectations about what others will do or have done . . . in circumstances that are not explicitly covered in the agreement."⁹ Expectations, adds Dasgupta, are largely determined by the reputation of the person with whom one enters into an agreement. Trustworthiness, as I have repeatedly demonstrated and as Ergas and Silvera knew, was never the natural attribute of individuals and groups, not even when these shared a minority religious creed. Reputation was an expensive commodity that a merchant acquired by living up to the expectations that he raised. And yet in order to gain more business agents, merchants sometimes had to take risks concerning whom to trust.

In what follows I examine why Ergas and Silvera initiated this hazardous business, and why they and Menasseh drifted apart after the tour began. By recounting the story of the big diamond affair, I not only follow our protagonists to their professional demise but also seek to understand the logic that guided them. My concern is less to offer a comparative historical analysis of contract law and legal institutions in different countries and empires at the time than to examine how Ergas and Silvera maneuvered in their relations with business associates once reputational sanctions lost their effectiveness. The chapter also discusses the role that matrimonial alliances played in the legal procedures concerning bankruptcy in Tuscany; in so doing, it reasserts the impact of specific kinship forms in the business organization of Sephardic traders.

THE TOUR OF THE SEVEN PROVINCES, OR, THE BEGINNING OF THE END

After a stormy sea voyage that forced him to stop in Malta, Menasseh arrived in Livorno in early April 1741 carrying a copy of the contract he had signed with Belilios and Silvera in Aleppo ten months earlier.¹⁰ He found Ergas and Silvera hard at work preparing for the tour of the seven provinces. No one at the Habsburg court seemed interested in the diamond. In Venice, Belilios had received a model and suggested that the king of Poland might buy the stone at the Leipzig Fair.¹¹ A Jewish dealer from Finale di Modena had inspected the diamond in

November 1740 but declined to buy it before seeing it polished. A Venetian Jewish diamond dealer named Romanelli later came in person to Livorno to scrutinize the stone and offered to buy it for fifty thousand pieces; Ergas and Silvera turned down the offer because it would have brought them a meager profit.¹² They would come to regret this decision.

Traveling across Europe to seek buyers for the stone was beneath the social standing of Abraham and David Ergas or Isaac Silvera. Instead, they hired Moses Vita (Hayyim) Cassuto, a trustworthy agent who would accompany Menasseh to Paris, London, and Amsterdam. The scion of a Jewish family of jewelers in Florence with whom Ergas and Silvera had done business for years, Cassuto was a fifty-year-old seasoned traveler who had sailed all the way to Jerusalem in 1733–35.¹³

Abraham Ergas, the senior partner, traveled in person to San Romano, a Tuscan town north of Livorno, to meet Cassuto in late January 1741. There, away from the eyes of friends and rivals, he handed the big diamond to the Florentine Jew and discussed with him the details of the impending journey.¹⁴ In May Ergas and Silvera notarized a power of attorney for Cassuto that bestowed on him the ability to represent them before any tribunal and allowed him to collect the 1 percent commission they were due at the diamond's sale.¹⁵ On 16 May 1741, Moses Cassuto and his brother David boarded a ship bound for Marseilles along with Menasseh, Jacob Belilios, who had arrived recently from Venice, and two servants. (For a map of the companions' route, see figure 10.1).

From Marseilles, Cassuto and company made their way to Versailles. In July 1741 Cassuto showed the diamond to Cardinal Fleury and his entourage at the court of Louis XV, but a king's minister recommended against purchasing it because the court had just suffered a fraudulent attempt engineered by an agent of the Sceriman family to sell a stone to the king through the offices of a courtier.¹⁶ Disappointed by the bad timing and cold reception at the French court, Ergas and Silvera suggested that Cassuto move on to London. He arrived on 2 August 1741, and on the partners' recommendation, he found Judah Supino and Benjamin Mendes da Costa, who were ready to guide him through the ins and outs of the diamond market there.¹⁷

In the summer of 1741 diamond prices in London were high, and Benjamin Mendes da Costa assured Ergas and Silvera that it would be entirely possible to sell the stone at a reasonable price. For nearly three months Cassuto gathered information about Indian and Brazilian diamonds and sought expert advice, but reported that Menasseh had only received an offer for £6,000, or about 25,000 pieces of eight. So low was the offer that Ergas and Silvera wondered whether Cassuto had made a mistake in his letter. Not yet defeated, Cassuto and com-

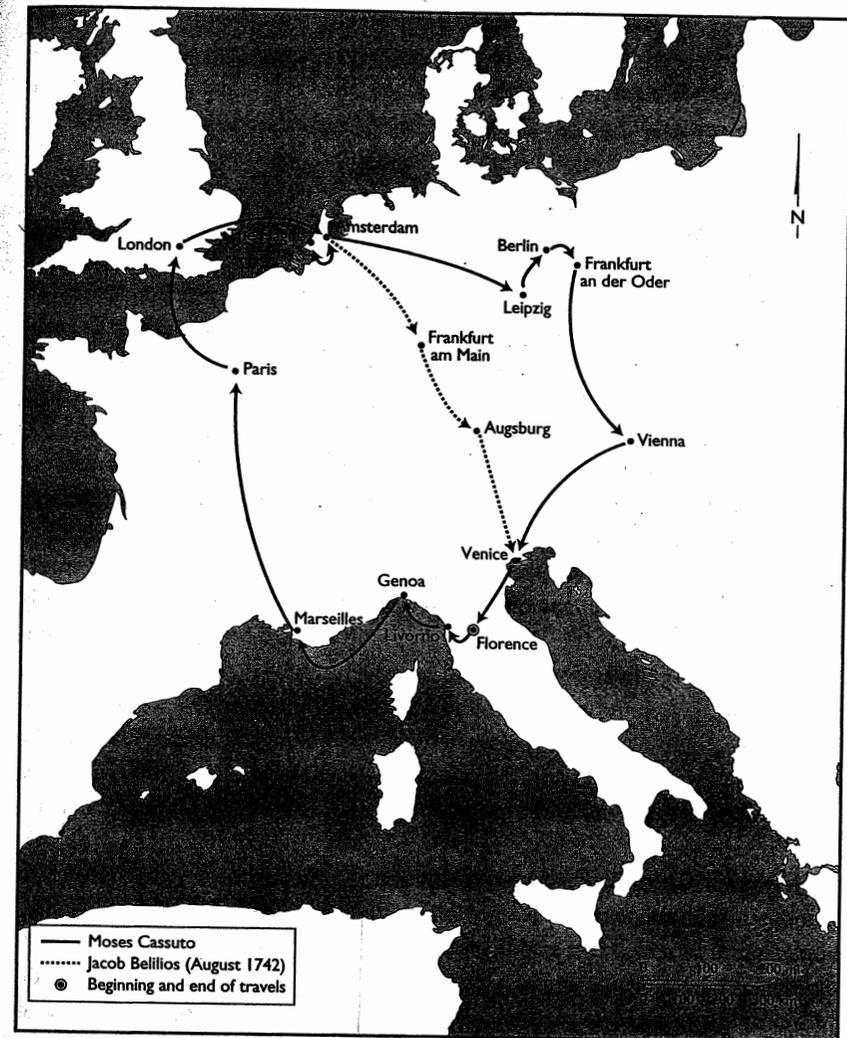


Figure 10.1. The tour of the seven provinces, 16 May 1741–18 June 1743

pany left England and headed back to the Continent bearing a recommendation meant for Benjamin Mendes da Costa's brother and cousin in Amsterdam.¹⁸ On 30 October 1741 they reached the Dutch capital, where Cassuto was to remain for nearly a year and a half looking for potential buyers and indulging himself at his principals' expense, although the prospects of making a large profit (and perhaps of selling the stone at all) looked increasingly grim.

Two weeks after leaving Livorno, Cassuto had already begun to express annoyance concerning Menasseh. His irritation grew worse over time. At first, he did not share with Ergas and Silvera the reasons for his impatience. But the Sephardim realized they had a serious problem on their hands when Menasseh expressed a wish to take the big diamond to St. Petersburg, where "the risk [was] most evident" because of the Russo-Swedish war (1741–43).¹⁹ When they learned that seven months earlier Menasseh had asked the exorbitant price of 60,000 guineas (about 270,000 pieces of eight) for the diamond, Ergas and Silvera wondered whether he was crazy ("pazzo") or not committed to closing the sale.²⁰ The more Menasseh dragged his feet, the angrier his associates grew, calling him a "hard head," a "barbarian," a "bad man," an "infamous type," and "a dog."²¹

With the diamond still unsold after two months in Amsterdam, Ergas and Silvera became exasperated and encouraged Cassuto to auction the stone at one of the public sales that specialized in diamonds, even if it sold at a loss.²² In January 1742 Cassuto filed a petition in the Supreme Court of Holland and Zeeland in The Hague, the highest appeals court for commercial disputes, asking permission to sell the diamond at an auction in Amsterdam. Because they had already visited the mainstays of the European diamond trade, he argued, only in vain, and at risk of their lives, would they now travel to new destinations to sell it.²³ But the contract signed by Silvera had conferred on Menasseh the authority to continue to try to find a buyer elsewhere. While waiting for Romanelli to make an offer in Livorno, Ergas and Silvera conceded that it was up to the Persian to decide whether to accept his proposal.²⁴ How could a court in The Hague invalidate the contract? The Persian Jew had never violated it and actually wished to implement it. Cassuto could accuse him of being unreasonable. He could try to demonstrate that Menasseh allegedly threatened to kill him.²⁵ He could even hope that a patient judge might listen to his accusations. But no court could nullify a contract of this kind against the wishes of one of the parties or initiate a thorough investigation of ulterior motives and information that might exceed the terms of the contract.

From Livorno, Ergas and Silvera cautioned Cassuto against filing a petition in The Hague. They worried that a sentence that was contrary to the terms of the original contract might generate more litigation in Aleppo, where, they claimed, Ottoman judges would not respect sentences passed in Europe and were generally unfavorable to Jews.²⁶ From Aleppo came a firm objection to Cassuto's plan to force Menasseh to sell the diamond at an auction in Amsterdam and a request to comply with the contract, according to which it was necessary to try to sell the stone at four more locations before calling off the whole enterprise.²⁷

Predictably, the tribunal in The Hague ruled in favor of the Persian. In a letter to Cassuto, Ergas and Silvera lucidly articulated what legal scholars argue today: that merchants resort to court when they no longer wish to deal with one another or when they are required to do so, rather than to preserve or restore a cooperative relationship. As Ergas and Silvera put it, "We've never heard of a magistrate who passes a case onto another to ensure that when the parties appear in court they reach a friendly agreement. If two parties resort to court it means that they were unable to resolve their disputes and that there is no remedy."²⁸

Why were Ergas and Silvera unable to foresee such an unfortunate outcome? The partnership's correspondence is silent with regard to all aspects of the deal prior to the diamond's arrival in Livorno. We are thus left wondering whether Elijah decided to buy it on his own, with the power that the bilateral general partnership conferred on him, or whether the two branches of Ergas and Silvera corresponded about this subject in secret letters not included in their letter books. All we know is that Ergas and Silvera were running a deficit in 1735–37, and their annual budget had dropped to twenty-seven thousand pieces. A sixty-carat diamond was a rarity, and the opportunity to sell it was hard to pass up. In the late nineteenth century, after the discovery of diamond mines in South Africa, only about a hundred diamonds in the world weighed more than 30 carats.

According to the general rule for calculating a diamond's price, a fine-cut stone of 62.5 carats was worth £31,250 (about 135,000 pieces of eight).²⁹ Diamond prices, however, varied greatly not only with weight but also with clarity, color, and cut. Large rough diamonds, moreover, were (and continue to be) very risky investments because of the difficulty of predicting with precision the result of cutting the stone—a risk that standardization and technical expertise still have not eliminated.³⁰ From the auction records concerning several parcels of uncut diamonds that were sold at the Bank coffeehouse, near the Royal Exchange in London, on 28 January 1779, we learn that a 62.5-carat rough diamond was sold for a mere £160 (less than 700 pieces of eight).³¹ As an early nineteenth-century dealer and expert recounted, "Diamonds of magnitude rarely compensate the possessor, there being so few purchasers. A friend of mine told me, that his father bought a fine brilliant for £12,000, and kept it twenty years without being able to dispose of it. Circumstances at length arose which rendered it necessary for him to part with it, on the best terms that could be obtained; it was sent all over Europe for two years and was at last sold for £9,000!"³²

When Ergas and Silvera first received the diamond in Aleppo in 1738, they described it as the next thing to the very first quality and without any defect.³³ Their expertise until then, however, had been in small stones, which they received in

bizalhos from India. Indeed, most of the diamonds on the market were tiny. A box that Solomon Urbino of Florence had shipped from Alexandria in 1737, for instance, contained 566 stones that weighed a total of 37 carats.³⁴ Taking advantage of Cassuto's travels, Ergas and Silvera had given him some additional commissions, including the sale of diamond jewelry that they claimed was of rare perfection and for which they asked £3,600 (about 15,000 pieces of eight).³⁵ By the time they learned that the sale of a large stone was an entirely different story, it was too late.

Having overvalued the big diamond, Elijah Silvera also chose to trust a Persian Jew about whom, in all likelihood, he knew too little. In so doing, he broke Jacques Savary's golden rule concerning how to select a good and wise correspondent or partner: know his habits ("moeurs"), his financial means ("faulitez"), and his way of conducting business ("sa conduite dans ses affaires").³⁶ We do not know if the Aleppo branch of Ergas and Silvera had other dealings with Iranian Jews, but there is reason to believe that contacts between these two groups were sporadic, if not limited to the big diamond affair alone.³⁷ It is not clear whether Silvera and Menasseh could speak to each other without an interpreter. Was Elijah sufficiently proficient in Hebrew to conduct tough business negotiations? Menasseh was fluent in Farsi and Ottoman Turkish but not in Italian, Spanish, or Portuguese (he later hired a translator in Livorno). Elijah's and Menasseh's families certainly never intermarried or sat on the same community boards. They may or may not have gone to the same synagogue in Aleppo. Ergas and Silvera, in other words, had little or no social leverage over Menasseh.

In retrospect, it is easy to reproach Elijah for being precipitous or naïve in accepting Menasseh's offer. But Ergas and Silvera would have never come into possession of a diamond of that size through their regular connections with India. A sixty-carat stone could only be handled in person. The "weak ties" (in Mark Granovetter's words) that existed between Western Sephardim and Persian Jews do not explain why Ergas and Silvera took an uncalculated risk on the basis of inadequate information, but they help us understand why they were tempted to do so—in this case, as in others, new opportunities came from the larger circle of acquaintances and lesser-known individuals rather than family and friends.

Distance and slow communication hampered the efforts of Ergas and Silvera to coordinate with their partner in Aleppo as well as with their traveling agent on tour across Europe. Under the best of conditions it was possible to sail from Alexandria to Livorno in twenty-four days. More often, it took at least forty days for a letter to travel from Livorno to Aleppo, between twenty and twenty-five days to arrive at Amsterdam, and not quite a month to reach London.³⁸ The senior partners in Livorno did not always share Elijah Silvera's opinions about how to

handle the tour of the seven provinces, nor were they always sure about Cassuto's whereabouts or his ideas for solving the disagreements with Menasseh. When Belilios suggested that they accept a bid below the asking price, for example, Ergas and Silvera could not respond before consulting with Elijah Silvera in Aleppo. Two months later, the partners in Livorno informed Cassuto that Elijah was consulting a rabbi about how to alter the stipulations of their agreement with Menasseh and that any solution would take time.³⁹

Menasseh's uncooperative behavior was quite rational. As it soon became clear, the initial offer that Romanelli had made for the big diamond was its market price: fifty thousand pieces of eight.⁴⁰ Recall that Menasseh owed his associates forty-four thousand pieces. Another one thousand pieces would go to pay the 1 percent commission to Ergas and Silvera and the Belilioses. Finally, there were the travel expenses, which were supposed to be deducted from the diamond's sale price and reimbursed to Ergas and Silvera. A quick calculation left Menasseh with no economic incentive to act cooperatively in the attempt to sell the stone. Procrastination was his best strategy. Cassuto had every right to be infuriated. Following Dasgupta, Menasseh's conduct constituted a failure of trust because he betrayed his associates' expectations about how he would conduct himself in circumstances that were not explicitly covered in the contractual agreement. But Cassuto had no recourse to the law because no tribunal could monitor or punish such opportunism.

Suspecting that he might be carrying three diamonds and precious stones with him, Ergas and Silvera thought of going to court to ask that the stones be confiscated and given to them. But neither Cassuto nor Belilios had reliable information about Menasseh's possessions, and in any case the Persian was under no obligation to pay Ergas and Silvera back if the diamond was not sold.⁴¹ As the chances of selling the stone grew slimmer and the conflict with Menasseh escalated, Jacob Belilios, David Cassuto, and one of the servants left Amsterdam on 5 August 1742 to return to Venice by way of Frankfurt am Main and Augsburg.⁴²

On leaving, Belilios placed the diamond in the hands of Jacob Nunes Henriques, the husband of Rebecca Baruch Carvaglio (see figure 1.2). He also gave full power of attorney to Henriques, although the original contract did not allow him to do so. Ergas and Silvera felt betrayed. They now accused Belilios and his family of not honoring their obligations. They forbade Cassuto from traveling to Venice with the big diamond, fearing that Belilios, whose family was in Venice, planned to kidnap him there.⁴³ Rather than taking him to court for having deserted his travel companions, Ergas and Silvera pleaded with the Belilios to help them contain Menasseh's malevolence and act "with good correspondence and fraternally" ("boa corespondencia y com hermandade"). They

threatened to resort to trial before a judge if they could not resolve their disputes amicably ("bonariamente ho per via di giudice"), but knew how little a judge could help them.⁴⁴

In order to finance this venture, Ergas, Silvera, and Belilios had borrowed the equivalent of 21,500 pieces of Livorno at 12 percent annual interest in Aleppo in 1740, spent 2,000 pieces to insure the diamond and to ship it from Alexandretta to Livorno, and already squandered more than they had planned to finance the travels of Menasseh, Cassuto, and Belilios, which in the end cost them about 6,600 pieces of eight. Even if they were in a healthier financial state in 1744 than when they had purchased the big diamond, with an annual turnover of 55,000 pieces, 6,600 pieces counted for 12 percent of their budget. In addition, they still owed Cassuto a 1 percent commission.⁴⁵ At the beginning of 1743, a year and a half after Cassuto and his fellow travelers had left Livorno to embark on what appeared to be an exciting business trip, the question for Ergas and Silvera was no longer how big a profit they would make on the diamond but how to get it back from Nunes Henriques, how to make sure that Belilios and Menasseh did not reach an agreement behind their backs, and how to sell the stone for a low but acceptable price.

Following the advice of a legal councilor whom they consulted in Tuscany, Ergas and Silvera decided there was no option but to complete the tour of the seven provinces. In February 1743 Cassuto submitted a new petition to the Supreme Court in The Hague indicating his choice of the next four destinations that were necessary if he was to fulfill the terms of the contract. This time the tribunal approved his request and ordered Menasseh to comply with it.⁴⁶ He also succeeded in getting the stone back from Henriques. Meanwhile, Ergas and Silvera and Belilios agreed that they would accept an offer for fifty thousand pieces of eight and ordered Cassuto to bring the diamond back to Florence if he couldn't sell it for that price.⁴⁷

On 7 May 1743 Cassuto finally left Amsterdam. In six weeks he visited several cities, including Leipzig, Berlin, Frankfurt an der Oder, and Vienna. The rapidity with which he completed the last portion of his journey indicates how resigned Ergas and Silvera and Belilios were now to the impossibility of selling the big diamond. Better to stop financing Cassuto and Menasseh's travels and bring the stone to Livorno. On 18 June 1743 Cassuto was back at his villa outside Florence with the stone.⁴⁸ The diamond unsold, the issue now was determining to whom it belonged. Were the Persians still its legitimate owners although they had pawned the stone to Ergas and Silvera? Should Ergas and Silvera keep it in their control until sold? The contract provided no answers to these crucial questions about property rights.

Immediately after Cassuto returned home, Ergas and Silvera asked him to get a good legal advisor. They were dealing with a serious matter. As the summer progressed and the litigation became more intricate, they hired one of the most respected lawyers in town: Giovanni Baldasseroni, head officer of the Livorno Customs House.⁴⁹ Acknowledging that going to court was expensive, time-consuming, and prejudicial to their reputation, they attempted to resolve the dispute by recourse to three Jewish arbiters. Arbitration was merchants' favorite form of legal resolution. In Livorno as elsewhere in Italy, Jews were allowed to elect their own arbiters, who could rule according to Jewish law.⁵⁰ In February 1744 three arbiters were designated to draft a "compromise" (this was the legal term) between the partnership and Menasseh. Nine months later, however, the arbiter elected by Menasseh had still not signed the compromise offered by the other two because it assigned the stone, and any decision concerning it, to Ergas and Silvera.⁵¹

Arbitration was a semiformal system of adjudication that was fully endorsed by state tribunals.⁵² Unwilling to accept the proposal of two of the Jewish arbiters, Menasseh appealed to the Supreme Magistrate in Florence, who elected three Christian arbiters trained in law (*giudici delegati*) to resolve the dispute. They turned the case over to the court of the governor of Livorno in September 1745.⁵³ Their intervention marked the full transition from an amicable to a formal order of litigation and from the Jewish self-administration of justice to the intervention of Christian authorities. Ignorant of local languages and laws, Menasseh hired Moses Attias, son of Isaac, to assist him in dealing with the Tuscan judicial system. Rivalries between the Ergas and the Attias families dated back to the murder of Abraham Ergas in 1689 and likely added to Ergas and Silvera's resentment concerning the costs of the lawsuit.⁵⁴

Their worst predictions soon came true. Six months later, the case still dragged on and the diamond had not been sold. Ergas and Silvera were forced to declare bankruptcy in March 1746. In the end, however, as we shall see, their case against Menasseh actually helped them shield their debts. On 11 May 1746, Cassuto appealed to the Civil Ruota, the highest civil court in Tuscany, objecting to the jurisdiction of the three judges appointed by the Supreme Magistrate.⁵⁵ In September of the same year, the wives of Abraham and David Ergas and of Isaac Silvera, as well as the widows of the deceased partners, came to Cassuto's aid and submitted the same request to the merchant court of the Consoli del Mare in Pisa.⁵⁶ Although the women lost their appeal, their appearance marked the beginning of a complex legal strategy that involved the men and women of the Ergas and Silvera families in Livorno and ultimately saved the partnership from complete financial breakdown.

BANKRUPTCY AND DOWRIES

A law passed in Florence in 1582 distinguished between fraudulent and involuntary bankruptcy and declared the latter to be a criminal offense no longer. The new statutes promulgated by the Florentine merchants' court in 1585 outlined the legal procedures to be followed in cases of involuntary bankruptcy. Standard procedures prescribed that two-thirds of the creditors (together holding credits for at least half of the total amount) agreed by means of a formal "compromise" to settle the bankruptcy amicably. Further rules stipulated that a merchant had to repay his wife before he could pay any debts to third parties. All these provisions applied equally to Jewish and Christian merchants in Tuscany.⁵⁷

As Jacob Price noted in his study of the rise and fall of a leading English firm in the North American trade in the early eighteenth century, bankruptcy was a common occurrence among private merchants.⁵⁸ Driven to a shortage of liquidity, Abraham Ergas, David Ergas, and Isaac Silvera took refuge in the convent of the Capuchins of Livorno, bringing with them jewels, various belongings, and their business records, including commercial letters, contracts, and account books. Jewish merchants who went bankrupt commonly fled to a Catholic institution because the properties of the Roman Catholic Church were off-limits for the secular authorities. After repeated remonstrations by creditors and wives, the partners were forced to deposit their business records in the court of the governor of Livorno, where the bankruptcy trial was to begin.⁵⁹

More than two-thirds of Ergas and Silvera's creditors signed an agreement according to which they would be repaid their credit in installments. Among the creditors were local and foreign merchants, agents, bankers, and suppliers, most but not all Sephardim, as well as some local artisans and workers. They also included Blanca del Rio, Esther Ergas, Esther Rodrigues Silva, Blanca Rebecca Carvaglio, and Deborah Ergas, the wives and the widows of everyone who had had a share in Ergas and Silvera's partnership in Livorno since 1704. The sum of all their dowries amounted to 32,550 pieces of eight. The partnership's total debts totaled 22,218:19:10 pieces of eight.⁶⁰ On 21 May 1746 Blanca del Rio and the others had formed a syndicate (*consortium*), that is, a fictional legal persona that allowed them to delegate to a male legal practitioner the power to represent them collectively in court and to sue their husbands and their husbands' creditors. As prescribed by law, the syndicate asked the court of Livorno to draw up an inventory of their husbands' estates in order to assess and liquidate the remaining patrimony.⁶¹ Were these women taking legal action to protect their own interests or those of their husbands and children, too?

Several authors, including Luciano Allegra, have linked the higher dowries

found among Jews to the fact that Jewish women enjoyed greater legal and economic independence than did their Catholic peers in early modern Italy.⁶² There is no doubt that, with due consideration for the local variations in the rights of Christian women, Jewish law conferred greater autonomy on women than both Roman law and the local statutes of late medieval and early modern Italian states. Jewish women could not initiate a divorce, but they could remarry after having been repudiated. Kenneth Stow argues that Jews in Renaissance Rome also granted greater freedom to their sons and daughters in the choice of their marriage mates than Catholic parents did.⁶³ According to Jewish civil and criminal law women had the same fundamental rights as men in the public forum, including the ability to initiate a court case, be sued, make contracts, testify in court, run shops, and do business without a male as a legal guardian.⁶⁴ Some of these rights, however, were restricted by civil laws. In Tuscany, for example, Christian and Jewish women normally had to be represented in court by a male guardian (*mundualdus*).⁶⁵

Jewish law allowed women to inherit from their mothers and fathers in addition to what was given them in the form of dowries and permitted widows or divorcées to manage their own and their late husbands' estates. Levirate marriage, when enforced, limited Sephardic widows in the exercise of this prerogative. Similarly, levirate marriage could interfere with the right of widows and divorcées to retain guardianship of their children (at least of their daughters) or appoint a guardian for them—a right that in principle distinguished them from the "cruel mothers" of Renaissance Florence, who lost their child custody rights if they remarried.⁶⁶

Whether in sixteenth-century Lucca and Augsburg or in eighteenth-century Lyon, dowries often made up a significant portion of a commercial partnership's capital.⁶⁷ At the same time, Christian partnerships frequently used limited liability contracts to raise capital among non-kin. As we saw in Chapter 5, Livornese Sephardim relied on dowries more than on external investors to finance their business ventures. Available data do not allow us to establish whether the dowries of Jewish (or only Sephardic) women in early modern Livorno were systematically higher than those of Christian women (whether Italians or foreigners). We know, however, that matrimonial alliances among Sephardim entailed a transfer of funds both from the bride to the groom and from the groom to the bride and that the total contribution was considered as "dowry" in bankruptcy cases because Jewish women were entitled to the restitution of both the dowry and all or most of the dower. This Sephardic custom, intentionally or not, protected a considerable portion of a merchant's patrimony in cases of insolvency.

The dowry system prevalent among Christian merchants, in contrast, gener-

ally did not include any transfer of money from the groom to the bride and thus did not protect the groom's patrimony under the guise of dowry. In principle, nothing prevented Christian merchants from exploiting the system if they could obtain a large dowry from their wives. The former head of the *Sicurtà* of Livorno, the office that levied the tax on marine insurance, was tried for corruption in 1762 and fined twelve thousand pieces of eight, which he never paid because he owed more to his wife in restitution of her dowry.⁶⁸ But in practice, exogamous marriage and the dowry system reduced Christian merchants' ability to avail themselves of the priority given to dowries before commercial credits.

In assessing the degree of women's autonomy, in sum, we cannot examine dowries separately from the kinship and devolutionary systems to which they belonged. The Western Sephardic families of Livorno, in contrast to other Jewish societies, more closely resembled the Christian upper classes insofar as they left women little choice about their mates and bound women's legal autonomy to the reproduction and survival strategies of patriarchal families.⁶⁹ Scholars stress the significance of women's right and obligation to take legal action (without parental consent) in order to recover their dowry credits from a husband veering toward insolvency but also recognize that the outcome of legal action would benefit the entire household rather than women alone.⁷⁰ In the case of Sephardic merchant families it is nearly impossible to draw a clear line between women's personal interests and the general welfare of their families of origin and spouse's family because their husbands had a large stake in the sums protected by the bankruptcy clause. In late April 1747, the severely ill Blanca del Rio, wife of one of the founders of Ergas and Silvera, drafted her last will: she named her daughter Deborah, wife of Isaac Silvera, as her principal heir, leaving her sons a mere 20 pieces each.⁷¹ In so doing, Blanca made sure that her rights in the dowry restitution reverted to her daughter. Had her sons Abraham and David Ergas inherited the bulk of her property, Isaac Silvera would not have been able to subtract his mother-in-law's 7,500-piece dowry from the sums claimed by Ergas and Silvera's creditors.

For several years Blanca and the other women engaged in legal battles nearly on a daily basis. They repeatedly contested the claims of their husbands' creditors and initiated suits against the partnership's debtors in order to reclaim their dowries. In July 1746, they also demanded alimony while their husbands were no longer in business. This minor issue was the only one that led to a real confrontation with their spouses and the only one that they lost on procedural grounds.⁷² Otherwise, the partners always had something to gain from their wives' legal maneuvers. This strategy became patent when Blanca and the others filed suit against Menasseh to dispute his claim to control of the big diamond, maintain-

ing that the stone had become an essential security against their dowries. The question of the stone's ownership thus became intertwined with that of the dowries' restitution. Therefore, by defending their rights to obtain the restitution of their dowries, Ergas and Silvera's wives and widows became instrumental in defending their husbands from their creditors and from Menasseh.

THE JEWS OF LIVORNO BETWEEN THE MARKET AND THE COURT

After Cassuto returned to Florence, Ergas and Silvera renewed their efforts to sell the big diamond through Benjamin Alvarenga and Benjamin Mendes da Costa in London. The longer the time spent in that effort, the more their business' survival was imperiled. In November 1745 the partners appealed to Benjamin Mendes da Costa obsequiously: "We beg you, who have the means; might your heroic deeds, with which you always assist us, help us, the weaker parts, especially considering that we are relatives?"⁷³ The purple prose was a measure of their despair. But insolvency tested familial bonds and ethnic allegiance. As the partners' financial situation worsened and they found themselves unable to endorse the bills of exchange that Alvarenga and Mendes da Costa drew on their account in Livorno, the London Sephardim left them on their own.⁷⁴

Another year and a half went by before the big diamond was put up for auction at Chadwell's, a coffeehouse near the London Royal Exchange on 12 May 1747. This time, too, it went unsold because it was found to weigh less than it was supposed to. Meanwhile, claiming ownership of the stone, Menasseh had sent his agent Attias to Vienna to inquire whether the emperor (now sovereign of Tuscany, too) might be interested in buying the big diamond for the stunning sum of one hundred thousand pieces. It is unclear how Attias could be lured into this last attempt. Had the news of Cassuto's failures across Europe not spread? In any case, the trip to Vienna led to nothing.⁷⁵

In the summer of 1747, Ergas and Silvera risked losing control of the diamond after a court ruled that Menasseh could have it in exchange for a security deposit, although he was not allowed to carry it outside Tuscany. Only their wives and a skilled legal consultant saved them from what would have been a catastrophic loss.⁷⁶ As more and more tribunals became involved in this lawsuit, nearly seven years after the tour of the seven provinces had begun, the stone remained unsold, and there was no easy way to adjudicate its ownership.

Menasseh's Persian associates were no less frustrated with him than were Ergas and Silvera. With no news of him since he had left Iran (Menasseh apparently did not answer any of their letters), Agah Israel Jadgar, the father of one of

the stone's co-owners, embarked on a long journey that took him to Livorno in October 1746. There, he initially gave Menasseh all his support, but over time he grew wary of his intentions; he revoked the power of attorney he had assigned to Menasseh and gave it to Moses Attias instead.⁷⁷ Jadgar, too, was not above suspicion. When called to testify before the governor's tribunal, he denied the allegation that, having stopped in Aleppo on his way to Livorno, he had reached a new agreement with Belilios and Silvera to settle the dispute with a payment of about two-thirds of what Menasseh owed them. Had Silvera received this payment in Aleppo, Ergas and Silvera would no longer have been able to pursue their cause against Menasseh in Livorno. They had no interest in confirming the allegation, and information technology at the time made it impossible for the Tuscan judges to ascertain the truth.⁷⁸

More sentences were passed and more appeals were made, including a settlement negotiated in July 1749 by three judges designated by the governor's tribunal who established the amount the Sephardim owed Menasseh and vice versa in a sentence that incorporated many of Menasseh's demands. The big diamond's fate still remained uncertain. Ergas and Silvera insisted on trying to auction the stone in London. Menasseh sought to obstruct this plan, because he feared that the diamond would sell for less than what he owed to Belilios and Silvera. His opponents, however, obtained several deferrals of the case in court that made it impossible for him to challenge the settlement.⁷⁹ By December 1749 the big diamond had been sold.⁸⁰ We do not know what was paid for it or by whom, but the sale must not have yielded any profit because a few years later, when the heir of one of their former employees demanded the payment of an outstanding credit, Ergas and Silvera pleaded indigence. The governor of Livorno acknowledged that they might mortgage their wives' dowries to obtain a loan but recognized their relative poverty.⁸¹

"Where there is no sure gain, there is loss."⁸² As summarized in the Spanish proverb, this was the bitter lesson that Ergas and Silvera learned from their foolish investment. To historians, business failures offer precious information for reconstructing the ways in which actors devised their strategies in view of the opportunities and constraints that they faced. That Elijah and Menasseh were both Jewish was not inconsequential. After all, Menasseh traveled all the way to Aleppo when he could have reached Isfahan, significantly closer to his home, and hired an Armenian diamond dealer for the same enterprise. Silvera's willingness to sign an incomplete contract with a stranger stemmed from his miscalculation of the facility with which this sixty-carat diamond would find a buyer but was likely encouraged by their shared religious identity. Yet the way in which the

story unfolded begs for a refinement of anthropological theories about "middle-minorities" that often take for granted the homogeneity of such groups.⁸³ Successive changes in the history of the Jewish diaspora left Western Sephardim with little or no contacts and socioeconomic ties to Persian Jews. Ergas and Silvera had denser channels of communication with the Hindus of Goa than with Menasseh's relatives and friends.

With Avner Greif, we have to recognize that being Jewish was not alone a basis for trust in business. In telling the story of the big diamond affair, however, I have been less interested in identifying the existence of legal institutions charged with protecting the property rights of strangers, as new economic institutionalists would be, than in examining the instances and ways in which actors used such institutions. While Cassuto struggled to obtain a ruling from the Supreme Court in The Hague, Ergas and Silvera expressed a view very much at odds with modern historians' belief that the legal systems of northern Europe were superior to those of southern Europe. They did not believe there was any significant difference between the course of justice in The Netherlands and in other places, except that it could take a bit more or less time for a lawsuit to be adjudicated.⁸⁴

Their view came from the understanding that the enforcement of incomplete contracts relied more on the parties' voluntary or socially coerced cooperation rather than on external authority, or, to use the terms of the new institutional economics, more on credible commitments than on credible threats. For this reason, in their regular dealings with a variety of commission agents, whether co-religionists or not, Ergas and Silvera used what Lisa Bernstein calls "relationship-preserving norms"—to be understood in this case as the exchange of favors and services channeled through correspondence as well as the social bonds and threats that made it work. Occasionally, a sentence could also serve as a new beginning in the dealings of two parties after they mended their dispute. But not all breaches of contract could be repaired. When Menasseh began to sabotage their supposedly cooperative enterprise, Ergas and Silvera resorted to what Bernstein calls "end-game norms," that is, those used when parties decide that they no longer intend to deal with one another.⁸⁵ Arbitration proved insufficient because Menasseh refused to comply. Once the Tuscan courts became involved, jurisdictional pluralism afforded Ergas and Silvera and Menasseh plentiful opportunities for appeals. Ergas and Silvera also sought to use their social standing to make a thinly veiled request to Cassuto to be sure that friendly judges be appointed to oversee their case in Florence.⁸⁶ Unable to speak the local language and a complete stranger in Livorno, the Persian nonetheless initially received a fair hearing in the Tuscan tribunals. The partners eventually prevailed in court,

but theirs was a Pyrrhic victory because there was no legal remedy for a poorly devised business venture.

Ergas and Silvera's daring but unsound investment in the big diamond came at a time when the most firmly established branch of their commercial activities, the Levantine trade, suffered the consequences of severe natural disasters and warfare. A place ridden with epidemics, Aleppo was hit by an unusually long and severe plague from mid-April 1742 to February 1744.⁸⁷ The Ottoman-Safavid war escalated and the city barely escaped a siege in December 1743. In September of that year, the French consul feared the damaging consequences for local trade as the conflict approached Aleppo. Ergas and Silvera had been concerned about the escalation of Ottoman-Safavid hostilities and their impact on the Levantine markets since 1741. To add to their fears, a devastating fire destroyed two-thirds of Smyrna in July 1742, and its repercussions impacted commerce in the entire region.⁸⁸ Livorno was hit by earthquakes for three consecutive weeks in late January and early February 1742. Damage to infrastructures was light, but people's confidence was shaken and business slowed down considerably in the aftermath of the quakes.⁸⁹ In the midst of all of these adversities, the War of the Austrian Succession reached into the Mediterranean in 1744, French commerce was temporarily halted, and insurance premiums skyrocketed.

An unwise speculation and unfortunate circumstances were too much for a family partnership such as Ergas and Silvera to absorb. After it dissolved, the partners continued to live in Livorno but suffered a decline in status. Unable to form a new, independent business, Abraham Ergas and Isaac Silvera took advantage of a new law passed in 1759 to regulate the posts of Christian and Jewish brokers in Livorno and obtained a license to operate in this subsidiary position.⁹⁰ Indigence in this case must be understood in relative rather than absolute terms. Large dowries spared their families from the worst and ensured their continued solidarity. Ergas and Silvera continued to hold lifetime appointments in the Jewish community.⁹¹ And when Isaac Silvera died in 1766, his former partners took his underage son Abraham Gabriel under their tutelage.⁹²

Ergas and Silvera's decline arrived at a time when the Sephardic oligarchy was loosening its grip on the Jewish nation of Livorno and met the challenge of the rise of Italian and North African families. It has been suggested that as the eighteenth century progressed, the Western Sephardim who had dominated the community since its inception and contributed significantly to the expansion of Livorno as an international entrepôt increasingly retreated from commercial activities and embraced the social and economic outlook of rentiers. Meanwhile, Italian and North African Jews became increasingly active in long-

distance trade.⁹³ Although there is evidence of this process, its dynamics did not respond solely to the changing balance of power within Jewish society. For one thing, most European states' commercial and military power grew stronger in the course of the eighteenth century in the eastern Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean, where Western Sephardim were most active. In contrast, North African Jews maintained their influence in the exchanges between Tunis and Marseilles until the advent of French colonial rule.

In Amsterdam, too, Sephardic merchants progressively lost ground in the second half of the eighteenth century. They retracted their investments in overseas trade and manufacturing activities and shifted them to the financial sector. Prestige and security were not the only motors of this transformation. By granting Great Britain a thirty-year contract to supply African slaves to the Spanish American colonies, the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 made Dutch Sephardic merchants and diplomats increasingly dispensable. Inquisitorial persecutions undermined all remaining ties between Iberia and the New Jews between the 1720s and the 1740s. Moreover, Prussia, Scandinavia, and Russia competed in the Dutch industries that had a significant Jewish presence, especially textiles and tobacco. Finally, after it began to decline as an emporium, Amsterdam was hit by financial crises in 1763 and 1772-73.⁹⁴

These and other structural changes in the international economy shook the internal dynamics of the Jewish world. The Portuguese and Spanish congregation in Amsterdam subsidized the emigration to Surinam of ever larger numbers of the poor.⁹⁵ On the other side of the channel, a number of affluent British Sephardim converted, some Ashkenazic Jews gained in socioeconomic status, and a new wave of Moroccan Jewish immigration tested the unity of Jewish society. As close communication among Western Sephardim and their sense of distinctive superiority within the Jewish diaspora waned, the end of a "Sephardic world order" (in the words of Daniel Schroeter) seemed at hand in the late eighteenth century.⁹⁶

In Livorno, the demise of the Sephardic oligarchy was not precipitous, although it did involve a partial shift away from commerce and toward speculative investments. After Ergas and Silvera's bankruptcy, Jacob Ergas, son of David, was the most successful of the family members. He remained active in the trade in coral and diamonds with London and began to specialize in marine insurance.⁹⁷ Jacob Ergas used his standing to prove that the Sephardim could still exert influence on the Jewish nation. In 1757 he joined forces with Jacob Franco to obstruct the Italian party that dominated the governanti.⁹⁸ Ergas died a rich man in 1790.⁹⁹

After Tuscany was annexed to the French Empire in 1808, Livorno entered

a long phase of stagnation, and many venues of Jewish economic activities dwindled into insignificance. Trade with Aleppo, the kernel of Sephardic commerce in the Levant, declined dramatically.¹⁰⁰ After they conquered Algiers in 1830 and Tunis in 1881, the French became less and less dependent on Jewish traders in North Africa. In the Levant, local Jews maintained a position in the banking sector, but Armenians and Greeks supplanted them in most manufacturing industries.¹⁰¹ In the Napoleonic census of Livorno drafted in 1809, six Ergases were listed as heads of household and still ranked in the upper or middle socioeconomic echelons: three were classified as "possidenti" (a term that referred to someone who was both well-to-do and owned real estate), two were listed as bank employees, and one was listed as a financial broker.¹⁰² No Silveras appeared in the 1809 list. Meanwhile, the Silvera family continued to participate in international commerce in Aleppo for most of the nineteenth century, acquired Italian citizenship in 1860, and later relocated to Manchester.¹⁰³

After the second decade of the nineteenth century, for the first time in more than two hundred years, more Jews left Livorno than arrived there.¹⁰⁴ Several families by the name of Ergas continued to live in the Tuscan port, but evidence of their presence after the 1840s is scant.¹⁰⁵ Records about the emigration of Livornese Jews in the nineteenth century are too incomplete to help us map the time and destinations of their departures.¹⁰⁶ Fragments of oral history and written information place numerous Ergases in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Salonica. They may have arrived there from Livorno or from Monastir, the Macedonian town which by that time was linked to Salonica by railroad.¹⁰⁷

Once again, in the mid-nineteenth century the upper echelons of Livorno Jews were on the move. This time they looked south. Because the Tuscan port was in decline, they sought better opportunities in established and emerging markets of the Ottoman Empire that they once had shunned. In Cairo, Alexandria, Tunis, and especially Salonica, they juggled their Italian, Livornese, European, Sephardic, and Jewish identities. There, those who in Livorno had been Italian, North African, or Spanish and Portuguese Jews became simply Livorno Jews. They spoke Italian rather than Portuguese, shared the Francophile political and cultural attitudes of westernized Sephardim, supported the mission of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, and allegedly practiced closed endogamy. An early scholar of Salonica Jewry called them a "caste."¹⁰⁸ They linked Europe and the Mediterranean in new ways and devised new forms of being at once insular and cosmopolitan.

CONCLUSION

In the increasingly interconnected world of the early modern period, individuals changed religious affiliation, spied on their friends, assumed new identities, and gained recognition as rulers of provinces whose languages they did not speak; wars and forced migrations altered the composition of vast regions and compelled groups to relocate and adjust to new environments; ideas and texts traveled back and forth across longer distances than ever before. Meanwhile, early modern Europe remained a highly segmented and hierarchical society—a society of orders, in which religion and ancestry for the most part determined legal status, kinship and communitarian structures tended to be closed, and no centralized credit or legal institution could offset all the uncertainties that arose from dealing with strangers. Questions about the participation of trading diasporas in long-distance trade thus explore the intersection of these two extremes—the omnipresence of cross-cultural contacts (some voluntary, some coerced, some a mixture of the two) and the fairly rigid normative frameworks in which these contacts took place.

In this book I have considered one of these trading diasporas and have focused on one partnership more specifically. By putting Ergas and Silvera on center stage, I was able to follow the diverse traces found in their business letters rather than taking one city (Livorno) or one more or less homogeneous group (the Western Sephardim) as a frame of reference. Though limited by gaps in the available historical records, global history on a small scale helps to unveil connections that have been forgotten and to elaborate on others that are taken for granted. It also encourages a multilayered analysis of the power and market relations that Sephardic merchants developed with the social and state entities with which they interacted—coreligionists, local authorities, foreign powers, and other trading communities.

If I chose to conclude with the demise of Ergas and Silvera, it is because my purpose has not been to glorify small-scale economic operations and trading diasporas in the age of the giants of European mercantilism. The big diamond affair, after all, is a reminder that one miscalculated investment was sufficient to bury a family firm with a limited ability to raise funds and live on credit. I have examined why Sephardic merchants nonetheless continued to adhere to a form of commercial organization that is often described as archaic or inefficient, the general partnership. Their marriage patterns and their belonging to a wider and interconnected diaspora gave this business form considerable strength. Moreover, private partnerships, including many family firms, remained a feature of Mediterranean trade, were widespread in the Atlantic, and continued to be present in some niches of the trade between Europe and Asia. In eighteenth-century Amsterdam and London, as is often remarked, the financial sector was more autonomous than in Livorno or Marseilles, but the commodity trade (even when carried out across the longest distances) was largely consigned to what Charles Carrière has called "personalized" rather than anonymous capitalism.¹ It is therefore essential to decipher the variety of social and legal arrangements that made way for such business arrangements.

Traditional in organization and lacking in technological advantages, Ergas and Silvera nonetheless reached outward. They could not control supply and prices in the same way certain joint-stock companies and state-run operations did but, rather, used their wide networks to gather information and act swiftly. They possessed a consummate ability to adapt to minute market fluctuations more than they embodied the scouting spirit of pathfinders. They were in competition with other Sephardim, but it was only by loosely coordinating collective action with them (although they did not operate as a cartel) that Ergas and Silvera acquired and sustained their position in niche markets. In some regions, such as in the Levant, their networks drew primarily from the Jewish diaspora. Elsewhere they included an assortment of business communities. Caught between the confining limitations of what anthropologists and sociologists call "ethnic economic networks" and the structural fragility of legal institutions in governing agency relations, Ergas and Silvera sought to contain the threat of agents who might betray the trust placed in them by deploying a creative mix of familial, communitarian, institutional, and discursive resources. When the big diamond affair took a turn for the worse, they showed a clear appreciation of what tribunals could and could not do to remedy an associate's opportunism.

Apart from legal professionals, merchants (along with the aristocracy) may have appeared before the courts more than any other group, although men and, to a lesser extent, women from all walks of life made increasing use of tribunals

in early modern Europe.² Sephardic merchants were no exception. In Livorno as in the other European ports where they were allowed to reside and trade, they were not supposed to suffer any formal discrimination in matters of commercial and civil law. They are, indeed, ever-present in court records. And yet not all contracts that merchants signed could be litigated in court effectively. Commission agency was the type of contract that most helped them expand their purviews and yet the most incomplete of the types of contracts used in long-distance trade. It thus required extralegal commitments and a great deal of accommodation.

In the most volatile and risky branch of their trade—the intercontinental exchange of Mediterranean coral and Indian diamonds conducted via Lisbon and Goa—the Livorno Sephardim had to resort to intermediaries from outside their community to initiate a lawsuit overseas and generally were unprotected by legal institutions. Their *modus operandi* disproves standard predictions according to which the more diverse the pool of actors involved in a transaction, the more crucial the role of external authorities. It conforms instead to the postulates of social network analysis according to which chains of information transmission generate economic incentives and social control, and shared norms of behavior standardize expectations. In delegating crucial decisions to faraway strangers who bartered their coral for diamonds and other Indian products, the Livorno Sephardim utilized several types of contracts recognized by commercial and civil law (powers of attorney, insurance policies, sea loans, and certifications). Yet in order to induce their agents to comply with their instructions, they relied more on prevailing conventions about how to conduct commerce, available information about market prices, and multilateral incentives spread via letter-writing than on legal threats. Thus networks opened up rather than closed down market opportunities.

As Ergas and Silvera's activities show, in order to work effectively, C. A. Bayly's "communities of mercantile trust" did not have to be homogenous in ethnic or religious terms. Even among Sephardim, a pledge or a threat was only believable when expressed in a context that lent it credence. In fact, it may be better to refer to "networks of mercantile trust" to dispel the consensual overtone that the term *community* carries. My invocation of the concept of network has sought to stress the horizontal and self-regulating nature of cross-cultural trade in cases when external authorities only played an indirect role in mediating conflicts concerning obligations and property rights. But I have balanced conventional depictions of networks as antihierarchical organizations with a more historically accurate characterization. I have thus suggested that we think of networks as comprising groups that had their own autonomy and sources of self-identification, rather

than as atomized arrays of individuals. Egalitarianism was no more a feature of early modern mercantile networks than of society at large. Sephardic families that participated in cross-cultural trading networks were patriarchal in ways that conditioned the formation, management, and transmission of mercantile capital. The oligarchic and exacting structures of Sephardic communities enhanced the credibility of network members by exerting group discipline, indirectly as well as through threats of expulsion. Several state authorities, moreover, lent support to the Sephardim of Livorno in their commercial endeavors by granting them diplomatic protection and access to specific markets. Vulnerable as they were in the age of cannon-bearing ships, trading diasporas could entice state powers into mutually beneficial if asymmetric alliances. The Medici and later the Habsburg authorities were the most important sponsors of the Jews of Livorno, but the French Crown was no less crucial to them in the Levant, and the English East India Company offered them new possibilities in the diamond trade.

If networks depend on information, they are predicated on language and channels of communication. As the sociologist Ervin Goffman pointed out four decades ago, it is reasonable to assume that actors will behave rationally, but that assumption needs to be understood in relation to the perception of the integrity and credibility of others involved in the exchange. It is therefore imperative to appreciate the avowals through which actors communicated credibility, promises, and threats in interactions that were not conducted face-to-face.³ A study of cross-cultural networks ought to illuminate the way commitments and warnings became intelligible and believable. Business correspondence remained the most important means by which merchants acquired and disseminated information in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As merchants' letters became accepted evidence in courts and were exchanged by agents from disparate places, they also followed more rigid protocols. Cross-cultural trade has left a double mark on the language of business correspondence that is only apparently contradictory: its idioms were often syntactically and orthographically hybrid, but its communication style was ever more standardized.

Standardization grew from necessity and was sanctioned and reproduced by a prescriptive literature. The European *ars mercatoria* (now with the aid of the printing press) included a variety of letter-writing manuals that codified the appropriate formulas with which to express oneself. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, these formulas combined an ancient language of commerce as love and reciprocity with a gentleman's etiquette. That Sephardim (who embraced the norms of Christian gentility but could not aspire to noble status in Christian society) and Hindus (who lay far beyond the boundaries of gentility

in early modern Europe) could legitimately absorb and, indeed, were expected to conform to these communication codes reveals the instrumental and rhetorical quality of such codes. Rhetorical formulas created a discursive reality that was more cosmopolitan in its reach and in its forms than in its intentions. This discursive reality was both divorced from and intimately connected to the lived reality (which remained deeply exclusionary), for no cross-cultural trade could occur without the conduit of a cosmopolitan language.

When studying a stigmatized minority such as the Jewish diaspora, we need to ask whether and how collective perceptions of credibility affected market transactions. Judges who settled commercial disputes were supposed to enforce the doctrine of legal individualism, but even when they did, legal judgments did not erase bigotry. An article of the capitulations granted by Suleiman the Magnificent to the Republic of Florence in 1527 stipulated that "if a subject of Florence is in debt (to the Ottoman subjects) the payment of the debt shall be required from the debtor alone and no other subjects of Florence shall be held responsible for it."⁴ The same principle was valid for Sephardic merchants operating under the French banner two centuries later. And yet it neither translated into mutual respect nor shielded them from occasional collective retaliation by the same European authorities that had extended diplomatic protection to them.⁵

Other groups were protective of their collective image, as well. In 1749 the Levant Company warned its officials to avoid any association with Syrian Christians, whom the British consul in Aleppo had accused of a "spirit of bigotry and persecution"; such allegations could reflect negatively on all "Franks" in the eyes of Muslim authorities and society.⁶ Similar preoccupations were not confined to the treatment of Christian and Jewish merchants in the Ottoman Empire. Centuries-old Christian stereotypes that depicted Jews as greedy moneylenders as well as insinuations that there were too many Sephardim in certain branches of international trade and finance haunted communities in Livorno, Amsterdam, and other European cities and caused concern about outsiders' perceptions.

In short, the networks of trust in which Ergas and Silvera participated were not amorphous, boundless, and spontaneous, but inscribed in social norms, legal customs, and rules for communication that gave them stability. Rather than hindering cross-cultural trade, the preservation of group boundaries could ease trade between strangers insofar as it enforced intragroup expectations and gave substance to the language of obligations. Rather than solipsistic and antiauthoritarian, Sephardic networks pursued the endorsement of institutional powers. Instead of spreading tolerance and acceptance, cross-cultural trade could be prompted by economic interest alone and coexist with denigrating representa-

tions of those involved in it. All of these findings run against the core tenets of most studies of trading diasporas. That Ergas and Silvera hired many non-Jews as overseas agents refutes the widespread assumption that trading diasporas were closed and homogeneous communities whose members relied on each other and lacked the means (or the aptitude) to engage in protracted credit and agency relations with outsiders. That they chose to do so when they could not count on effective courts to mediate potential disagreements is at odds with the new institutional economics' prediction that independent legal enforcement is necessary in order for strangers to cooperate. That members of Ergas and Silvera did not wish to and could not marry into the families of their Christian and Hindu agents clashes with both Greif's and Curtin's arguments. Should we conclude that this partnership was an anomaly?

There is no space in this conclusion to provide a full-scale comparison between Sephardic merchants and other trading diasporas.⁷ Yet we cannot begin to determine the representativeness status of Ergas and Silvera until we question the widespread implicit assumption that trading diasporas were insular and cohesive communities. Little is known about the ways in which Huguenot, Quaker, Armenian, Greek, and other trading diasporas did business with strangers primarily because historians imagine them either as prone to assimilation into local societies or as bounded groups whose internal harmony was only disrupted by the rise of centralized states, impersonal markets, and militarized imperialism. The evidence that I have gathered, which concerns mainly the Sephardim of Livorno, suggests that by enlarging our inquiries into the way trading diasporas engaged in cross-cultural trade, we will also produce a more nuanced history of the relations between market and community and between informal and formal means of enforcement.

Neither the poor statistical data of the period, nor a cultural approach that relies on notions such as persecution or acculturation, nor clear-cut oppositions between states and diasporas or between family capitalism and impersonal markets will deliver a full-fledged response to legitimate concerns about the distinctive character of the Sephardic diaspora. Yuri Slezkine has recently reaffirmed Jewish uniqueness in matters of trade (and modernity at large). But he has done so through a playful use of metaphors rather than systematic comparisons. In a world divided between "Apollonians" (agricultural and pastoral societies) and "Mercurians" (those who provide services in such societies), many can aspire to being Mercurians, but none better than Jews ("quintessential, extraordinarily accomplished Mercurians").⁸ In a markedly different fashion, I have sought to place the Sephardim of Livorno in their proper local, regional, and global contexts and have followed three lines of investigation that, if pursued further, might

provide the basis for a comparative approach. The first advocates moving beyond asserting the importance of family ties and social traditions to explore how specific kinship arrangements, demographic and migratory patterns, and community structures affected the business organization of each mercantile community and its ability to engage in cross-cultural trade more specifically. The second revisits tales of the rise of impersonal markets by teasing out the combination of social, legal, and discursive regularities that each trading diaspora mobilized to bind kin and strangers alike. The third asks how autonomous from and how reliant on state powers trading diasporas were in shaping new commercial patterns in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Trading diasporas were neither fully dependent on nor intrinsically averse to state power; they were neither hermetically sealed nor prone to dissolve into the dominant society. To highlight the specificities of each group is to delay development of a general theory of cross-cultural trade in the early modern period but moves us beyond totalizing interpretations that conceive trading diasporas as either antiquated remnants of a pre-modern world (and thus inefficient economic institutions) or idyllic consortia of cooperative kith and kin. The slow but inexorable decline of the Armenian trading diaspora based in New Julfa after the mid-eighteenth century and the progressive erosion of Sephardic influence in global trade thereafter conform to Curtin's chronology, according to which the rise of militarized European colonialism brought to an end the liveliness that trading diasporas had displayed for more than two millennia.⁹ Other merchant communities, though, proved more resistant. As Iranian Armenians and Western Sephardim retreated from their traditional roles in Mediterranean commerce, Greek entrepreneurs began to come to the forefront. Greek sailors, traders, and brokers—some Venetian, some Ottoman subjects—had already developed ties with Venetian merchants in the eastern Mediterranean in the sixteenth century and had contributed to English domination in the region. Greeks practiced piracy and privateering at large but also worked in the interstices of and in cooperation with state-sanctioned commercial enterprises that, at least in their early phases, depended on these mariners and intermediaries to infiltrate new markets. After Russia conquered Crimea in 1774 and established a protectorate for the Ionian Islands, Greek shipowners and merchants penetrated the Black Sea and from there took over much of the international shipping industry in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹⁰ They did so by continuing to employ an allegedly archaic business form: the general partnership.¹¹

Nor was the Greek diaspora the last vestige of a world that we have lost. If globalization today is dominated by multinational corporations and inter-state agreements, old and new incarnations of stateless diasporas, including sophisti-

cated international terrorist organizations, continue to occupy important niches in the domain of global exchanges. The diamond industry is perhaps the most exemplary case of a capitalist sector that thrives on family ties, oral contracts, and extralegal adjudication.¹² I have suggested that we turn to these phenomena not as metahistorical recurrences, nor as unique marvels of intragroup solidarity, nor as relics of primordial forms of capitalism, but as complex organizations that shed light on multifarious processes of social and economic change and thus also test the role and limits of the market in transforming early modern societies.

NOTES

ABBREVIATIONS

- ACEL Archivio della Comunità Ebraica, Livorno
Recapiti *Recapiti riguardanti gli Israeliti in originale nella Regia Segreteria del Governo*
- AHN Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid
- AIU Alliance Israélite Universelle, Paris
- ANP Archives Nationales, Paris
AE *Affaires étrangères antérieures à 1791*
- ANTT Instituto dos Arquivos Nacionais Torre do Tombo, Lisbon
RGT *Registro geral de testamentos*
- ASF Archivio di Stato, Florence
LCF *Libri di commercio e di famiglia*
MP *Mediceo del principato*
MS *Magistrato supremo*
NMP *Notarile moderno: Protocolli*
NMT *Notarile moderno: Protocolli (Testamenti)*
TF *Testamenti forestieri*
- ASL Archivio di Stato, Livorno
CGA *Capitano poi Governatore poi Auditore vicario*
GCM *Governo civile e militare*
- ASP Archivio di Stato, Pisa
- ASV Archivio di Stato, Venice
NA *Notarile atti*
NT *Notarile testamenti*
VS *Cinque savi alla mercanzia*
- BL British Library, London
- BLO Bodleian Library, Oxford
- BMC Biblioteca del Civico Museo Correr, Venice

- BNL Biblioteca Nacional, Lisbon
- BRM Biblioteca-Archivio "Renato Maestro," Venice
ACIV *Archivio della Comunità Israelitica di Venezia*
- CCM Archives de la Chambre de Commerce et de l'Industrie, Marseilles
AA1801 *Archives antérieures à 1801*
- GAA Gemeentelijke Archiefdienst, Amsterdam
NA *Notarieel Archief*
PIGA *Archieven der Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente te Amsterdam 1614–1870*
- HAG Historical Archives of Goa, Panaji, Goa
PDCF *Petições despachadas do Conselho da Fazenda*
- JFB James Ford Bell Library, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- NATH Nationaal Archief, The Hague
HR *Hoge Raad van Holland en Zeeland*
- NSL Arquivo Paroquial da Igreja de Nossa Senhora do Loreto, Lisbon
- PRO Public Record Office (now the National Archives), Kew
PROB *Prerogative Court of Canterbury and Related Probate Jurisdictions: Will Registers*
SP *Secretaries of State, State Papers, Foreign*
- SPL Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation, London
- XCHR Xavier Center of Historical Research, Alto Porvorim, Goa
MHC/F *Mhamai House Collection, French*
MHC/E *Mhamai House Collection, English*
MHC/P *Mhamai House Collection, Portuguese*

Whenever available, folio numbers are indicated. For unfoliated documents, the date serves as a reference.

NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY AND UNITS OF MEASUREMENT

1. Beawes 1752: 31.
2. Y. Kaplan 2000; Israel 2002a; Schorsch 2004: 5.
3. Bodian 1997; Swetschinski 2000: xii.
4. Segre 1996: 742.
5. Different etymologies have been offered for the word *marrano*, but all authors concur that it had a derogatory meaning (Farinelli 1925; Révah 1959–60; N. Roth 1995: 3–4; Méchoulan 2001: 298).
6. ASF, MNP, Giovanni Battista Gamera, 25270, fols. 141r–142r, no. 273.
7. On the lack of standardization in the spellings of names in the Sephardic community of Amsterdam, see Swetschinski 2000: 280–83.
8. Ricci and Guidotti 1751: 86–87.
9. Savary des Bruslons and Savary 1723–30, 1, col. 650 (s.v. "Change").
10. Ricci and Guidotti 1751: 88–90, 96, 135, 141, 147, 154–55, 164, 167, 202; Ricard 1700:

- 311; Mentz 2005: 92. On Tuscan and foreign coins as well as monetary exchange rates in seventeenth-century Livorno, see Stumpo 1997.
11. ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Moses Cassuto in Livorno (16 May 1741).
12. Ricci and Guidotti 1751: 167, 202; Yogev 1978: 126; Mentz 2005: 148.
13. Mentz 2005: 92.
14. Ricci and Guidotti 1751: 167. For details on the price and weight units of Indian diamonds in the early seventeenth century, see Malynes 1622: 74–80.
15. Lenzen 1970: 100.

INTRODUCTION

1. Curtin 1984.
2. See n. 44. In a rare example, Baskes (2005) applies the new institutional economic theory to a case study of cross-cultural trade in eighteenth-century Mexico.
3. Since the 1930s, economists, economic sociologists, and economic historians have debated the role of personal ties, markets, and hierarchies in diminishing transaction costs and uncertainty. For classic and recent formulations that are relevant to my study, see Ben-Porath 1980; Williamson 1985; North 1990: 27–69; Powell 1990; Gelderblom 2003; Lamoreaux, Raff, and Temin 2003.
4. On the demography of Sephardic settlements, see Chap. 2. Studnicki-Gizbert (2007: 41) estimates that twenty thousand New Christians and Portuguese Jews were living in the diaspora across Europe and the Atlantic in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. E. Samuel (2004: 90) calculates that no more than fifty thousand New Christians resided in Portugal in the seventeenth century, but as we will see, commercial ties between them and the diaspora grew increasingly weak in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.
5. For a detailed discussion of these scholarly interpretations, see below in this introduction. A notable exception to this trend is the account of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Parisian credit markets by Hoffman, Postel-Vinay, and Rosenthal (2000).
6. Snyder 2006, 2009.
7. Benton 2002: 26.
8. Israel 1998: 93.
9. Renzo Toaff and Lucia Frattarelli Fischer focus on the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; Jean-Pierre Filippini is primarily concerned with the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. See the works by these authors cited in the references list.
10. Israel 2002a.
11. Colley 2002: 70.
12. ANP, AE, B/III/234. Contemporary accounts place greater stress on the importance of caravan trade after the European oceanic ventures than does the historical literature. See, e.g., J. Green 1736: 4.
13. ASF, MP, 2328A.
14. On Livorno's exceptionalism, see notably Diaz 1976: 395–97, 1978; Cassandro 1983a.

15. Horden and Purcell 2000: 2–4.
16. Important remarks are found in Subrahmanyam 1997.
17. As a standard procedure, Ergas and Silvera's business papers, including their letters, were seized by the court of the governor of Livorno on 23 January 1748 during their bankruptcy trial. They are currently preserved in a miscellaneous collection in the State Archives in Florence called *Libri di commercio e di famiglia*. This collection includes more than fifty-five hundred folders containing private business records of Tuscan merchants, mostly small-size traders, from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century. Most of these documents are fragmentary, and the court proceedings to which they were originally attached cannot be easily identified. The business papers of Ergas and Silvera are mentioned in Cassandro 1983a: 112n287; 1983b: 384n9. Their archival classification has changed since Cassandro's publications appeared, and two more ledgers were found during the reindexing conducted in the summer of 2003. The letter-books are now labeled as ASF, LCF, 1931, 1935–1939, 1941, 1945, 1953, 1957, and 1960. Among the few historical studies based on records from this miscellaneous archival series is Paolo Malanima's (1982: 265–70) analysis of the trading operations of Tommaso Baldi, a Florentine silk merchant of the early eighteenth century.
18. On the synchronic and diachronic dimensions (*synchronic* meaning "history as a temporal context" and *diachronic* meaning "history as transformation") of historical investigation, see Sewell 2005: 182–83. The microhistorical perspective tends to privilege synchronicity (Ginzburg and Poni 1979: 188) and investigates the tension between individuals' agency and the multiple normative frameworks with which individuals come into contact (G. Levi 1991; Revel 1996).
19. The Napoleonic Wars marked a more drastic turning point for Livorno and its Jews than did the death of the last Medici ruler in 1737, when the Grand Duchy of Tuscany came under the rule of Francis Stephen of Lorraine, the husband of the Habsburg heiress Maria Theresa. From 1737 to 1765 Tuscany was not formally integrated into the territories of the Habsburg monarchy. Francis Stephen left the regency of Tuscany in the hands of the plenipotentiary Prince Marc de Craon. Craon was followed by Comte Emmanuel de Richécourt and Marshal Antonio Botta Adorno. After 1765 Maria Theresa's son, the future emperor Peter Leopold, ruled in person for twenty-five years. His son Ferdinand III succeeded him in Florence in 1790 and remained in power until 1801, and again from 1814 to 1824.
20. A. Cohen 1971: 267, 274; Curtin 1984. In British English "trade diaspora" is preferred to "trading diasporas," but the two expressions are often used interchangeably. Curtin's approach is also indebted to Karl Polanyi for the notion of embeddedness and the role of port cities in premodern markets (Polanyi 1944; Polanyi, Arensberg, and Pearson 1957). Among the many works about trading diasporas that acknowledge explicitly Curtin's influence are S. F. Dale 1994: 2; Baghdiantz McCabe 1999: 200; S. C. Levi 2001: 85–120.
21. Brubaker 2004: 8.
22. Boshier 1995: 78.
23. Bayly 2002: 61.

24. Slezkine 2004: 121. For Yuri Slezkine, who focuses on the modern period, all trading diasporas (including Armenians, Parsis, Jains, overseas Indians and Chinese, and Lebanese in Latin America and the Caribbean) display the same features, but Jews are exemplary. Slezkine's notion is reminiscent of Bonacich's "middleman minorities" (1973).
25. Baladouni and Makepeace 1998: xxxiv.
26. Chaudhury 2005: 66.
27. Markovits 2000: 261.
28. See, e.g., Aslanian 2006; Prange 2006. For an early and judicious assessment of the interdependence of social and legal enforcement in the economic strategies of trading diasporas, see Braude 1985.
29. Williamson 1993: 463. A recent reappraisal in Guinnane 2005.
30. North 1991a: 97–99 (my emphasis). See also North 1990, 1991b. For an earlier formulation, see North and Thomas 1973.
31. Chaudhuri 1978: 82. See also Steensgaard 1973.
32. Chaudhuri 1985: 224–26.
33. Lombard and Aubin 1988.
34. Greif 2006: 30, 382–83. Elsewhere Greif defines institutions as "the non-technologically determined constraints that influence social interactions and provide incentives to maintain regularities of behavior" (Greif 1998: 80). See also Aoki 2001.
35. Macaulay 1963; L. Bernstein 1992; Dixit 2004.
36. On the commercial revolution of the medieval Mediterranean, see Lopez 1971. Greif draws from the treasure trove of documents discovered in the Old Cairo Geniza in 1890. The business papers of the Cairo Geniza are discussed in Goitein (1967–93), Udovitch (1970a, 1970b, 1977), Gil (2003), and Margariti (2007), among others. The community of the Ben Ezra synagogue in Fustat (Old Cairo) discarded all writings bearing God's name (which according to Jewish law could not be destroyed) in a *geniza* storeroom rather than burying them, as was common practice; it thus helped ensure their survival. Naturally, most business records contained references to God.
37. Greif 2006: 288.
38. The community responsibility system resembles what Goitein calls "formal friendship," but Greif's overall analysis overlooks several features of the Maghribi commercial organization that were stressed by Goitein (1967–93, 1: 169–92). These included the use of a variety of contractual agreements (family partnerships, *commenda* contracts, commission agencies, loans, and powers of attorney). Rabbinic and Islamic courts, moreover, settled some commercial disputes (*ibid.*, 1: 172, 179, 251; Goitein 1973b: 93–101, 177–81, 2008: 167–236, 241–53, 542–43; Ackerman-Lieberman 2007; Margariti 2007: 199–205). Udovitch (1977: 72) estimates that one in twenty business transactions recorded in the Geniza letters were sealed by a formal contract. He also documents the use of Islamic law in the drafting of such documents (1970b: 128–30). Moshe Gil (2003: 275) goes as far as to argue that "all of the transactions [recorded in the Geniza] were carried out by partnerships" rather than via the unpaid services of

- overseas agents, and he emphasizes the role of Jewish and Muslim legal institutions in enforcing these contracts. See also the exchange between Edwards and Ogilvie (2008) and Greif (2008).
39. On the “individualistic cultural beliefs” of medieval Genoa, see Greif 2006: 269–301. On family responsibility in the bankruptcy laws of northern and central Italy before the sixteenth century, see Santarelli 1964: 141–47. On fathers’ and sons’ liabilities in fifteenth-century Florence, see Kuehn 2008: 65–67. On family vendettas in the civic statutes of medieval Italy, see Heers 1977: 105–11; Dean 1997.
 40. Goitein may have used excessively modern categories in speaking of “a period of relatively free trade” and “a spirit of tolerance and liberalism” with reference to the Fatimid Caliphate (Goitein 1967–93, 1: 29; see also Goitein 1973a). An erudite and philologically minded historian, he nonetheless relates that partnerships between Muslims and Jews “were nothing exceptional” (Goitein 1967–93, 1: 72; see also pp. 85, 105, 116, 262, 281). Partnerships between Jews and Muslims are also mentioned in Udovitch (1970b: 126) and Gil (2003: 280–81). From Olivia Remie Constable (1994: 68–70, 77) and Roxani Eleni Margariti (2007: 155–57, 213–14) we learn that Maghribi merchants in Aden and other Indian Ocean ports sealed partnerships with Muslim and Hindu merchants, officials, ship owners, and captains more commonly than those in medieval Spain did with Muslims and Christians. All of the Geniza business letters are written in Hebrew script (although the language is Arabic) and thus are not ideal sources for documenting commercial relations between Jews and Muslims. They nonetheless contain references to cross-cultural business cooperation, which Greif glosses over. He also offers few explanations for the decline of the Maghribi “coalition” (Greif 2006: 84, 176n16). For Goitein (1967–93, 1: 38, 149) it was the mid-thirteenth-century rise of the Mamluks in Egypt, who were averse to trade and religious toleration, and Genoa’s naval superiority that put Maghribi Jews out of business.
 41. Greif 2006: 328. He demonstrates this point by showing that, during a transitional period in the economic history of medieval Europe, the community responsibility system, now backed by local states, facilitated impersonal exchanges even in the absence of limited liability partnerships (*ibid.*, 309–38).
 42. Curtin 1984: 1.
 43. Notable examples are found in Chaudhuri 1985; Abu-Lughod 1989; Bentley 1993. Fernand Braudel (1972–73, 1981–84) foreshadowed this approach, although he did not use the expression “cross-cultural trade” to define any of his projects.
 44. In a famous paper for new institutional economic historians, Milgrom, North, and Weingast (1990) argue that judges facilitated cross-cultural trade and financial deals between merchant-bankers who arrived annually from afar at the Fairs of Champagne in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Greif (2006: 315–18) criticizes this paper for outlining a theoretical possibility without offering any empirical support. His claims about the efficiency of the Genoese legal system, however, are also based on the assumption that it worked as it was supposed to, and they do not include discussion of any case of contested contracts adjudicated by a Genoese court.

45. Malynes 1622: 6. On Gerard Malynes, see de Roover 1974; Finkelstein 2000: 26–53.
46. Todeschini 1989: 123–80; 1994a: 213–28; 2002: 227–309, 393–486; 2004; 2008.
47. Defoe 1710: 13.
48. No business relations with Muslims in the Ottoman Empire are documented in the surviving papers of Ergas and Silvera, which do not, however, document the local activities of the Aleppo branch of the partnership. For the rare mentions of commercial associations between Sephardim and Muslims for trade in North Africa, see Chap. 3.
49. Granovetter 1985. I agree with Dario Gaggio (2006: 25) that, contrary to what critics have claimed, Granovetter’s “embeddedness” is not another name for feel-good notions of trust and communitarianism but, rather, is an analytical framework that is most useful for uncovering both the strategic and normative characteristics of social action.
50. For an inspiring theoretical approach, see Cerutti 2004.
51. For a critique of the way in which the new institutional economic history conceives of the relation between culture and economics, see S. R. Epstein 2000.
52. Curtin 1984: 5, 11–12.
53. Classic examples are found in Hall 1990; Bhabha 1994; Clifford 1997.
54. Y. Kaplan 1989c.
55. Barth 1956, 1969.
56. The expression “new Jew” (*Judío nuevo*) appears in seventeenth-century Spanish documents (Y. Kaplan 1992: 230n2).
57. Notable examples are found in García-Arenal and Wieggers 2002; Muchnik 2005; N. Davis 2006; Colley 2007.
58. A dissonant voice in diaspora studies, the social anthropologist Jonathan Friedman (2005: 143–44) notes that diasporas do not stand only for cultural mixing but often cultivate the preservation of group identity via endogamy and cultural and social homogenization.
59. Livornina of 1593, art. 6. Modern editions of the livornine include Guarnieri 1962: 518–25; Frattarelli Fischer and Castignoli 1987; R. Toaff 1990: 419–35; Bertoli 1992. A manuscript copy of the livornine owned by the University of Pennsylvania Library is reproduced electronically at <http://dewey.library.upenn.edu/sceti/ljs/PageLevel/index.cfm?ManID=ljs379andPage=2>.
60. Pieterse 1989: 76.
61. In 1570, a notary of Ferrara defended Righetto Marrano before the Inquisition of Venice by declaring that he had always known him as a Jew, although Righetto used a Christian name in order to trade with Catholic countries (Ioly Zorattini 1980–99, 3: 60).
62. Cassuto 1918: 231–2; Stow 2001: 72.
63. Ruderman 2001: 12–13. See also Coudert and Shoulson 2004.
64. C. Roth 1946: 422; R. Toaff 1990: 335; Sani 2006: 31–42; Bregoli 2007a; Frattarelli Fischer 2008.
65. See Chap. 7 for examples. Anthropological field work conducted in the marketplaces

of Aleppo in the 1990s suggests that interfaith business cooperation coexists with a sense of difference and even mistrust between Muslims, Christians, and Kurds (Rabo 2005: 97–100).

1. DIASPORIC FAMILIES AND THE MAKING OF A BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP

1. “[A]vendo tenuto casa aperta di negozio nella suddetta piazza di Livorno per il corso di cento sessanta e passa anni” (ASL, CGA: *Atti civili spezzati*, 2249, no. 953).
2. ASL, CGA: *Cause delegate*, 2500.
3. As a general rule, the first child to revert to Judaism in a New Christian family was named Abraham, and his sons took the names of other patriarchs (Isaac, Jacob, Israel). Thereafter, the first-born child normally took his or her paternal grandparent’s name, and the second child was named after the maternal grandparent. On specifically Sephardic naming customs, see Gaster 1901: 96; E. Samuel 2004: 4.
4. My approach differs from that of the “dictionary” of seventy-four Sephardic families published in Lévy 1999: 223–319, which uses the last name as the main criterion for outlining short family biographies on the basis of various secondary sources. Lévy’s dictionary nonetheless remains the only attempt to define membership in the Western Sephardic diaspora on the basis of family ties and communitarian structures in three interconnected towns (Livorno, Amsterdam, and Tunis). In this chapter I occasionally signal the presence of individuals named *Ergas* or *Silvera* who might be closely related to those who are at the center of my investigation, but I also omit many more references when no clear relation to the Ergases and the Silveras of Livorno can be established. *Ergas* in this context was a recognizable Jewish last name, although not a common one. *Silveira* (also spelled *Sylveira*), on the other hand, was extremely widespread in Portugal among New and Old Christians, noble and common. The Silveras of Livorno do not seem to be related to the marrano poet Miguel de Silveira (Brown and Boer 2000) or to Rabbi Abraham Gomes Silvera of Amsterdam (Franco Mendes 1975: 68, 89; Franco Mendes and Mendes dos Remédios 1990: 205).
5. ASF, MS, 4045, letter E, no. 2. On Rabbi Joseph Ergas, see Carlebach 1990: 137–43; R. Toaff 1990: 336–37.
6. ASF, LCF, 1945, letter to Ergas and Silvera in Aleppo (11 October 1736); ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Ephraim and David Cassuto in Florence (13 February 1741); Sutton 2005: 328.
7. Thus Raphael Ergas left his wife Leah in charge of his business when he died childless in 1772 (ASF, NMP, Giovanni Matteo Novelli, 26734, fol. 31v, no. 56; PRO, PROB, 11/962, fols. 171–181; PRO, PROB, 11/1332, fols. 216r–221r).
8. For a comparison with women in lesser trades in eighteenth-century Liverpool and Philadelphia, see Haggerty 2006. On the economic activities of middle- and lower-class women in the ghetto of Rome, see Stow 2001: 29, 78–79.
9. ASF, NMP, Giuseppe Mazzoli, 1950, fol. 29r–v, also quoted in Frattarelli Fischer 1998a: 111. Abraham Ergas’s name also appears in a list of New Christians denounced

- to the Inquisition of Venice as being in Pisa in 1595 (Ioly Zorattini 1980–99, 13: 237). On the synagogue of Pisa, see R. Toaff 1990: 104–5; Luzzati 1995: 12.
10. R. Toaff (1990: 336) speculates that Abraham Ergas reached Pisa from Iberia via Flanders. The list of members admitted to the Jewish community of Pisa between 1595 and 1637 is lost (Frattarelli Fischer 1987: 20), making it difficult to establish their provenance. Testifying before the Inquisition of Madrid in 1661 that he had met Isaac Ergas (a former New Christian) in Livorno, Christobal Méndez alias Abraham Franco y Silvera claimed not to know where exactly in Portugal Isaac was from (AHN, *Inquisición de Toledo*, legado 165, exp. 12, fol. 55r; Graizbord 2004: 1, 122, 136–39). Some Ergases were said to be from the Portuguese town of Trancoso (see López Belinchón 2002 as cited in n. 23). The Jewish surname *Ergas* is documented in Portugal as early as the mid-fourteenth century (Tavares 1982–84: 222).
 11. M. R. Cohen 1994. For comparisons of the treatment of Jews in Christian Europe and in the Ottoman Empire as described in the writings of sixteenth-century Jews and Christians, see Stillman 1979: 290–93, 304–5.
 12. Henry Kamen (1988: 4) revised old estimates of the number of Jews who left Spain in 1492, which varied between 150,000 and 400,000, suggesting figures as low 40,000 or 50,000 in an attempt to downplay the consequences of the decree issued by Ferdinand and Isabella. Tavares (1982–84: 253–55) and E. Samuel (2004: 90) also suggest a low figure (30,000) on the basis of tax records. Jonathan Israel (1992: 367) initially accepted the figure of 120,000. He later estimated at 70,000 the number of those forced to convert in Portugal in 1497 and at 100,000 the number of those who left Spain for Italy, the Ottoman Empire, and Flanders in 1492 (Israel 1998: 5–6). Other educated guesses about the size of the migratory current flowing to Portugal range between 85,000 and 115,000 (Swetschinski 2000: 57).
 13. For details about these policies, see Tavares 1982–84: 483–500 and Marcocci 2004: 31–40.
 14. Patents were first issued to Portuguese refugees in 1538 in Ferrara, which until about 1573–74 remained the main Sephardic center of the Italian peninsula. In 1547 and 1552 marranos were admitted in Ancona, but in 1555–56 they were expelled from this city and Jews in the Papal State were enclosed in the ghettos of Ancona and Rome. In Venice, an embryonic and unofficial marrano settlement was created in 1552–55 around the Mendes family. In 1572 the Duke of Savoy admitted Jews to the port city of Nice. On the Jews of the Italian peninsula, see Milano 1963; Segre 1991, 1996. On Portuguese New Christians in Antwerp, see Goris 1925; Pohls 1948; di Leone Leoni 2005.
 15. R. Toaff 1990: 444.
 16. *Ibid.*, 145, 156, 336, 455.
 17. ASV, NA, 10789, fols. 366r–367v. Sarah Ergas, the mother of Jacob and Isaac, was already living in Pisa in 1621 (ASF, NMP, Vincenzo Cappelletti, 8408, fols. 28v–29v, 49v–50r). Another branch of the Ergas family, headed by a different Jacob, remained in Venice. In 1632–33 Jacob was living in the Venetian ghetto together with his wife, three sons, and a daughter (ASV, *Provveditori alla sanità*, 569). In 1639 the Inquisition of Lisbon had been informed that a certain Manuel da Silva from Alentejo lived in the Venice ghetto under the name of Isaac Ergas (C. Roth 1930a: 215).

18. In 1644 the Ergases of Venice and of Livorno figured among the founders of the most prestigious charity in the Jewish community, the one devoted to subsidizing dowries for poor maiden girls (C. Roth 1931: 4; R. Toaff 1990: 453–55). Jacob and Isaac Ergas of Venice were first elected to the governing board of the Jewish community in Livorno in 1646 and 1651, respectively (*ibid.*, 455–56). In 1663 and 1688 various members of the Ergas family figured among the wealthiest Jews in Livorno (Frattarelli Fischer 2008: appendixes 6, 7).
19. ASF, NMP, Roberto Micheli, 27236, fols. 167v–168r. On the death of Jacob Ergas in 1719, his sons Samuel, David, and Raphael also began litigation about some real estate that dragged on for three generations. References to this litigation (petitions, amicable agreements, appeals, trials, and so forth) can be found in ASF, NMP, Agostino Frugoni, 24735, fols. 120r–121r; ASF, MP, 2483 (fol. 157), 2486, 2488–2493, 2501, 2510 (fols. 47r–v, 170v, 266v, 275r–v), 2511 (fols. 29v, 233v–234v, 276v), 2512 (fols. 2v–25r, 69r–v, 76v), 2513 (fols. 266r–v), 2514 (fols. 34r, 69v–70r, 172r–173r, 231r–v), 2515 (fols. 77r, 89v, 102v), 2516 (4 January 1739); ASF, *Segreteria di finanze e affari prima del 1788*, 806, nos. 43, 74, 424, 583, 584, 808, 978, 1014, 1015, 1018, 1020, 1026, 1062; ASL, CGA: *Atti civili*, 888, no. 957; ASL, CGA: *Atti civili spezzati*, 2287, no. 82; ASL, GCM, 974, fol. 163r.
20. In 1725 several members of the Ergas family protested against the appeal of Gabriel Pereira de Leon, chancellor of the Jewish community, who contested the election of Abraham Ergas, son of Manuel, to the Board of Deputies of the Holy Land. The Ergases claimed that Pereira was motivated only by his hatred of their family (“per effetto del gran livore che . . . ha colla nostra casa di Ergas” and “tutta la nostra famiglia”); ASF, MP, 2485 (24 June 1725).
21. ASL, CGA: *Atti criminali spezzati*, 3083, fol. 61. R. Toaff (1990: 320) erroneously dates this murder to 1679. Records about criminal justice in Livorno are very uneven. According to the sparse references to this homicide in the *avvisi* of those years, two unnamed Jews were investigated (ASF, MP, 2328A [7 February 1689, 16 June 1692]).
22. Di Leone Leoni 2000: 38n, 47n, 53n, 89, 90.
23. López Belinchón 2002: 346–47. This is the earliest mention of the surname Ergas in Amsterdam. In 1656 Jacob Ergas Henriques alias Balthasar da Cunha (who was born in Madrid in 1626) married Sarah (who was born in Seville in 1639) in the Dutch capital (Verdooner and Snel 1990–91, 2: 614, 658).
24. *Ibid.*, 614. Further information appears in the abstracts published with the English title “Notarial Records Relating to the Portuguese Jews in Amsterdam up to 1639” in various issues of *Studia Rosenthaliana*. See *Studia Rosenthaliana* 25.2 (1991): 179 and 31.1 (1997): 142–43. On the members of the Ergas family who are buried in the Jewish cemetery in Hamburg, see Studemund-Halévy 2000: 400–401.
25. In 1639 a certain David Ergas was elected one of the six members of the board of Amsterdam’s Spanish and Portuguese Jewish community, and Jacob Ergas Henriques followed him in 1675 (Franco Mendes 1975: 48, 78). The records of community taxes paid by Jacob Ergas Henriques in 1670, however, show that he was not among the wealthiest members of the congregation (Y. Kaplan 1989a: 193–94n71). In 1661 Jacob

- Ergas bought a house in Amsterdam for twenty-five hundred guilders (Bloom 1937: 65).
26. In 1653 Isaac Ergas alias Sebastião da Cunha left Amsterdam for Venice and Livorno after he was taken to court by his wife Rachel Nunes because of his repeated infidelities (Swetschinski 2000: 238). In 1655 David Ergas registered in the chancellery of the Jewish nation of Livorno the addendum to a testament that he had drafted in Amsterdam two years earlier in which his nephew Isaac Ergas is mentioned as a business partner together with two others in Venice (ACEL, *Testamenti 1629–1713*, L).
27. In 1671 Jacob Ergas Henriques of Amsterdam assisted another merchant of Amsterdam, Abraham Telles, who wanted to invest twenty-four hundred ducats in the Livorno Customs House by securing the services of Isaac and Manuel Ergas of Livorno, who assisted Telles (GAA, NA, 3679B, fols. 2049–2050). Cátia Antunes kindly provided me with this reference.
28. Brulez 1965: 53.
29. Braude 2001: 189.
30. Lévy 1999: 243. In 1741 Rabbi Samuel Ergas left Tunis for Naples, where Jews had been recently readmitted (Giura 1984: 47, 67, 104).
31. The partnerships were “Abram de Isac e Abram Ergas,” “Manuel e Jacob Ergas,” “Rafael e Mosé Ergas,” “Samuel e Jacob Ergas,” and “Mendes Daniel Ergas” (R. Toaff 1990: 466). See also figure 1.1.
32. Cassandro 1983a: 86, 88–89, 106–7, 139–57, 173–75. In 1648 the partnership included two new associates (Jacob Camacho and Samuel Lusena) and took the name “Abram e Isac Ergas e compagnia.” Mentions of the financial dealings of this partnership are found in the papers of “Ascanio Saminiati, Niccolò Guasconi e compagni di banco”; Università Commerciale Luigi Bocconi, Milan, Archivio Saminiati-Pazzi, seconda sezione, no. 172. On this private archive, see Groppi 1990. Powers of attorney drafted by Jewish merchants in Venice in favor of Abraham and Isaac Ergas in Livorno appear more frequently after 1638. See ASV, NA, Giovanni Piccini, 10798, fols. 191v–192v; 10803, fols. 648r–649v; 10805, fols. 696r–697v; 10806, fols. 266v–267v, 278r–279r; 10807, fols. 510r–511r, 559r–v, 615v–616v, 655r–v; 10808, fols. 51v–52r. I thank Federica Ruspio for these references.
33. ASL, CGA: *Atti civili*, 365, no. 4.
34. Eleven of the ledgers of Ergas and Silvera that cover the period from January 1730 to February 1745 survive. ASF, LCF, 1933, 1942, 1943, 1946, 1948, 1949, 1950, 1951, 1955, 1958, 1961. These ledgers are kept in a simplified form of double-entry bookkeeping; debits and credits are balanced off every year or year and a half. A journal of debtors and creditors (1708–15) and six journals containing receipts for payments received daily in Livorno (1729–44) also survive.
35. Data about the capitalization of Livorno merchants are extremely rare. Seldom do testaments mention the amount of capital invested in a family partnership, and most account books are lost. In 1783 Abraham Soria died in Livorno, leaving his partner Isaac Coen capital in the amount of twelve thousand pieces of eight to continue

- their business (ASF, MNT, Vincenzo Luigi Lapi, 30593, fols. 30v–33r). The limited responsibility commercial partnerships (*accomandite*) registered by Sephardic Jews in Livorno in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries ranged between three hundred pieces and forty thousand pieces in terms of capitalization, but these contracts are not representative of Jewish commercial partnerships in Livorno as a whole (see Chap. 5). Eldem (1999: 209) calculates that a capital of ten thousand to twenty thousand Ottoman piasters (equivalent to between sixty-five hundred and thirteen thousand pieces) was necessary to set up the Levantine branch of a Marseilles partnership around 1750.
36. C. Roth 1930a: 216; Ioly Zorattini 1980–99, 12: 8–9; A. Luzzatto 2000: 310–13; Ruspio 2007: 115, 180–85; ASV, NT, Cristoforo Brambilla, 167.281, 166.35, 166.144; ASV, NT, Giovanni Piccini, 756.18, 756.214; ASV, NT, Carlo Gabrieli, 516.166, 516.183, 517.288; ASV, NT, Andrea Calzavara, 257.107; ASV, NT, Pietro Venier, 1008.60. In the community's tax records of 1668–91, the Baruch Carvaglios consistently appear as one of the two or three wealthiest families, if not the richest family of the Pontine nation in the Venice ghetto (BRM, ACIV, 2). Not all of them were rich, however. In 1682 Gabriel Baruch Carvaglio, a cousin of Moses and Isaac, died in Venice a destitute man (ASV, NT, Cristoforo Brambilla, 166.144).
37. Abraham Ergas's commercial ties to northern Europe were limited to Amsterdam. In 1684 Joseph Nunes Marchena of Amsterdam claimed to be a creditor of "Abram, Isaac e Abram Ergas" because he had sent them twelve Dutch woolen cloths (ASL, CGA: *Atti civili spezzati*, 2193, no. 164).
38. ASF, NMP, Agostino Frugoni, 24736, fols. 5r–6v. In Livorno, Ergas and Silvera rented a house from Rebecca del Rio of Aleppo (ASF, TF, 19, nos. 127–128).
39. Schwarzfuchs 1984: 709–10; ANP, AE, B/1, 77 (4 August 1711, 11 August 1713, 14 August 1711, 19 October 1719); ANP, AE, B/1/84 (13 September 1742); CCM, AA1801, J.943. I have not been able to ascertain whether any relatives of Elijah Silvera had lived or were living in the Levant prior to his arrival. No personal relation between Rabbi Isaac Silveira, who died in Smyrna in 1681 after having embraced the Sabbatist movement (Barnai 1993: 120; Brown and Boer 2000: 14), and the Silveras of eighteenth-century Aleppo has emerged in the course of my research, but evidence is scant.
40. A special *kettubah* (marriage contract) was commissioned in Venice for the occasion. Esther arrived in Livorno on board a ship sailing from Marseilles via Genoa. ASF, LCF, 1941, letters to Daniel Bonfil in Venice (9 June, 7 July, 21 July, 11 August, 8 September 1730).
41. In his last will, registered in London in 1764, Benjamin Mendes da Costa left an annuity of £20 per year to "my cousin Esther Sylva Ergas (wife of Abraham Haim Ergas of Leghorn)" (PRO, PROB, 11/898, fol. 272v).
42. They referred to him as "congionto in sanguinità del nostro Abram Hai" (ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Moses Cassuto in Paris [17 July 1741]) and promised him any help in the name of their blood-kinship ("nos não faltaremos de fazerlo pois tendo nossa/sangue," ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Benjamin Mendes da Costa in London [21 August 1741]). When they wrote to Benjamin Mendes da Costa they called him "primo y amigo"

- (cousin and friend) or simply "primo" (cousin); ASF, LCF, 1957, 22 July and 2 September 1743.
43. On the Silveras of Lisbon and Madrid and their fortunes in the Asian trade, see Boyajian 1993: 14, 37–38, 117, 134, 143, 215; Disney 1978: 98–99. On the Silvera asientistas in Madrid, see Israel 1978: 46; Boyajian 1983: 30–32, app. A-7; Broens 1989; Álvarez Nogal 1997: 127, 182, 191, 198, 205, 208–67, 272–80. Jorge de Paz Silvera paid for and obtained a naturalization patent from the king of Spain in 1632 (Herzog 1997: 251). Only the young Pedro de Baêça da Silvera (1591–1641) remained in the Portuguese capital to manage the still-flourishing family business and acquired the noble status of knight of the Order of Christ before being executed for plotting against the life of the newly restored king D. João IV. With promises of liberty for the New Christians and abolition of the Inquisition, Pedro was drawn into a conspiracy organized by the archbishop of Braga to restore the Habsburgs in Portugal in 1641. His involvement was discovered and the plan thwarted (De Azevedo 1921: 240; Boxer 1970: 460–61; Grant Smith 1974: 257n76; Boyajian 1983: 129).
44. Sicroff 1960: 216–22; Israel 1978: 48, 2002a: 228–31; Boyajian 1983: 120–21, 125; Schwartz 1991: 754–55.
45. AHN, *Inquisición de Toledo*, legado 165, exp. 12, fols. 56r–57v, 71r. The Inquisition of Toledo had jurisdiction over Madrid.
46. Collins 2006: 295. R. Toaff (1990: 471) suggests that Abraham and David Silvera may have arrived in Livorno via Tunis. In the eighteenth century, there were different families with this or a similar last name in the Tuscan port. The Silveras of the firm Ergas and Silvera were originally called Gomes Silvera. Others, named de Sá Silvera, Saccuto Silvera, or Silvera de Matos, lived and died in Livorno in the eighteenth century, but none attained preeminence in the community or seem related to the partners of Ergas and Silvera. Some are listed in the death records of the Jewish community (ACEL, *Registro delle tumulazioni 1716–46*). In 1729 Moses Silvera de Matos, a broker (*sensale*), was tried for cheating on a bill of exchange (ASF, MP, 2493). In 1732 a certain Abraham, son of the deceased Joseph de Sá Silvera, died in Livorno; in 1729 all his belongings had been valued at no more than five hundred pieces of eight (ASF, NMT, Giulio Ceccanti, 23628, fols. 79r–80r), but he must have made some money in business, because three years later he increased the dowries of his three daughters from one hundred to six hundred pieces each (ASF, NMT, Giulio Cesare Grifi, 25344, fols. 54v–55v). A different man by the name of Abraham de Sá Silvera died in Livorno in 1781, leaving only a modest inheritance (ASF, NMT, Jacopo Filippo Bargioni, 28919, fols. 23r–24r). In Pisa, one Isaac Saccuto Silvera and his family were ranked as propertyless in the local census of 1643 (Frattarelli Fischer 1987: 45). In 1657, however, he was elected leader of the Jewish community (*massaro*) in Pisa (Lévy 1999: 297). His widow Blanca disinherited her nephew in 1709 for having divorced his wife and stabbed a relative (ASF, NMT, Matteo Tavola, 23883, fols. 3r–4r).
47. R. Toaff 1990: 471; ASF, MP, 2474, fols. 401r, 412r, 430r; ASF, MP, 1814, fol. 808.
48. Price and Clemens 1987; Morgan 1993: 191–93; Zahedieh 1998; Nash 2005: 112–15.
49. Carrière 1973: 916–23.
50. Addobbati 1996b, 2007.

51. Hancock 2005a, 2006. See also Nash 2005: 96–104.
52. Evidence of ship ownership is tenuous in the case of the Ergas family. See ASL, CGA: *Atti civili spezzati*, 2196, no. 116.
53. Examples are found in the letters to Nathan Levi Sonsino in London (ASF, LCF, 1953, 13 February 1741; ASF, LCF, 1957, 10 February 1744).
54. As an additional precaution, Ergas and Silvera occasionally insured with a third party the sums for which they had provided merchants with marine insurance. See, e.g., ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Giuseppe Driuzzi in Venice (27 May 1741).
55. The commission on the ransoming of a “Turkish slave,” Tafrana, for 150 pieces of eight is mentioned in ASF, LCF, 1935, letter to Prospero and Raphael Salonicchio in Venice (12 July 1709). The Francos of Livorno also continued to be involved in ransoming captives (ASF, NMP, Giovanni Giuseppe Mazzanti, 23704, fols. 24v–25r, no. 16). In 1673 the value calculated for slaves captured at sea was 150 pieces (ASF, MP, 1541). On the Ergases of Livorno who were involved in ransoming both Jewish and Christian slaves in the seventeenth century, see Grandchamp 1920–33, 6: 224. In 1606 all members of the Jewish nation were required to pay a special tax called *seboim* (the Portuguese version of the Hebrew *Pidion Shebuyim*) on cargo of theirs that was in transit in Livorno in order to finance a fund to ransom Jewish captives (Laras 1972; R. Toaff 1986). After the activities of the Knights of Saint Stephen declined in the late seventeenth century, half of this tax was used for charity. On the role of the Livorno Jews in ransoming slaves during the early eighteenth century, see Lo Basso 2004: 158–65.
56. It is impossible to ascertain precisely the relative importance of different goods in the composition of Ergas and Silvera’s trade or the profit of individual transactions because we lack the letters received in Livorno and, according to custom, the partners bartered goods or settled their debts and credits with overseas agents and suppliers by means of bills of exchange. Rarely did they pay for single operations or cargoes.
57. ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Aaron Uziel in Naples (23 January 1741). Other Livorno Sephardim also assigned powers of attorney to coreligionists in Naples in the years between 1740 and 1746, when Jews were permitted to trade in Naples (ASF, NMP, Giovanni Battista Gamera, 25267, fols. 63r–64r). On the readmission of Jews into Naples, see Milano 1963: 221–33; Giura 1984.
58. ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Jacob Baraffael in Rome (14 August 1741).
59. The first person named Ergas to move to London was probably Abraham Ergas, who left Amsterdam for England with his family in 1691 (Abrahams 1925: xxvii). He does not, however, appear in the London census of 1695 (Arnold 1962). In the burial registers of the Spanish and Portuguese Jewish Community of London, which begin in 1657, the first person named Ergas to be listed is the wife of David Gomes Ergas, who died on 13 Teveth 5480 (25 December 1719); L. D. Barnett 1962: 17. David Gomes Ergas alias David La Cour died in London in 1730 (PRO, PROB, 11/635, fols. 52r–53r). His son Abraham, better known as Philip de la Court, graduated in Leiden, became a fashionable medical doctor in London and Bath, and after meeting with some misfortune died in Amsterdam in 1786 (PRO, PROB, 11/1141, fols. 6r–62r; Rubens 1935: 119; Hyamson 1951: 83, 105, 213). In 1776, Ralph Ergas, a gentleman, was a resi-

- dent at 22 Prescot St., Goodman’s Fields, and was a member of the Antiquity Lodge of the Freemasons (Shaftesley 1973–75: 178).
60. Jacob Ergas is first recorded as making a financial contribution to the Spanish and Portuguese congregation in London in August 1700 (SPL, MS 373A, fol. 40). In 1701 (27 Ylul 5461) he donated one pound, six shillings, and sixpence to the newly inaugurated Bevis Marks synagogue in London (Gaster 1901: 91). As was customary, Jacob Ergas contributed to his wife’s dowry a payment equal to one-third of the dowry (SPL, MS 134). I thank Edgar Samuel for helping me read this *kettubah*. See also L. D. Barnett 1949: 67. On the meaning of *kettubah*, see Chap. 5, n. 14.
61. A *List of Names of all the Adventures in the Stock of the Governour and Company of Merchants of London trading into the East-Indies, the 15th of April, 1708* (n.p., 1708). In 1702 the synagogue assessed a tax (*imposta*) on Jacob Ergas of £9:1:0, which placed him in the middle rank of contributors (Gaster 1901: 96). After 1676 the rate of this tax was two shillings for every hundred pounds of all goods bought and sold in London, one shilling for every hundred pounds of goods in transit in London (such as coral shipped from Livorno to India via London), and sixpence on every hundred pounds of diamonds, gemstones, gold, silver, or the equivalent in bills of exchange (L. D. Barnett 1931: 105–6). Accordingly, Jacob’s turnover in London in 1702 must have been between £2,000 and £5,000. The *imposta* was modeled on the taxes levied by the Spanish and Portuguese Jewish community in Amsterdam, which included a tax on the general wealth of every male member (the *finta*) and a tax (the *imposta*) on imports and exports, as well as transactions in silver, gold, diamonds, pearls, amber, currency, insurance policies, and brokerage fees, which went to subsidize the poor and their emigration (Vlessing 1995: 226–28; Swetschinski 2000: 182, 197–98). The *finta* was also introduced in London, but it was assessed on one’s income rather than on total patrimony. Jacob Ergas paid £4:13:4 in *finta* in 5467 (1707–8), £4:9 in 5468, £3:13:4 in 5471, and £2:4:6 a few years later (SPL, MS 103, fols. 59v, 67r–68r, 82r, 95r). These payments indicate a decline in his business. Edgar Samuel (2004: 359–60) calculates that the *finta* levied was £1 for every £2,449. In 1752 merchants such as Benjamin Mendes da Costa, Samson Gideon, Francis Salvador, and Abraham and Moses Franco were taxed the highest assessment of £18:15.
62. One-third of the debt was forgiven. ASF, NMP, Giovanni Battista Gamera, 25260, fols. 132r–139v, no. 136. See also Filippini 1987: 55–56 and Chap. 5.
63. ASL, *Dogana*, 5, no. 340. Jacob does not appear among the taxpayers of the London Spanish and Portuguese synagogue in 5477 (1717) and 5480 (1720) (SPL, MS 103, fols. 101r, 122v). On the position of *mezzani*, see LoRomer 1987: 67–68.
64. In 1734 (24 Elul 5495) Isaac Ergas married Rebecca de Jacob Vaz Martins, who brought a dowry of £233. The *kettubah* for his second wife (15 Adar 5508), Sarah Abrahanel, does not disclose the dowry amount, but a year later Isaac’s *finta* increased, suggesting that he received about £1,200 from his second marriage. Isaac lived in Bury Street when he died in 1776 (PRO, PROB, 11/1018, fol. 246r–v). Isaac’s brother Moses married Leah Carvalho, a widow, in 1748 (28 Ab 5508) and received £500 as a dowry. He died in 1764 (PRO, PROB, 11/896, fols. 315v–316r). Hannah, the mother of Isaac and Moses, died in modest circumstances in 1759 (PRO, PROB, 11/851).

65. ASF, *Arte dei Giudici e Notai (Proconsolo)*, 608. See also Chap. 8.
66. Raphaël Ergas, in Livorno, bought a broker's license for his nephew Jacob, son of Moses Ergas, who was in London, for £600 (PRO, PROB, 11/962, fol. 178r). Jacob was imprisoned for a debt of £550 in 1773 (PRO, *Court of Chancery*, C12/85/11).
67. "[D]a qualunque altro matrimonio che da lui si contraesse con donna di nazione ebrea oriunda portoghese o spagnola e nata da genitori abitanti in Livorno, Venezia, Londra, Amsterdam o Aleppo." ASF, NMT, Giovanni Lorenzo Meazzoli, 26541, fols. 28v–34r.

2. LIVORNO AND THE WESTERN SEPHARDIC DIASPORA

1. "[U]n navio de guerra ingles truxò al navio de capitan Audibert francès de estes senhores Franco que venia de Smir con rico cargo y Deus restaure a los interessados y lo mas es de nostra nacion" (ASF, LCF, 1957, letter to Benjamin Mendes da Costa, London, 22 June 1744). The Audiberts were a family of merchants, ships' captains, and brokers in Marseilles (Carrière 1973: 939–41). On the Francos in London, see C. Roth 1964: 233; Yogev 1978: 145.
2. Yerushalmi 1971: 12–21. Historians of Dutch Sephardim have rendered the notion of an ethnic identity a staple of the scholarship concerning Western Sephardim. See, in particular, Bodian 1994, 1997; Glick 1997; Y. Kaplan 1997, 1999, 2000. Kenneth Stow (2001: 24) points out that in the Jewish context "ethnic" identity refers to membership in a specific congregation (*'edah*), each with its traditions and rituals—Sephardic, Ashkenazic, Italian, and so forth. The Western Sephardim, however, elaborated a collective identification with Iberia for which we now invoke the concept of ethnicity.
3. Since the 1930s historians have debated the religious convictions of Iberian Jews, with interpretations ranging from Cecil Roth's (1930a, 1931, 1932) assumption that all conversos and marranos wished to embrace Judaism to insinuations that marranism was an invention of the Inquisition (Rivkin 1957–58; Netanyahu 1966: 3). These two positions have been nuanced and reformulated in various guises. Marxist historians (typically Saraiva 1969) attribute the persecution of New Christians in Portugal to the state's attempt to eliminate the "capitalistic class" rather than to religious fanaticism. Révah (1959–60) proved Roth largely right. Yoseph Hayim Yerushalmi (1971, 1980) elaborated on Roth's and Révah's studies and focused on the reeducation of crypto-Jews. Trying to categorize the variety of religious experiences in the Sephardic world, José Faur (1992: 41–52) distinguishes between the faithful Christian converso, the faithfully Jewish, the Judeo-Christian converso, and the religiously apathetic converso. Today, most scholars insist on the extent to which the lives of many former marranos escape linear trajectories (Wachtel 2001; García-Arenal and Wiegers 2002; Graizbord 2004). Thomas Glick speaks of "cultural commuters" (Glick 1997: 70). Studnicki-Gizbert (2007) refers to a single "Portuguese nation" in the Atlantic, irrespective of the outward religious affiliation of its members, until the 1630s.
4. Ravid 2001; Caffiero 2004. Among the few voices in the Catholic hierarchy to dispute the legitimacy of forced baptisms at the beginning of the seventeenth century was Paolo Sarpi (1552–1623), a theologian and an advisor to the Venetian state. Sarpi's position was viewed favorably in Venice as a means to assert the independence of secular power from the Church, but it was never embraced officially (C. Roth 1930a: 207, 214; Ravid 1976: 210, 2001: 265; Pullan 1983: 277–78; Ioly Zorattini 1984; Cozzi 1987a: 355–56). Only during the Second Vatican Council of 1963 did the Roman Catholic Church reject entirely the legitimacy of forced baptisms.
5. Pullan 1977: 37–38, 1983: 209.
6. Ravid 1976: 211, 1978: 33; Pullan 1977: 58.
7. Ruspio 2007: 71. The grand duke of Tuscany also declined Philip II's offer (Braudel 1972–73, 2: 560), but no evidence connects this decision directly to the issuing of the livornine.
8. For an account that emphasizes religious motives for the readmission of Jews into England during the Revolution, see Katz 1982. The economic side of Cromwell's policies is analyzed in E. Samuel 1988–90b.
9. Nahon 1989b: 48.
10. Nahon (2003: 48–49) corrects the conventional chronology according to which Iberian New Christians were first recognized as Jews in the *lettres patentes* of 1723.
11. Whaley 1985; di Leone Leoni and Salomon 2001; Studemund-Halévy 2004.
12. Pieterse 1989; Vlessing 1995: 223; Bodian 1997: 43–53; Swetschinski 2000: 4.
13. For the expression "philosemitic mercantilism," see Israel 1998: 93.
14. Bodian 1997: 146.
15. Bodian 1987: 39.
16. Marranos were expelled from St. Jean de Luz in 1619, while more New Christians settled in nearby Bayonne. On the Santa Companhia of Amsterdam, see Révah 1963; Bodian 1987, 1989; Swetschinski 1981: 67–69. For a comparison with Italian-Ashkenazic and Levantine confraternities in the Venice ghetto, see Horowitz 2001: 242–45, 2002: 296.
17. C. Galasso 2002a: 126–27. See also Orfali 2001.
18. ASV, NT, Cristoforo Brambilla, 167.281. See also Chap. 3.
19. Y. Kaplan 1984, 1985, 2000: 111. The London and Hamburg congregations also punished those who traveled to Iberia, though more mildly (Y. Kaplan 2000: 163, 175).
20. The statutes of the Livorno Hebrà referred explicitly to Spain and Portugal, whereas the community statutes (*haskamot*) preferred an indirect expression such as "as partes de Ponente donde não poden estar Judeos" (art. 25). See R. Toaff 1990: 267, 561.
21. For Amsterdam and the expression "public image," see Bodian 2004: 112–16. For London, see Y. Kaplan 1992: 237–38; Endelman 1990.
22. Galluzzi 1781, 1: 281; Frattarelli Fischer 1994: 217–18, 2000a: 99–105, 109; Molho 1997: 1012.
23. The 1551 charter was prompted by the request of a Greek merchant and addressed to "mercanti greci, turchi, aggiumi, armeni e persiani." Sebouh Aslanian suggested to me that the term *aggiumi* (which does not figure in any Italian dictionary) could be a corruption of the Arabic word *Ajemi*, meaning "person from Persia," and may refer specifically to Persian Armenians as opposed to Ottoman Armenians. Jews were not mentioned among the "Oriental persons" ("persone orientali"), although the char-

- ters included the right to build “mosques” and “synagogues” (terms that in this context may refer to non-Catholic places of worship in general). See the full text in ASF, *Pratica segreta*, 186, fols. 94v–96v. See also Cassuto 1918: 89–90, 170–79. In 1560 Cosimo I invited Greeks to settle in Pisa again over the protests of Pope Pius IV (Galluzzi 1781, 2: 219). In 1563 a privilege was issued for Turks and “Moors” from Asia and Africa (Frattarelli Fischer and Castignoli 1987: 1).
24. Frattarelli Fischer 2000a: 109–10.
 25. Cassuto 1918: 100–117; Siegmund 2006.
 26. Luzzati 1985: 137–38.
 27. For an analysis of these patents, see Cooperman 1976, esp. chap. 2. The livornine granted Jews admission to Livorno and Pisa for twenty-five years but also declared that they might be given five years’ notice to leave in case the Roman Catholic Church requested that they be expelled. The original texts of 30 July 1591 and 22 August 1593 can be read in ASF, *Pratica segreta*, 189, fols. 116v–118v, 196v–201v. A glossa in the margin of the 1593 text (fol. 196v) prohibited the reproduction and distribution of the livornina (“non se ne dia copia né vista”). A document dated 1626 mentions the existence of a printed edition, but the first printed version that survives appears in *Collezione* 1798. It was followed by another copy in Cantini 1800–32, 14: 10–19. At first, the grand dukes sent copies of the livornine to Queen Elizabeth and the Ottoman sultan. A decree promulgated in 1602 prohibited all advertisement of these charters (ASF, *Auditore delle Riformagioni*, 24, no. 314). The livornine nonetheless offered a model for Jewish leaders and secular rulers. Manuscript copies circulated illicitly and inspired the demands made by Sephardic leaders elsewhere in Europe, including the *Humble Addresses*, which Menasseh ben Israel submitted to Cromwell (Ravid 1982: 164). The Amsterdam rabbi likely examined a copy of the livornine that still survives in the archives of the Spanish and Portuguese congregation there (GAA, *PIGA*, 1353). Conversely, a translation of the privileges granted by the king of France to Portuguese New Christians in 1723 is preserved in the Florentine archives (ASF, *MP*, 2481, fols. 254–55). In 1766, the Habsburg rulers of Trieste invoked Livorno as a model in devising new legislation regarding Jews (Dubin 1999: 83–84).
 28. Livornina of 1593, art. 3.
 29. On the trials of several Jews and New Christians from Pisa and Livorno by the Inquisition of Pisa, see Laras 1978; Prospero 1994, 1998; Frattarelli Fischer 1994, 2003a: 264–69. Systematic research on the impact of the Inquisition of Pisa is made difficult by the scarcity of surviving documents.
 30. Frattarelli Fischer 1998a: 100.
 31. *Ibid.*, 92; Frattarelli Fischer 2000a: 142. On the persistence of Portuguese New Christians who lived outside the ghetto in Venice during the first three decades of the seventeenth century, see Ruspio 2007.
 32. Novinsky 1992: 75–107; Israel 2002a: 125–50; Studnicki-Gizbert 2007: 151–74.
 33. R. Toaff 1990: 141–48.
 34. “Da Malaga comparve hiersera una nave zelandese in .XI. giorni, senz’altro carico che 40 passeggeri di quella sorte de cristiani che quando sono qui diventano subito hebrei” (ASV, *Senato: Dispacci console Livorno*, 1). The New Christians had boarded

- the ship in Malaga secretly, without the health certificates that were necessary to move from port to port (Frattarelli Fischer 2003b: 96n22).
35. R. Toaff 1990: 563.
 36. Inspired by old notions of moral decadence, the official historian of the Tuscan grand duchy, Jacopo Riguccio Galluzzi (1781, 5: 148–49), argued that the last two rulers of the Medici house contributed to the decline of Tuscany because of their bigotry and intolerance. This judgment has been endorsed by Diaz (1976: 494–96). More recent studies of the political and economic history of Tuscany have challenged these views. See, e.g., Waquet 1990: 75–77. Insofar as religious policies are concerned, however, Adriano Prospero rejects all revisionism concerning Cosimo III and shows that under his rule Jews and marranos in Pisa were increasingly persecuted (1998: 149, 151–52, 154).
 37. The regency suspended the activities of the Inquisition of Tuscany from 1744 to 1754. As part of the new concordat signed by the House of Lorraine in 1754, the tribunal was reorganized to include the presence of a bishop and a secular official (Villani 2003: 55).
 38. ASF, *MP*, 2495 (8 May 1730, 20 May 1730). C. Roth (1931: 2–3) mentions this episode incorrectly as the only occasion when the protection from the Inquisition granted by the livornine was seriously menaced. In 1725 the Jews of Livorno had already protested against persecution by the Holy Office of Pisa (ASF, *MP*, 2485, 2506).
 39. ASF, *MP*, 2506.
 40. In Portugal a renewed wave of arrests and trials began in 1718, escalated from 1721 onward to reach its peak in 1722–23, and continued until 1740 (Israel 2002a: 574–75). Others have dated the beginning of these persecutions to 1723 (Braga 1982: 9) or 1725 (Veiga Torres 1978: 58).
 41. R. D. Barnett 1973–75; Boxer 1969: 384.
 42. ASF, *MP*, 2517, fol. 142v.
 43. Evidence of this diplomatic affair (“il negozio della venuta qua de gl’ebrei spagnoli e portoghesi”) is found, in particular, in ASF, *MP*, 2517 (fols. 215v–217r, 142r–v); 2518 (fols. 13r, 18r, 20v, 23r–v, 25r, 28r, 97r–v). No copies of the safe-conducts survive in the archives of the Consulta. Jewish leaders appealed to Rinuccini, repeating the accepted view of the commercial contribution that New Christians could make to the trade of Livorno, but also explicitly asking him to intervene against their persecution in Portugal; ASF, *MP*, 2486 (6 March 1726).
 44. ASF, *MP*, 2494 (letter of Carlo Rinuccini to the auditore Giacomo Conti, 12 August 1729). Two years earlier, the Tuscan government had responded cautiously to the request for safe-conduct by Moses Alvares of London, who admitted to having been previously married to a Protestant woman. A legal advisor, however, concluded that safe-conduct could be issued because the marriage was invalid and the crime not serious (ASF, *MP*, 2488). Alvares arrived in Livorno and in May 1728 was married to a Jewish woman, Rebecca Francia, whom he later threatened with divorce (ASF, *MP*, 2491). See also Chap. 5, n. 15.
 45. ASF, *MP*, 2530 (letter of Giacomo Conti to Carlo Rinuccini, 26 January 1731).
 46. ASF, *MP*, 2517, fols. 215v–217r. For excerpts of this document, see also R. Toaff 1990:

664. The question of the massari's jurisdiction over "foreign Jews" had already been raised in 1645 (ASF, MP, 2160, fol. 576). In the 1730s, old disputes about the way to distinguish between Livornese and "foreign" Jews for the purpose of assessing the seboim tax (see Chap. 1, n. 55) reemerged (ASG, MP, 2497; Laras 1972: 94–99).
47. ASF, MP, 2476, fols. 712–22.
 48. In the 1520s, 2,645 of the 4,863 households in Salonica were Jewish (1,229 were Muslim and 989 were Christian); Lewis 1984: 118.
 49. Data about the Jewish population of all Italian towns with a ghetto are collected in Harris 1967. Livorno is excluded from this study because it did not formally have a ghetto. Favero and Trivellato (2004) discuss new evidence about the Jewish population of Venice between 1516 and 1797.
 50. Nusteling 2002: 51–53. Previous estimates had set the number of Sephardim at 2,800 in 1683, with a peak of 3,000 in the middle of the eighteenth century (Bodian 1997: 156, 158) or, on the basis of marriage data, between 3,275 and 3,475 individuals in the 1680s (Swetschinski 2000: 91). Israel (2002b: 100) oscillates between endorsing lower figures (2,230 in 1675, 3,000 in 1700 and 1725) and Nusteling's revisions (Israel 2002a: 36). A smaller Sephardic community existed in Rotterdam from 1647 to 1736.
 51. Lipman 1971: 38; Endelman 2002: 41; Israel 2002a: 581–82.
 52. Kellenbenz 1958: 41, 1989: 34. More recent studies have not revised this number, nor have they given credence to the figure of 1,212 Jews and New Christians in Hamburg mentioned in a denunciation by Samuel Aboab in 1652 (Studemund-Halévy 2004: 132–34).
 53. On Bayonne, see Schwarzfuchs 1966: 355. On Bordeaux, see Cavignac 1991: 15. At the outbreak of the French Revolution, Bayonne and Bordeaux housed 2,500–3,500 and 1,500–2,000 Jews, respectively (Schwarzfuchs 1975: 146).
 54. Klooster 1998: 61, on the basis of an official census. Other estimates put the Jewish population of Curaçao between 1,200 and 1,500 in the second half of the eighteenth century.
 55. For figures concerning the Jewish population in the Caribbean, see Emmanuel and Emmanuel 1970: 234, 277; Fortune 1984: 49; Goslinga 1985: 209, 309, 519; Robert Cohen 1991: 63–65; Arbell 2000: 36; Israel 2001: 337.
 56. On the shifting commercial interests of Amsterdam Sephardim in the 1620s and 1630s, see Israel 1989a: 124–70. Little is known about the departures from Livorno to the New World. In the late 1620s, a few Jews left Livorno for Spanish America (R. Toaff 1990: 411n34). More families ventured to the Dutch Caribbean between 1645 and the 1660s, but most of them were poor (Israel 2002a: 401–2).
 57. López Belinchón 2002: 363n52.
 58. ASV, NT, Pietro Bracchi, 180.1115.
 59. Testaments of Jewish men and women of Livorno can be found in three collections. A folder with 122 testaments drafted between 1629 and 1713 by the chancellor of the Jewish nation (on whom the livornine of 1593 had conferred power to act as a public notary) is preserved in the archives of the Jewish community of Livorno. The collection titled *Testamenti forestieri* in the State Archives in Florence contains all last wills drafted by foreign notaries and deposited in translation in the Florentine office of pub-

- lic contracts. More numerous are the Jewish testaments that appear in the registries of Christian notaries of Livorno, now kept in the State Archives in Florence. Technically, Jewish law equated testaments with contracts of *donatio mortis causa*, thus attributing to them a weaker legal meaning than did Roman law (Colorni 1945: 209). At the time, rabbis debated the *halakhic* legitimacy of notarized wills in Renaissance Italy (see Malkiel 1997; di Leone Leoni 1998). The fact of the matter is that in Livorno, as in most Italian cities, numerous Jews had recourse to Christian notaries, and their deeds document Jewish life in important ways. On the importance of these sources, see Segre 1983; Simonsohn 1993–97. On Ancona, see Bonazzoli 1987, 1998. On Venice, see Boccato 1976, 1990, 1993a, 1993b, 2006; Ruspio 2000–1, 2007. Testaments of Jews drafted by Christian notaries in Livorno do not differ in form from those of other Tuscan subjects, except that Jews were allowed to waive any bequests to Catholic charitable institutions (and they almost always did); they also were permitted to include legal formulas from Jewish law, such as oaths or the *kinyan* (the formula recited at the act of acquiring property rights). It is difficult to establish the reasons why some Jews in Livorno resorted to Christian notaries. They did so even when it meant unveiling the identity of New Christian relatives in Iberia. It is possible that notarized documents were perceived as having greater weight in disputes brought before a Christian court. Thus in 1748 Raphael Manuel Ergas first jotted down his testament in Hebrew and deposited it in the chancellery of the Jewish nation. When in 1751 he wished to name new tutors for his children and assign his daughter a dowry, he asked Filippo Gonnella, a notary in Livorno, to draft his codicil (ASF, NMT, Filippo Gonnella, 27200, fols. 16v–17r).
60. ACEL, *Testamenti 1629–1713*, 126. See also C. Galasso 2002a: 81.
 61. ACEL, *Testamenti 1629–1713*, 136.
 62. "[S]i viniero alguna perssona de mi linaje y de casa de mi padre de España" (ACEL, *Testamenti 1629–1713*, EE).
 63. Rachel "tiene nella parte di Ponente nepoti eredi, è sua volontà che, venendo al judesmo alcuno di detti suoi nepoti, provato che abbia essere suo erede, si li dia tutto quello che vi serà in essere." ASF, MP, 2474, fol. 384. According to Cristina Galasso (2002a: 83), Jewish men in seventeenth-century Livorno used Christian pseudonyms more often than did women, and women mentioned relatives and friends in Iberia more often than did men. Moreover, men made bequests to relatives and friends in Iberia conditional on their return to Judaism, but women were less prescriptive in this regard. This gendered difference may be due to the greater involvement of men in the trade with Iberia and their need to protect their investments from the Inquisition.
 64. ASV, NT, Giovanni Piccini, 756.18. On Giorgio Cardoso, his importation of sugar from Lisbon, and his associations with Portuguese Jews in Venice, see Ruspio 2007: 86, 200–213.
 65. ASV, NT, Giovanni Piccini, 756.17.
 66. ASV, NT, Cristoforo Brambilla, 167.281.
 67. ACEL, *Testamenti 1629–1713*, 84.
 68. Swetschinski 2000: 82–83. Between 1598 and 1811, 121 Jews said to be from Livorno married in Amsterdam, the first in 1647 and the last in 1801, with 107 marriages taking place after 1680 (Verdooner and Snel 1990–91, 2: 791–92).

69. Swetschinski 2000: 86, 188.
70. Frattarelli Fischer 1997c: 86, 2003b: 102. The testaments of Venetian Sephardim also disclose ties to Amsterdam in this period. See, e.g., ASV, NT, Pietro Bracchi, 185, fols. 1798r–1799v.
71. ASF, TF, 10, nos. 86–88.
72. ASF, TF, 10, no. 38.
73. ASV, NT, Andrea Calzavara, 257.107.
74. ASV, NA, Angelo Maria and Giovanni Piccini, 10840 (4 August 1661).
75. ASV, NT, Pietro Venier, 1008.60.
76. ASF, NMT, Giovanni Battista Gamera, 25280, fols. 92r–94r; ASF, NMT, Filippo Filippini, 25175, fols. 85r–89v, 101r–108r; ASF, NMT, Giovanni Lorenzo Meazzoli, 26541, fols. 21v–26v. Moses Carvaglio ordered his heirs to invest one-third of his estate in the Dutch public debt.
77. Fischel 1960; *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 1971–72, s.v. “Franco (English family)”; Yogev 1978: 125; R. Toaff 1990: 314, 315n, 413n. On moving to London the Francos dropped the appellation Albuquerque from their last name; later a branch of the family converted to Christianity and became the Barons Ludlow (C. Roth 1931: 11).
78. Yogev 1978: 145, 152. For Nathan Levi Sonsino, see ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Nathan Levi Sonsino in London (1 January 1742); PRO, PROB, 11/784. For Judah Supino, see ASF, MNT, Giovanni Matteo Novelli, 26737, fols. 30v–31r; PRO, PROB, 11/716. Moses Montefiore was born in Livorno in 1712 and died in London in 1789. He set up a trade in straw bonnets and hats in the English capital. His more famous grandson, also named Moses Montefiore (1784–1885), was also born in Livorno and became one of the foremost Jewish merchants and philanthropists of the nineteenth century. A list of all Jews who immigrated to England (except those who were naturalized British subjects) can be found in Lipman 1971.
79. ASF, MS, 4045, letter E, no. 2.
80. *A List of Names of all such proprietors of the Banck of England, who are qualified to vote at the ensuing election, to be made of governor and deputy-governor . . . March 25th, 1749* (London: Printed by J. Moore, [1749]): 4.
81. ASF, NMT, Jacopo Filippo Bargioni, 28920, fols. 6v–14r.
82. Furber 1940: 140; 1948: 273.
83. ASF, NMP, Matteo Novelli, 26731, fols. 82r–83v; ASF, NMT, Giovanni Battista Gamera, 25280, fols. 98v–100r, 100r–102v. In 1760 Isaac Saccuto and his partners owned £3,000 in deposits in the Bank of England, the same amount in East India Company stock, and £340:17:6 in South Sea Company stock (Filippini 1987: 57–58; 1998, 3: 288–89). See also Trivellato forthcoming.
84. ASF, MNP, Agostino Frugoni, 24731, fols. 94v–95v.
85. On the business of the Racah family, see ASF, MP, 2478, fols. 253–263, 751 and 2482, fols. 786, 851, 865, 919; ASL, CCA: *Atti civili e spezzati*, 2463, 2206, and 2207; ASF, MNP, Giovanni Battista Gamera, 25270, fol. 176r, no. 345. For the activities of Abraham and Solomon Racah in Genoa in the early eighteenth century, see Urbani and Zazzu 1999, 2: 599, 602, 657, 678, 697–98, and passim. In 1726 Solomon Racah served as a correspondent of Ergas and Silvera for selling Indian diamonds in Venice

- (ASF, LCF, 1939, letter to Solomon Racah in Venice, 17 June 1726). Salamon Aghib bequeathed his investments in the Bank of England to his two sons in 1752 (ASF, MNT, Giovanni Battista Gargani, 26286, fols. 7v–8r).
86. ASF, NMP, Pier Francesco Martelli, 26197, fols. 122v–125r; ASF, NMP, Giovanni Giuseppe Mazzanti, 23704, fols. 49v–51r, no. 35. In 1753 Sarah Racah, daughter of Moses, married Isaac Racah (ASF, NMP, Filippo Gonnella, 27191, fols. 147r–150r, no. 211; ASF, MP, 2481, fol. 919).
87. PRO, PROB, 11/1391, fol. 138r.
88. Lehmann 2005.
89. Stein 2002: 334. See also Rodrigue 1990; Schroeter 1994; Molho 1997: 1031–32.
90. For the first policies aimed at welcoming Ottoman Jewish traders to Venice, see Ravid 1978: 29, 33, 1987; Israel 1992, 367, 1998: 37, 2002a: 61–63.
91. Malkiel 1991: 13–16, 93–113.
92. Mark R. Cohen 1988: 92, 95.
93. “VM perdoara se não lhe respondemos em italiano para ser que a lingua paterna e materna a de fazer sua operação ainda que somos nascidos em Italia.” ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Isaac Coen de Lusena in Genoa (6 March 1743).
94. ASF, MS, 4045, letter E, no. 2.
95. In Livorno, the sentences passed by the Jewish tribunal began to be written in Italian in 1787 (ASL, GCM, 961, no. 11; R. Toaff 1991: 23). In eighteenth-century Bordeaux, the community registers were kept in Spanish and in French (Schwarzfuchs 1981). The first statutes of the London Sephardic congregation were written in Spanish. Portuguese was soon adopted as the community’s administrative language (Y. Kaplan 2002a: 357). Depending on the origin and linguistic proficiency of the scribes, Spanish and Portuguese were used intermittently in official documents in London (see, e.g., SPL, MS 103, fols. 37v–38r). In 1779 and again in 1782, a commercial contract between Livornese Jews in Tunis was drafted in Spanish (Filippini 1999: 135). On the languages of the Sephardim across the diaspora and in Amsterdam, see Díaz-Mas 1992: 72–101; Bunis 1992; Teensma 1993; Méchoulan 1991: 28–32; Swetschinski 2000: 278–80.
96. Raposo 1989: 197–98.
97. Hacker 1994. Bornstein-Makovetsky (1992) emphasizes the fiscal and administrative responsibilities with which Ottoman authorities invested lay leaders of Jewish communities. Mark Alan Epstein refers to the “accidental leadership” played by laymen (1980: 53).
98. Berkovitz 2004: 19, 23.
99. On the aid extended by Livorno to the Jewish communities in Palestine, see R. Toaff 1990: 82–84. For the rest of the Western Sephardic diaspora, see R. D. Barnett 1964: 25–33; Nahon 1977, 1984, 1989a. Donations to the students and the poor in Jerusalem, Hebron, and Safed are mentioned in several testaments of Sephardim from Venice and Livorno. See ASV, NT, Pietro Bracchi, 185, fols. 1798r–1799v; ASF, MNT, Giovanni Giacomo Mazzanti, 23707, fol. 121r; ASF, MNT, Roberto Michieli, 27327, fols. 24r–27r; PRO, PROB, 11/962, fol. 173r–v; ASF, NMT, Antonio Mazzinghi, 28055, fols. 13v–14r. And yet in 1773 the noted Jerusalem rabbi Hayyim Joseph David Azulai

- complained about the difficulty of collecting donations from the elite Jews of Livorno (Cymerman 1997: 47–48).
100. Schwarzfuchs 1984: 709–10.
 101. On the building (*khan*) that housed French merchants in Aleppo, see Sauvaget 1941: 213–19; Paris 1957: 264–68; Fukasawa 1987: 71; David and Grandin 1991.
 102. Russell 1794, 2: 60. On the presence of European Sephardim in Smyrna, see Barnai 1992: 142. On Salonica, see Rozen 1988: 324–25. For more details about Alëppo, see Chaps. 4 and 8.
 103. The complaint was that “pour se distinguer des juifs du pays et paraître comme s’ils étaient chrétiens, ils portent le chapeau et la perruque” (quoted in Paris 1957: 257).
 104. Russell 1794, 2: 60.
 105. Clément 1960: 207.
 106. Febvre 1681: 354.
 107. Grandchamp 1920–33, 8: 52–60; Hirschberg 1974–81, 2: 82–85, 98–100; Avrahami 1984; Sebag 1991: 82, 95–96; Lévy 1999: 65–67.
 108. Valensi 1977: 61–65, 1985: 210–28; Rozen 1984, 1985; Boubaker 1987: 155–56; Lévy 1999: 261–64. Several studies by Jean-Pierre Filippini (1977, 1984b, 1998, 1999) have illuminated the activities of the North African Jews based in Livorno. On the Lombrosos of Tunis, see Grandchamp 1920–33, 9: 29, 254, 10: 49; Rozen 1984: 53–54, 1985: 95–100; Boubaker 1987: 135, 157; Lévy 1999: 261–64; Boccara 2007. On the manufacturing of chéchias, see Valensi 1969. Moses de Medina of Livorno and Isaac Boccara of Tunis liquidated their joint business in 1756 (ASF, NMP, 26729, Giovanni Matteo Novelli, fols. 101v–102r, no. 152).
 109. Examples are found in ASF, MNP, Giovanni Battista Gamera, 25272, fol. 27r–v, no. 51 and 25273, fols. 47v–48r, no. 62.
 110. Oliel-Grausz 1999, 2000, 2006. See also Nahon 1993.
 111. Available sources do not allow us to judge how other relatives viewed this conversion, but we know that Ergas-Fortunati intervened in favor of his brother-in-law Manuel Mora with the highest Florentine authorities (Frattarelli Fischer 2006b: 155). Although canon law prescribed the dissolution of a marriage when one of the spouses did not convert, Catholic authorities often encouraged relations between new converts and their family of origin (Rothman 2006: 41, 60n10). As was often the case, Sarah Ergas had to battle to secure her inheritance. See ASF, NMT, Michiel’Angiolo Brocchi, 22211, fols. 45r–56v; ASF, NMP, 25262, Giovanni Battista Gamera, fol. 186r–v, no. 236; ASF, NMT, Roberto Michieli, 27237, fols. 24r–27r; ASF, NMT, Antonio Chiocchini, 27402, fol. 7r–v; ASF, NMT, Paolo Brignole, 27562, fols. 6v–7v.

3. A NEW CITY, A NEW SOCIETY?

1. Foss [1798]: 155–56.
2. Büsching 1778: 121; Büsching 1762, 3: 128; *Universal Gazetteer* 1771, s.v. “Leghorn”; Payne 1791, 2: 372. More accurately, Wyndham Beawes (1752: 723) noted “a Concurrence, not only of French, English, Dutch, etc. but also of Jews, Turks, and Armenians; the Turks however trading only *de passo*.” The observation is repeated in

- another dictionary (Mortimer 1766, s.v. “Florence”). Here as elsewhere, *Turks* could refer either to Ottoman subjects or to Muslims in general.
3. On the image of Livorno in travel literature, see Mangio 1978b; Mascilli Migliorini 1989; Addobbati 2007: 17–22.
 4. Büsching 1762, 3: 128; *Universal Gazetteer* 1771, s.v. “Leghorn”; *Encyclopædia Britannica* 1778–83, 4: 4176; Seally 1787, 2, s.v. “Leghorn.” Elsewhere Büsching (1778: 121) asserted that “several millions” of Jews lived in Europe outside Portugal, Spain, Russia, Sweden, and Norway.
 5. Guyot de Merville 1729: 555–56, also quoted by Mangio 1978b: 315, 316n69. The entry “Livourne” in the *Encyclopédie* (Diderot and d’Alembert 1751–80, 9: 600) claims that Jews regard the Tuscan port as “une nouvelle terre promise.”
 6. Beckford 1786: 151.
 7. The passage appears in Montesquieu’s *Voyage*, now in Montesquieu 1950, 2: 1087. In his *Persian Letters* (1721), Montesquieu (1950, 1: 49–50) praised Livorno as an exception to the decline of the Italian peninsula. “It is a new city,” wrote the fictional Persian character Usbek to a friend in Smyrna in Letter XXIII, “and bears witness to the ingenuity of the dukes of Tuscany, who, from a swampy village, have made of it the most flourishing city of Italy.”
 8. Ray 1738, 2: 226.
 9. S.v. “Juif” in Savary des Bruslons 1759–65, vol. 2, col. 461. The same number had already appeared in Addison 1705: 394 and Salmon 1729, 9: 492.
 10. Payne 1791, 2: 372.
 11. Orrery 1773: 101 (referring to 1754–55).
 12. Quoted in Mangio 1978b: 316n69. It may not be an accident that Labat is also the most ferocious in his description of Jews as “odieux,” “arrogants,” “fourbes,” and “fripons.”
 13. C. Roth 1946: 399. On Cecil Roth’s views of Italian Jewry in the Renaissance and on his critics, see Ruderman 1998.
 14. Milano 1963: 322–28.
 15. See, in particular, *Danielillo ó Respuestas à los Cristianos* (Amsterdam, 1738), discussed in C. Roth 1931: 5–6 and in Orfali 1997, and Isaac Euchel’s “Letters of Meshulam ben Uriyah ha-Eshtamoi” (1780), quoted in Dubin 1999: 134.
 16. “L’hemeute qui s’est faite contre les Juifs confirme assez que la haine religieuse contre les Etrangers couve toujours sous les Cendres et qu’elle n’attend que la permission pour eclater” (Bonnard 1961: 230–31). Note that Mascilli Migliorini (1989: 645) only quotes Gibbon’s positive remarks. Gibbon kept his diary in French.
 17. ASF, MF, 2478, fol. 727.
 18. ASF, *Consiglio di Reggenza*, 65. See also Pera 1888: 317.
 19. Addobbati 2002: 73–75.
 20. Mangio 1995: 14; Filippini 1998, 1: 144–45, 3: 321–57; Fettah 2000: 466–70; Frattarelli Fischer 2003a: 288–89.
 21. R. Toaff 1990: 603. Further deliberations were aimed at limiting the instances when Christians could deride Jewish worship (584, 589–91).
 22. Nothing comparable to the literature about Jewish poverty and charity in Amsterdam

- (Robert Cohen 1982; Levie Bernfeld 1993, 2002; Egmond 1993) exists for Livorno. We know that additional power was conferred on the community's leaders in order to control "vagabond, indolent and scandalous villains" in 1713 (ASL, GCM, 961, no. 10). But the questions of whether and how the Jewish community of Livorno organized the emigration of its "poor and indigent" members awaits further research.
23. See, e.g., Mangio 1995: 16, 18; Marzagalli 1999: 37; Fettah 2004: 179.
 24. Méchoulan 1991: 21. See also Méchoulan 1990. Daniel Swetschinski (2000) has introduced a cautionary close to the tale of the nexus between trade and cosmopolitanism. For him, Amsterdam Sephardim were "reluctant cosmopolitans," bound not only by legal but also by social restrictions and in large part by their desire to lead lives that were more faithful to Jewish religious identity.
 25. Raposo 1989: 133.
 26. Pearson 2003: 39.
 27. My understanding of communitarian cosmopolitanism owes much to Robert Ilbert's studies of Alexandria in the late Ottoman period, which stress the coexistence of a fluid cosmopolitan culture among the professional elites with rigid divisions and hierarchies among groups. See Ilbert 1992, 1996, 2: 733, 2002.
 28. On the urban history of Livorno, see Matteoni 1985; Frattarelli Fischer 1989, 2006a. For the history of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany from 1500 to 1800, see Diaz 1976; Cochrane 1973; Diaz, Mascilli Migliorini, and Mangio 1997.
 29. Frattarelli Fischer 2006a: 281.
 30. Sassetti 1853.
 31. Fasano Guarini 1978: 62.
 32. "A tutti voi mercanti di qualsivoglia nazione, levantini e ponentini, spagnioli e portoghesi, greci, todeschi e italiani, hebrei, turchi e mori, armeni, persiani e altri, saluto" (Livornina of 1593, preamble).
 33. The decree ordering the renewal of the livornine in July 1737 is in ASF, MP, 2525. On their abolition, see Fubini 1998: 25–39.
 34. Colorni 1945: 306–20.
 35. On Rome, see Stow 2001: 99–126. On Venice, see Malkiel 1991: 37–47.
 36. Livornina of 1593, arts. 25, 33. Criminal sentences adjudicated by the massari were enforced by the state police (*bargello*). See also ASF, MP, 2489.
 37. Milano 1967; A. S. Toaff 1965: 276; R. Toaff 1968, 1990: 205–35; Orfali 1992: 211–12.
 38. Livornina of 1593, art. 31. The term *ballottazione* comes from "ballot," as in the process of selecting new members.
 39. Livornina of 1593, art. 5; R. Toaff 1990: 408–9; Filippini 1983: 210–12, 1998, 3: 83–85.
 40. Frattarelli Fischer 1991: 39.
 41. Livornina of 1593, art. 31.
 42. Livornina of 1593, art. 29.
 43. Frattarelli Fischer 1997a.
 44. Livornina of 1593, arts. 6, 16, 24, 28, 39.
 45. Livornina of 1593, art. 21. This article overrode canon law, which set the age of con-

- sent for baptism at six. Baptism was the only Catholic sacrament that could be performed by a layperson, and involuntary baptisms of Jewish children by Christians (especially Christian domestic servants) were not infrequent.
46. Frattarelli Fischer 2006b, 2006c, 2006e: 463–75.
 47. Frattarelli Fischer 2006b: 141–49.
 48. The livornina of 1593, art. 29, established that there would be no ghetto. A 1765 letter by the governor of Livorno listed the streets that were designated for Jewish residences (ASL, GCM, 961, no. 32). On the residential patterns of the Jews of Livorno, see R. Toaff 1990: 131–40; Conforto and Frattarelli Fischer 1982; Frattarelli Fischer 1983, 1984, 2003a: 254n5. On the long-term leases (called *jus hazakak*) on the basis of which Jews could own real estate in the other Italian cities, see Colorni 1956: 60–63.
 49. R. Toaff 1991: 18–19. Jewish leaders also became increasingly concerned with the preservation of boundaries between Jews and Christians in regard to housing arrangements (R. Toaff 1990: 582).
 50. ASF, MP, 2511, fols. 84v–85v. As noted by the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1778–83, 6: 4176), "The Turks who are not slaves, live[d] in a particular quarter, near that of the Jews."
 51. At first, consular representation was not continuous. When the French consul died in 1625, no one filled his post for two years. He was replaced by a vice-consul; and from 1640 to 1650 the French had no consuls in Livorno (Reynaud 1947: 103). On the English consuls in seventeenth-century Livorno, see Villani 2004b.
 52. Dubin 2006: 53–55. The expression "suddita nazione" dates at least to 1774.
 53. The point is also stressed in Luzzati 1986.
 54. Examples are found in Filippini 1976: 236; Frattarelli Fischer 2006e: 451.
 55. On the number of foreign merchants in Livorno, see ASF, *Consiglio di Reggenza*, 652, no. 213 (1752); Castignoli 2001: 101–4; Mangio 1980a; Filippini 1976: 240–41, 1988: 581–94, 1998, 2: 418–19; Engels 1997: 129–35.
 56. Castignoli 2001: 117; Frattarelli Fischer 1998b: 23, 26–30, 35. Claims that there were 120 Armenians in Livorno in the early seventeenth century and from one hundred to two hundred in the eighteenth century seem inflated. See Zekiyan 1978: 914; Herzig 2004: 156. Also unreliable is the report sent by the papal nuncio to the *Propaganda Fide* in 1669 that mentioned 300 resident Armenian merchants in Livorno (Aslanian 2007b: 160–61).
 57. Gorani 1986: 108.
 58. R. Toaff 1990: 116, 132–33; Luzzati 1995: 11–12, 48.
 59. Castignoli 2001: 79.
 60. Villani 2004a; Frattarelli Fischer 2006a: 303, 305.
 61. Castignoli 2001: 80, 97; Villani 1999: 39.
 62. Beckford 1786: 152. Others noted more cautiously that Anglicans alone among all Protestants were permitted to worship (Büsching 1762, 3: 128, 1778: 121; Seally 1787, 2: s.v. "Leghorn"; Payne 1791, 2: 372). On Protestantism in Livorno, see Santini 1982; Villani 2003.

63. Frattarelli Fischer 1999: 300, 2006d: 32–41. In 415, the Armenian Church did not accept the authority of the Christian Council of Chalcedon; this paved the way for the separate and autonomous development of the Armenian Catholicate. The first step toward reconciliation with the papacy came during the Council of Florence in 1439, but the Armenian Church maintained its independence, to Rome's great dismay. A minority of Armenians converted to Catholicism as a result of the missionary campaigns of Capuchin friars and others in the early seventeenth century. The Church of Saint Gregory the Illuminator in Livorno was severely damaged by bombs in 1944, and today only the façade survives.
64. Bellatti Ceccoli 2008.
65. Panessa 1991: 33–56; Castignoli 2001: 81, 109–14. This building is no longer standing.
66. On the space allocated to the Muslims of Marseilles for a cemetery in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, see CCM, AA1801, G.6. Tékéian (1929: 35) notes that there had been a mosque in Marseilles in the seventeenth century and that it was destroyed in the early eighteenth century.
67. The mosques appear on the late-seventeenth-century map of the Bagno reproduced in Frattarelli Fischer 2000b: 88. The Bagno was dismantled in 1750, but a few travel accounts continued to mention one or more mosques in Livorno (Büsching 1762, 3: 128; Payne 1791, 2: 372). One notes that they were small and “adorned with five or six Ostridge Eggs” (Misson 1739, 1: 552). On ostrich eggs as religious symbols in Islam and Christianity, see N. Green 2006, which Sarah A. Stein kindly suggested to me.
68. Büsching 1778: 122.
69. *Encyclopædia Britannica* 1778–83, 6: 4176.
70. Kafadar 1986; Dursteler 2006: 158–73. For Livorno, see the surviving safe-conducts issued individually to “Turkish merchants” in the 1650s (ASF, MP, 2312, also quoted in Frattarelli Fischer 2003b: 101).
71. ASF, MNP, Giovanni Battista Gamera, 25272, fol. 27r–v, no. 51.
72. ASF, MNP, Giovanni Giuseppe Giuliani, 23411, fol. 64r.
73. ASF, MNP, Giovanni Battista Gamera, 25270, fols. 141r–142r, no. 273. In 1750 another Muslim merchant from Algiers was in Livorno, where he entrusted Joseph and Raphael Gabai Villareale with overseeing his business during his absence (ASF, MNP, Giovanni Battista Gamera, 25273, fols. 47v–48r, no. 62).
74. Frattarelli Fischer 2006a: 296.
75. Addison 1705: 393; Salmon 1729, 9: 492; Ray 1738, 2: 226; Misson 1739, 1: 552; Stevens [1758?]: 92; Büsching 1762, 3: 129; *Encyclopædia Britannica* 1778–83, 6: Beckford 1786: 152; Seally 1787, 2, s.v. “Léghorn”; Starke 1800, 1: 196. The four chained Moors were designed by Pietro Tacca and added to the statue of Ferdinand I between 1623 and 1626.
76. Y. Kaplan 2002a: 350–53.
77. ACEL, *Recapiti*, no. 26; R. Toaff 1990: 565–66, 570, 577, 585. On Amsterdam, see Swetschinski 2000: 220. On Venice, see Malkiel 1991: 220, 342–43. Jewish sumptuary laws were enforced more strictly where, as in Alsace and Lorraine, Jewish communities faced greater antagonism (Berkovitz 2004: 33–58).

78. E. Samuel 1988–90a; Bodian 1997: 85–89; Boer 2002: 97–98, 109–110n8.
79. Cecil Roth (1931: 18, 1930a: 208) first called attention to the coats of arms visible on the tombstones of the ancient Jewish cemeteries in Venice and Livorno. Unfortunately, the one in Livorno, unlike the one in Venice (A. Luzzatto 2000), has not been restored and catalogued. For the use of blazons in Hamburg and Amsterdam, see Bodian 1997: 89. C. Roth (1967) already noted that Ashkenazic and Italian Jewish families occasionally used coats of arms, too.
80. The Franco family had its arms certified in London as well (Rubens 1949: 92–93).
81. The Ergas coat of arms is also mentioned in Aghib Levi d'Ancona 1971: 29, 1989: 182. Aviva Ben-Ur suggested to me that the crown could be a symbol of nobility or royalty but also might hint at a kabalistic concept (the crown of monarchy) or simply, as with a number of ritual objects, stand for the “crown of good name” that designated persons of high reputation.
82. Bodian 1994: 66–67, 1997: 90.
83. Menkis 1988: 131–35, 1990: 12.
84. C. Roth 1930a: 171.
85. Friedenbergs 1988; Mann 1989: 313; Richard Cohen 1998: 29–31; Zell 2002: 15–17. It is curious that Jacob's wig is placed in a way that leaves some hair visible.
86. The pendant portraits of Isaac Medina and his wife are preserved in the reading room of the Jewish community archives. For a reproduction and description, see Mann 1989: 60, 313–14.
87. On Gainsborough's portrait of Franco, see Rubens 1955–59: 24; Waterhouse 1958: 68. Two other portraits of British Jews in the same guise are reproduced in E. Samuel (2004: 323). On Lopes Suasso, see Swetschinski and Schönduive 1988.
88. On the ghetto of Venice, see Concina, Camerino, and Calabi 1991.
89. Israel 1998: 209.
90. Nahon 2003: 90. By the 1750s, however, Abraham Gradis, who had embraced Judaism openly, became a major shareholder in the city's Grand Théâtre (Menkis 1990: 37).
91. Jacob 2006: 105–6.
92. Endelman 1979: 118–65, 1990: 9–33.
93. Schorsch 2004: 180.
94. ASL, GCM, 961, no. 27; Cooperman 1976: 296–98; R. Toaff 1990: 114, 200.
95. ASF, MP, 2487 (29 July 1726), 2488 (13 January 1726), 2518, fol. 34v. Permission to have Christian servants and wetnurses was rescinded in 1620, but the prohibition was largely ignored (Cooperman 1976: 298–300; R. Toaff 1990: 328–34, 542–43; C. Galasso 2002b). The presence of Christian servants in Jewish homes in Livorno is recorded in several testaments: ASF, NMT, Giovanni Giacomo Mazzanti, 23707, fols. 121r–125v; ASF, NMT, Giovanni Battista Gargani, 26286, fols. 7v–8r; ASF, NMT, Filippo Filippini, 25175, fols. 85r–89v, 101r–108r, 123r–126v; ASF, NMT, Giovanni Lorenzo Meazzoli, 26541, 21v–26v; ASF, NMT, Jacopo Filippo Bargioni, 28920, fols. 6v–14r. In 1720 Joseph Jesurum contested his nephew's right to succeed his father on the board of a community office because the nephew was born of a Muslim slave (“schiava turca”). The massari, however, found that the former slave had converted to Judaism (ASF, MP, 2475, fols. 30–31).

96. R. Toaff 1990: 448.
97. Frattarelli Fischer 1983: 893n28.
98. This information comes from the "Prospetto delle case," compiled after the earthquake of 1742 (probably in 1746–47). ASF, *Segreteria di finanze e affari prima del 1788*, 806, nos. 45, 976–77. This document is analyzed in Conforto and Frattarelli Fischer 1982 and in Frattarelli Fischer 1983. Further evidence of the real estate holdings of Ergas and Silvera can be found in ASF, NMP, Giovanni Battista Gamera, 25263, fols. 116r–119r, no. 138; ASF, LCF, 1935 (copies of notary deeds); ASL, CGA: *Atti civili spezzati*, 2214, no. 155. For the real estate holdings of the Attiases and the Baruch Carvaglios, see ASF, NMT, Jacopo Filippo Bargioni, 28918, fols. 90r–92v and ASF, NMT, Niccolò Guidotti, 31386, fols. 12v–14v, respectively.
99. Filippini 1997: 1059, 1998, 1: 126–27n24; ASF, MP, 2510, fol. 60r. The Francos already owned a house with land in the countryside (ASF, NMP, Giovanni Giuseppe Mazzanti, 23703, fols. 14r–15v, no. 9). The wealthy Armenian merchant David Sceriman, a long-term resident of Livorno, owned a sizeable villa in the Livorno countryside in the 1740s (Sanacore 1998: 140–41).
100. After 1739 Ergas and Silvera rented a plot of land with a house for about seventy pieces of eight per year from the friars of Carmine in Pisa and the papal nuncio (ASF, NMP, Giovanni Giuseppe Giuliani, 23411, fols. 87v–92r). On several occasions between 1739 and 1743 they blamed the delay of their correspondence on their residence in the countryside. See, e.g., ASF, LCF, 1945, letter to Medici and Niccolini in Lisbon (3 August 1739); ASF, LCF, 1957, letter to Moses Cassuto in Florence (26 August 1743); ASL, CGA: *Atti civili*, 817, no. 808. The burial register says that David Gomes Silvera died "na vinha" (ACEL, *Registro delle tumulazioni*, 19 June 1735).
101. Frattarelli Fischer 1991: 36.
102. The 1746 inventory taken of their urban and country dwellings as well as their countinghouse is fifty-five pages long. The total value of these properties was estimated to be 14,175 pieces (ASL, CGA: *Atti civili e spezzati*, 2245, no. 953).
103. ASF, NMP, Roberto Micheli, 27235, fols. 6v–11v, 15v–22r, 34v–35r, 36v.
104. Frattarelli Fischer 1991: 39.
105. In 1739 Tuscan secular authorities denied the Florentine inquisitor permission to inspect Attias's library (Morelli Timpanaro 2003: 202, 208). Attias's heterodox collection of books is analyzed in Bregoli 2007a; Frattarelli Fischer 2008. This Joseph Attias, known in Livorno by his Italian name (Giuseppe Attias), is not to be confused with the Amsterdam rabbi and printer Joseph Athias (d. 1700), who also attracted a Christian clientele to his workshop.
106. R. Toaff 1990: 314, 579.
107. ASF, LCF, 1930 (3 March 1704, 17 March 1706, 11 May 171); ASL, CGA: *Atti civili*, 817, no. 808. Isaac Pardo Roques purchased a theater box in Livorno for five hundred pieces of eight in 1752 (ASF, MNP, Niccolò Mazzinghi, 27112, fols. 41r–v, no. 75). See also Pera 1888: 204–5; R. Toaff 1990: 696; Frattarelli Fischer 1997b: 36.
108. ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Ephraim and David Cassuto in Florence (28 April 1741). On this festival, see Zampieri 1995–96; Addobbati 2002. A historical re-creation of this festival still takes place in Pisa, now on the last Sunday of June.

109. Cantini 1800–32, 19: 123–25, 188–90, 320–21. For mentions of the encounters between Christians and Jews of all social strata in early modern Livorno, and the policing of these practices, see C. Galasso 2002a: 104–13; Frattarelli Fischer 2003a: 285–87, 290–94, 2005: 59–60. On legislation passed by both Christian rulers and Jewish communities prohibiting sexual intercourse and social mingling between the two groups in other Italian towns, see Horowitz 2002: 278–79.
110. R. Toaff 1990: 584, 589–91. In Venice, Rabbi Leon Modena boasted about the number of Catholic priests and noblemen who heard his sermons (M. R. Cohen 1988: 96, 117, 131). In seventeenth-century Amsterdam, special arrangements were made to accommodate non-Jewish visitors in the synagogue. In London, in contrast, after 1664 Sephardic leaders sought to bar Gentile men and women from attending services in synagogue (Y. Kaplan 2002a: 351–53).
111. ASF, MP, 2502. Other Jews who traveled to spas in Tuscany include Saul Bonfil and Judah Nunes (ASF, MNP, Giovanni Battista Gamera, 25273, fols. 127v–128r, no. 243 and 25276, fol. 181r–v, no. 537). In the eighteenth century, the spas of San Giuliano and Pisa were elite tourist attractions (Addobbati 1993).
112. Stow 2001: esp. 92–95.
113. Starting in the 1660s, a Hebrew school (Talmud Torah) operated regularly. All boys between the ages of seven and fourteen and girls "until an appropriate age" had to attend. Affluent families also hired private tutors for their children. After 1728, the curriculum of Jewish primary schools included Spanish and Portuguese, calculus, and basic accounting skills (R. Toaff 1990: 337–41). On Amsterdam, see Swetschinski 2000: 279; Y. Kaplan 2002a: 359.
114. Her last will, which was probated in London, states: "I Rachel Ergas widow of the late Moses Ergas do affirm all of what is above said and not knowing how to write she desired messer Abram Joseph de Sa Silvera to sign" (PRO, PROB, 11/895, fol. 80v).
115. PRO, PROB, 11/962, fols. 171–181r. In 1752 the wealthy coral producer Moses Baruch Carvaglio endowed a yeshiva ("esgher" in the Judeo-Livornese vernacular) in Pisa with an annual fund of three hundred ducats. Raphael Ergas and his widow Leah Medina Ergas also provided for a private yeshiva (ASF, NMT, Filippo Filippini, 25175, fols. 101r–108r; ACEL, *Tribunale dei massari*, filza 358, no. 57, copy of Leah Medina Ergas's testament of 26 March 1797). In order to make it difficult for affluent Jews to shun the community synagogue, in 1694 the Jewish nation forbade anyone from holding services in their homes on Saturdays and other religious holidays (ASL, GCM, 961, no. 25). See also R. Toaff 1990: 341–43; Filippini 1993: 16.
116. The benefactors included David de Medina, Samuel Jacob Ergas, Jacob Rodrigues Sarmiento, Gabriel Fernandes Dias, David Attias, Joseph del Rio, and others (A. S. Toaff 1955; R. Toaff 1990: 278–82, 656). The synagogue's exterior was rebuilt in 1895 (figure 3.2). The building was damaged severely during the bombardments of 1943–44, and a new construction replaced it in 1962 (Luzzati 1995: 73–79). As a result of the bombardments, most of the synagogue's archives were also destroyed.
117. R. Toaff 1990: 268, 337.
118. For Saul Bonfil, see ASF, NMT, Giovanni Giacomo Mazzanti, 23707, fol. 121r. For Moses Baruch Carvaglio, see ASV, NT, Carlo Gabrieli, 517.288 and 518, fols. 234v–

- 240v. Other examples from Venice and Livorno are in ASV, NT, Luca Calzavara, 247.59 (Jacob Belilios, 1687); ASV, NT, Carlo Gabrieli, 515.121 (Manuel Coronel, 1710); ASV, NT, Carlo Gabrieli, 515.104 (David Mocato, 1709); ASF, MS, 4045, letter E, no. 2 (Moses Ergas, 1746); ASF, NMT, Giovanni Matteo Novelli, 26739, fols. 24v-528v, no. 25 (Isaac Saccuto, 1762). Before 1627, no such forms of cooptation existed in the Jewish government in Venice (Malkiel 1991: 207-8).
119. Weinstein 2009: 704.
 120. ASF, MNT, Marc'Antonio Ducci, 26460, fols. 113r-114r.
 121. During his stay in The Hague, Cassuto was the guest of local Sephardim, whose wealth and largesse contrasted starkly with the poverty of the ghetto of Florence (BLO, MS Ital. d.9, fols. 143v-144r). On Cassuto's travels, see Chap. 10.
 122. Swetschinski 2000: 194.
 123. Israel 1987a: 34.
 124. Malkiel 1991: 113-23.
 125. Berkovitz 2004: 22.
 126. Y. Kaplan 1989b; Swetschinski 2000: 188; Robert Cohen 1991: 161-74; Schorsch 2004: 217-53.
 127. R. Toaff 1990: 128-29.
 128. Filippini 1983: 214-15, 1998, 1: 122-23 and 3: 87-88. These figures offer an estimate rather than precise statistics because the source used by Filippini may not survey all Jewish immigrants of the period and does not always mention their precise place of origin. This might explain why Filippini offers slightly different percentages in various publications.
 129. Filippini 1984b: 63, 1998, 3: 62, 69.
 130. Only for the brief period between 1637 and 1641 did the Medici transfer the right to elect the massari of Livorno to those of Pisa. An aborted reform of the electoral system of the massari was attempted in 1642 (R. Toaff 1990: 155-60).
 131. Initially, there were twelve governanti. The number was raised to eighteen in 1690 and to thirty in 1693 (*Collezione* 1798: 306-12).
 132. In order to secure approval for the creation of the congresso and the rejection of alternative proposals made by Italian Jews, the Sephardim promised Cosimo III that, in the course of six years, they would buy 120,000 scudi's worth of Tuscan textiles. This proposal was particularly appealing at a time when local silk manufacturing was struggling (R. Toaff 1990: 178, 405).
 133. ASL, GCM, 961, no. 33, also referred to in Vivoli 1842, 2: 342-43 and Filippini 2001: 38.
 134. R. Toaff 1990: 177n72, 697.
 135. This time, too, the Sephardim tried to buy off the grand duke, but to no avail (Filippini 2001: 38).
 136. This language appeared in 1721 in ASF, MP, 2475, fols. 79, 92. For the continued conflicts among Sephardic, Italian, and, later, North African Jewish families, as mediated by the central authorities, see ASF, MP, 2475, fols. 391-396, 434; ASF, MP, 2476, fols. 443, 458-465; ASF, MP, 2479, fols. 227, 366-460; ASF, MP, 2481, fol. 40; ASF,

- MP, 2497, fol. 181; ASF, *Consiglio di Reggenza*, 645, nos. 50, 57, 806, no. 57. See also Filippini 2001.
137. *Ibid.*, 44-46.
 138. Nusteling 2002: 45n3, 54-55; Fuks-Mansfeld 2002: 171. The first official Dutch census of 1795 counted 20,335 Jews in Amsterdam, but Fuks-Mansfeld considers this figure to be an underestimation.
 139. Y. Kaplan 1989b: 43. The balance of power was such that Ashkenazim (most frequently men) who married into a Sephardic family initially accepted exclusion from membership in the Portuguese and Spanish nation. In the late eighteenth century, Portuguese men who lost their membership because they married Ashkenazic women began to protest more forcefully (Swetschinski 2000: 188).
 140. Méchoulan 1991: 60.
 141. Y. Kaplan 1997: 140. Negative descriptions of Ashkenazic Jews were common in England as well (Katz 1994: 258).
 142. R. Toaff 1990: 128.
 143. C. Galasso 2002a: 19, 41-43. Unfortunately, no sources are available for a systematic study of marriages between members of these groups in Livorno during the eighteenth century, when non-Sephardic immigration intensified and some Italian and North African Jews reached positions of social and economic influence. After 1688, there was only one Jewish congregation in Florence, and it brought Italian, Ashkenazic, Levantine, and Pontine Jews together (Cassuto 1918: 90). Numerous marriages between Italian and Sephardic Jews were registered in Florence starting in 1713, when records of dowry payments begin, but note that the Jewish community of Florence was generally much poorer than that of Livorno (ASF, *Nazione Israelitica*, registro 68).
 144. CCM, AA1801, L/IX.920, L/IX.1114.
 145. The others were five Western Sephardim (Joseph Franco, Isaac Attias, Joseph Leon, Jacob Ergas, and Jacob Bonfil) and three North African Jews (Judah Farro, Michel Pereria de Leon, and Jacob Aghib); R. Toaff 1990: 182.
 146. Gorani 1986: 102; Filippini 1984a: 644-45, 1998, 3: 246.
 147. The Medici may have participated in this decision, but there does not seem to have been a debate about whether to set up separate synagogues and congregations.
 148. Aghib Levi d'Ancona 1989: 183.
 149. ASF, MNT, Jacopo Filippo Bargioni, 28918, fol. 44r-v. Another example of a marriage between a well-to-do Italian and a North African Jew in the 1770s is included in ASF, NMP, Giovanni Matteo Novelli, 26733, fols. 186v-189r, no. 462.
 150. Filippini 2001: 42-44.
 151. ASF, *Consiglio di Reggenza*, 645, no. 50 and 652, no. 7.
 152. "Detto signore Isache Saccuto dise a detto signor Nataf 'Non siamo in Barberia' ed esso signor Nataf soggiunse e rispose 'Se son Barbaro, non son ladro.'" (ACEL, *Tribunale dei massari*, filza 286, no. 1 [11 July 1760]). North Africa was commonly referred to as the Barbary Coast at the time.
 153. "[S]e si volesse escludere dal nome de' cittadini tutti quelli che per mezzo secolo traggono la loro origine altrove, non vi sarebbe uno che si potesse dire livornese e

- sarebbe una città senza cittadini.” ASF, *Consiglio di Reggenza*, 65. For the rules that were spelled out in 1737 and the conflicts that they generated, see ASF, *Consiglio di Reggenza*, 644, 652. The relation between citizenship and fiscal obligations in eighteenth-century Livorno is also discussed in Conforto and Frattarelli Fischer 1982: 53; Frattarelli Fischer 1983; Verga 2001.
154. Frattarelli Fischer 2006a: 304.
 155. T. V. Cohen 1988: 221.
 156. For an overview, see Diaz, Mascilli Migliorini, and Mangio 1997.
 157. Filippini 1997: 1052.
 158. ASL, *GCM*, 961, no. 26.
 159. In order to contain the corporatist forces, the grand duke retained the right to select the delegate from among ten candidates put forth by the Jewish nation. In the following eleven years, Lazzaro Recanati (an Italian Jew) held the office five times, David Franco and Jacob Bonfil (both Sephardim) held it twice, and Jacob Aghib (a North African Jew) also held it twice (ASL, *GCM*, 961, no. 7). A more radical proposal, the substitution of baptism for real estate ownership as the qualification for the acquisition of active political rights, was rejected (Milano 1963: 331; Gavi 1995; Verga 2001: 1061).
 160. Dubin 1999: 198–225, 2006; Wyrwa 2000; Bregoli 2007b.
 161. Filippini 1997: 1061–65, 1998, 1: 146–49.
 162. Sorkin 1999: 90–92.
 163. Schechter 2003: 30.
 164. B. Kaplan 2007: 282–84, 2008.
 165. Sutcliffe 2006: 98.
 166. Nadler 2003: 22.
 167. Little is known about these relationships in Livorno, but criminal court records include numerous cases involving Jewish men and Christian prostitutes (R. Toaff 1990: 317–20; C. Galasso 2005: 83).
 168. Swetschinski 2000: 13–14, 21–22; Huussen 2002: 35.
 169. Bodian 1997: 72–73. On similar polemics ignited by Isaac Orobio against Huguenots and especially against Catholic “idolatry” in the 1670s, see Y. Kaplan 1989a: 235–62.
 170. Alessandro Guetta kindly pointed to me a passage in *Pery Megadim*, written when Ergas was eighteen (but first published in 1832), which reads as follows (chapter 34): “We ought never to praise a Gentile, even just to say that an idolater is nice-looking; it is even more important that we refrain from praising his deeds and appreciating anything else about them [Gentiles] . . . because that leads us to associate with them, and learn from their malevolent actions.”
 171. Horowitz 1994: 96.
 172. In the 1660s a witness to the Spanish Inquisition related that one Isaac Ergas in Livorno had “black hair and beard” (AHN, *Inquisición de Toledo*, legado 165, exp. 12, fol. 71r). Should we assume that he wore a beard, or should we take this as a generic statement about his hair’s color?
 173. Swetschinski 2000: 12, 15, 17.
 174. Y. Kaplan 2000: 110, 138.

175. Colorni 1945: 185–87; Milano 1963: 581–84. See also Chap. 5.
176. Huussen 2002: 36.
177. C. Roth 1964: 213–21; Perry 1962.
178. Sutcliffe 2006.
179. Carrière (1973: 284) counts 393 Protestant merchants in eighteenth-century Marseilles, most of whom were nominally Catholic.
180. Crémieux 1908; Weyl 1886: 268, 1888: 99; Israel 1998: 132–33. The Jews expelled from Marseilles in 1682 found refuge in Livorno; when some sought to regain access to the French port, the royal representative (*intendant*) opposed their efforts, against the will of the assembly (*parlement*) of Provence (CCM, AA1801, G.5). A copy of the edict of 12 June 1758 is in CCM, AA1801, G.5. Carrière (1973: 282–83) lists twenty Jewish merchants residing in Marseilles in the eighteenth century but stresses the feebleness of their economic influence.
181. Mandilara 1998. See also n. 66.
182. Paris 1957: 11. Jean-Pierre Filippini (1998, 1: 93) has called Livorno the “anti-Marseilles.” Considering that Marseilles consciously devised its policies in order to antagonize the Tuscan port, it seems more appropriate to say that the French port was the “anti-Livorno.”
183. “In Livorno non vi è, si può dire, nobiltà; il cetto dei mercanti, che forma il primo e secondo cetto, è composto per la maggior parte di forestieri che non stanno a Livorno che per il loro interesse personale, senza nessuno attaccamento al paese, di mercanti paesani, sensali, etc; . . . regna fra di loro la disunione, la malignità, il spirito di partito, di rovinarsi e calunniarsi.” Lorena 1969, 1: 31. See also Diaz 1978: 21; Marzagalli 1999: 37.
184. ASF, *LCF*, 1953, letter to Moses Cassuto in Amsterdam (8 March 1743); ASF, *LCF*, 1957, letter to Niccolò Cattaneo in Genoa (7 April 1743).
185. Matthee 2005: 4. For a comparison between Dutch and Ottoman forms of toleration in the seventeenth century, see Parker 2006.
186. Caffiero 2004: 73–110. See also Rosa 1997; Caffiero 1997.

4. BETWEEN STATE COMMERCIAL POWER AND TRADING DIASPORAS

1. Braudel 1972–73, 2: 728.
2. For references about Venice and the Levantine Jews in the sixteenth century, see Chap. 2, n. 92. On the rise of the Greeks in the Balkans, see Stoianovitch 1960.
3. A reappraisal is found in Greene 2002. In his study of the Mediterranean, Braudel (1972–73, 1: 578–82, 2: 802–23) stresses the role of Jewish merchants in the relations between the Ottoman Empire and Christian Europe. In his trilogy about the global history of capitalism, Braudel (1981–84, 2: 122–24, 154–60) emphasizes the role of Jewish and Armenian trading diasporas. On the impact of Braudel’s work in opening up new research concerning the Armenian merchants of the seventeenth century, see the remarks in Baghdiantz McCabe 1999: xxi–xxii, 27.
4. Subrahmanyam 1996: xiv. For an illustration of his approach in his own work, see Su-

- brahmanyam 1990: esp. 298–342, 1992, 1995. Throughout his work, Jonathan Israel stresses the importance of state policies for Sephardic merchants (for full references see the bibliography).
5. Islamoğlu-Inan 1987; Masters 1988.
 6. See, e.g., Morineau 1976; Bashan 1982–86; Rozen 1984, 1988; Miège 1984; Filippini 1979b, 1984a, 1989, 1990, 1999; Arbel 1995; Molho 1997.
 7. The English term *chintz* is the most common translation of the French *indienne* or *toile peinte*. These generic terms referred to all partly colored cotton textiles with flowers or other motifs that were imported from India or made in Europe according to Indian manufacturing methods and design patterns (Fukasawa 1987: 42).
 8. On the export of silver coins from Marseilles to the Levant, see Paris 1957: 129–38, 579–81. On the variety of silver coins circulating between Europe and the eastern Mediterranean, see Carrière and Courduiré 1984.
 9. Carrière and Courduiré 1984: 26–28, 44–45; Eldem 1999: 19–22. For the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century, moreover, Ottoman silver production was robust. In the 1730s and 1740s, the sultan, breaking with his traditional policy, allowed for the export of bullion to Europe (*ibid.*, 113–19; Pamuk 2000: 161–62).
 10. Ashtor 1983; R. Davis 1967: 34–35, 195–201.
 11. Carrière 1973: 858–74; Grassby 1994: 48–51; Pamuk 2000: 162–63; Eldem 1986, 1999: 120–202; Fukasawa 2000.
 12. Only some of the imported goods, and new textiles in particular, were distributed in the Tuscan countryside during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Malanima 1990: 109–23).
 13. Romano 1978: 204; Cassandro 1983a. On the decline of Venetian commercial power in the Mediterranean during the seventeenth century, see Rapp 1975.
 14. Braudel and Romano 1951; Braudel 1972–73, 1: 601, 621–23. For a revision of Braudel's assessment of Dutch shipping and trade in the Mediterranean, see Israel 1989a: 53–60. On Dutch trade in early seventeenth-century Livorno, see Engels 1997.
 15. Pagano de Divitiis 1997: 114–81. A 1674 list of commodities frequently imported from England to Livorno is found in ASF, *Carte strozziane*, serie 1, 106, fols. 158–178, also quoted in Frattarelli Fischer 1993: 46 and Malanima 1995.
 16. Filippini 1980; Frattarelli Fischer 1993; Addobbati 2007: 78–81.
 17. Pagano de Divitiis 1993.
 18. Addobbati 1996b, 2007.
 19. Caracciolo 1963; Kirk 2005: 155.
 20. Angiolini 1996.
 21. ASF, NMP, Giovanni Giuseppe Mazzanti, 23691, fols. 17r–18v, no. 25. Further evidence of the Francos' ownership of vessels in Venice and Livorno can be found in ASF, NMP, Giovanni Giuseppe Mazzanti, 23691, fols. 42r–43r, nos. 60–61; ASF, MNP, Niccolò Mazzinghi, 27111, fol. 176r–v, no. 302 and 27112, fol. 5r–v, no. 7; ASF, *Consiglio di Reggenza*, 65, 645; ASV, NT, 519, fol. 64v. Other Sephardic ship owners included Solomon Aghib (1732; ASF, NMP, Giovanni Giuseppe Mazzanti, 23704, fols. 49v–95r, no. 35), the Baruch Carvaglios (1743; ASF, NMP, Giovanni Battista Camerra, 25266, fols. 93v–94v), and Isaac Saccuto (1761; ASF, NMP, Giovanni Matteo

- Novelli, 26730, fol. 141r–v, no. 260). In Venice, several Sephardim were ship owners, and in the late seventeenth century they actually owned the largest ships in the Venetian fleet (G. Luzzatto 1962).
22. Filippini (1998, 1: 45) maintains that English ships accounted for 34.1 percent of all vessels that called at Livorno in 1700, 56.2 percent in 1715, 79.6 percent in 1730, and 72.8 percent in 1735. These figures are incredibly high. Others (e.g., Santini 1982: 365) claim that English ships constituted only 30 percent of all non-Italian ships entering the port of Livorno during most years in the second half of the eighteenth century.
 23. LoRomer (1987) first questioned the Marxist interpretation put forth by Mori (1956), according to which the lack of manufacturing activities in Livorno had long-term negative consequences for the town's economic development. No precise figures exist to document the exportation of Tuscan manufactured products, but several authors suggest that Livorno's share of this trade was not negligible. See Baggiani 1994, 1997; Fettah 1998; Mazzei 2003.
 24. For an illustration of the archival collections in Florence and Livorno that are useful to the study of Livorno's commerce, see Baggiani 1994; Ghezzi 2007. Additional French sources are discussed in Fettah 1998. For the period prior to 1676, Braudel and Romano (1951) have sought to reconstruct the activities of the port of Livorno on the basis of the cargo declarations of ships arriving in and departing from the city (the so-called *portate*).
 25. Filippini necessarily relies on fragmentary or approximate sources, but it is not always clear what statistical methods he is using. Overall, available data document the number of vessels that entered the port better than they describe import and export commodities. Many of Filippini's articles and essays have now been collected in three volumes (Filippini 1998), preceded by a synthetic overview of the fluctuations of Livorno's commerce from 1617 to 1814. For an overview of Livorno's commerce in the early modern period, see also Addobbati 2007: 51–110.
 26. Filippini 1998: 1, 39–40. Alternative figures for the movements of the port of Livorno can be drawn from statements of the tax (*stallaggio*) levied on import goods from 1600 to 1816. For discussion and elaboration of these data, see Frattarelli Fischer 1993: 53; Addobbati 2007: 88–92, 98–106. See also Ghezzi 2007.
 27. Filippini 1979a: 40.
 28. Carrière 1973: 440–46.
 29. Filippini 1998, 1: 67–69.
 30. Mangio (1978a: 931) confines the setback to the years 1734–40 and defers the beginning of a general crisis (characterized by a decrease in the arrival of large vessels) to 1748.
 31. Guarnieri 1969: 37; Filippini 1998, 1: 66–67.
 32. All merchants consulted during a government inquiry in 1758 lamented the consequences of these quarantines (ASF, *Segreteria di finanze e affari prima del 1788*, 799). See also Guarnieri 1969: 38; Filippini 1998, 1: 43, 67–68.
 33. Filippini 1998, 1: 64; Addobbati 2007: 69–70.
 34. Carrière and Courduiré 1975; Lo Basso 2002: 178–220. In contrast, Riley (1986: 117–18) downplays the negative effects of the Seven Years' War on Marseilles.

35. It is probably not a coincidence that Livorno reorganized its system of financial clearing in 1764 (Addobbati 2007: 109).
36. Mori 1956; Filippini 1998, 1: 64, 70–72; Marzagalli 1999: 85–94; Addobbati 2007: 258–301.
37. In addition, twenty-eight businesses belonging to merchants of various origins paid 1,552 scudi, and forty-eight merchants with a warehouse (“che fanno fondachi”) contributed 1,012 scudi. The levy raised a total of 22,843 scudi (ASF, *Pratica segreta*, 169, fol. 241). On this document, see Fasano Guarini 1980: 212; Frattarelli Fischer 2003b: 99.
38. These numbers come from the assessments conducted on the occasion of the prince’s marriage. Jews were asked to pay three thousand pieces of eight, the English two thousand pieces, the Flemish eight hundred pieces, and the French only four hundred pieces (Frattarelli Fischer 1993: 45).
39. Filippini 1998, 1: 76. In 1733 the signatures of fifty-five Jewish merchants appeared on an official document. Grendi (2004: 245–46) counts fifteen English merchants in mid-eighteenth-century Livorno.
40. Addobbati 1996a, 1: 12–13. In 1789 the ruling authorities in Livorno calculated that there were 220 merchants in town (Filippini 1998, 1: 76–77).
41. Filippini 1984a: 639.
42. A. S. Toaff 1955: 367; Frattarelli Fischer 2003b: 108.
43. The geographical network of the Saminati-Pazzi, outlined on the basis of the provenance of their business letters, is mapped in Braudel 1981–84, 2: 185. See also Groppi 1990.
44. Braudel 1972–73, 2: 823.
45. Israel 1978, 1983, 1984b, 1989c, 1992, 2002a.
46. Ruspio 2007.
47. On the basis of a survey of more than eight hundred freight contracts in the Amsterdam notary archives, Swetschinski (1981: 59–65) reaches the same conclusion about the centrality of Portugal and its colonies in the mercantile activities of the Amsterdam Sephardim until the 1650s. According to his data, however, the trade between Holland and Portugal was still predominant in the period 1638–76. The sample used may have influenced his conclusion. He also maintains that Italy always lay at the periphery of the commercial world of Amsterdam’s Portuguese Jewish merchants. Elsewhere, however, Swetschinski (2000: 129–30) suggests that in the second half of the seventeenth century the trade between Amsterdam and Italy (especially Livorno) did not suffer much from the decline in the Iberian circuit. A treaty signed in 1661 helped revive Dutch trade with Portugal and the Portuguese islands in the Atlantic (Israel 1984a: 25, 33–36).
48. This was also the time when Jewish partnerships moved from Venice to Livorno (Israel 1987b: 105, 110).
49. Israel 1992: 394.
50. Israel 2002a: 566–84.
51. Crouzet 1966: 265. Even for the trade with the Antilles, Marseilles was the second

- French port after Bordeaux and before Nantes at the outbreak of the French Revolution (Fukasawa 1999: 581).
52. Overviews of this period may be found in Mantran 1977; Stoianovich 1977; Panzac 1992; Faroqhi 1994.
53. Syntheses may be found in İnalçık 1994: 179–379; Faroqhi 1994: 474–75, 2004: 151–60. On Aleppo, see Masters 1988; Marcus 1989; Frangakis-Syrett 1991; Raymond 1991. On Smyrna, see D. Goffman 1990; Frangakis-Syrett 1992. For a provocative discussion of historical and historiographical issues pertaining to the notion of “Ottoman decline,” see Kafadar 1997–98.
54. A distinct field of study focuses on the dynamics of North African economy. See Raymond 1974; Valensi 1977, 1985; Boubaker 1987; Winter 1992; Cherif 1995.
55. Eldem (1999: 49–59) documents rivalries among non-Muslim traders in eighteenth-century Constantinople.
56. Goffman 1990: 83–86.
57. Ferrier 1970, 1973, 1986; Herzig 1990, 1992; Jamgocyan 1991; Smyrnelis 1995: 28; Baghdiantz McCabe 1999; Matthee 1999.
58. Braude 1991b; Israel 1992: 367–68; Arbel 1995.
59. For a dark view of the impact of this event, see S. Shaw 1991: 109–46.
60. Boogert 2005: 117–57. Although French consuls were supposed to use their revenues (*avarie*) to pay the *avanas*, they often placed the burden of these payments solely on Jews and other non-French subjects under their protection. In 1744 the Levant Company ordered these occasional fiscal impositions to be imposed not on all British merchants in Aleppo, but only on “the person or persons by whose insult or offence the false pretence or *abania* may come,” while it also called on the consuls and ambassadors to challenge any unjust demand perceived to be contrary to the capitulations (PRO, SP, 110/68, fols. 30–31).
61. On the impact of capitulations on European trade in the early modern Mediterranean, see Steensgaard 1967; İnalçık 1960–2000; İnalçık and Quataert 1994: 194–95. According to Mantran (1970: 381), by 1685 French trade and shipping had already achieved supremacy in the central and eastern Mediterranean. For a more measured view of the growth of French trade with the Levant, see Paris 1957: 87–91, 567–69. On eighteenth-century capitulations and the jurisdictional conflicts that ensued, see Boogert 2005.
62. The full text of the French capitulations of 1740 is available in De Testa 1864–1911, 1: 186–210; Noradounghian 1897–1903, 1: 277–300.
63. The first article of the English capitulations of 1661 stated that the privileges extended not only to England and English merchants but also to “any other nation, or merchants which are or shall come under the English banner, and protection”; *The Capitulations and Articles of Peace between the Maiestie of the King of England . . . and the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Paul Ricaut Esquire Secretary to his Excellencie the Lord Ambassador (Constantinople: Abraham Gabai, 1663), 2v.
64. Examples from Smyrna are found in Eldem, Goffman, and Masters 1999: 110–13. Christian merchants also competed in negotiating protection from different consuls,

- as litigation at the death of the Florentine merchant Giovanni Targioni in Smyrna in 1689 reveals (ASF, MP, 1606).
65. Milano 1949; Schwarzfuchs 1984; Masters 1987, 1988; Rozen 1992: 146-47; Filippini 1990; Philipp 1994. In 1585 the Florentine nation in Alexandria was already under French protection (ASF, *Pratica segreta*, reg. 189, fol. 26r-v). The anti-Muslim activities of the Knights of Saint Stephen and French influence on the Porte worked against Tuscany's being granted diplomatic representation in Constantinople. All the grand duke of Tuscany could negotiate in 1668 was an agreement that allowed Tuscans in the Ottoman Empire to be recognized as imperial subjects (Galluzzi 1781, 5: 206; Masson 1911: 384; Guarnieri 1962: 229; Mangio 1980b). That the French obtained more favorable terms and that war broke out between Vienna and Constantinople in 1682 explain why Livorno Jews preferred French protection in the Levant. The existence of a copy of the 1673 French capitulations among the Medici papers is indirect evidence of their importance to Tuscany (ASF, MP, 1605).
 66. CCM, AA1801, J.908 (29 July 1744); ANP, AE, B/I/84, fols. 272-277r (29 September 1744); CCM, AA1801, J.949 (30 September 1744). Twelve years later, when he went bankrupt, Belilios found refuge with the Venetian consul against a crowd of more than 150 angry Muslim creditors who were allegedly ready to attack him; by then, the Livorno Jews were under Habsburg protection, and the Cesarean ambassador protested that the Venetian consul negotiated an agreement between Belilios and his Muslim creditors that was unfavorable to the Livornese creditors of this partnership (ASV, VS: *I serie*, 185, fol. 102r). See also V. Costantini 2001: 168.
 67. CCM, AA1801, H.57.
 68. CCM, K.80 (25 November 1736); ANP, AE, B/III/2, fols. 201r-202r (31 October 1736); CCM, AA1801, J.49 (6 March 1743).
 69. After 1722, cottimo and tonelage were replaced by a new customs duty (*droit du consulat*) that was set at 2 to 3 percent of the estimated value of merchandise arriving from the Ottoman Empire, depending on the port of origin (Masson 1911: 59; Paris 1957: 121).
 70. Paris 1957: 11; Carrière 1973: 319-30.
 71. Paris 1957: 8-9n3.
 72. Masson 1886: 253-54; Paris 1957: 19.
 73. "Instruction relative à l'Ordonnance du Roi, concernant les consul, la résidence, le commerce et la navigation des sujets de Sa Majesté dans les Échelles du Levant et de Barbarie, rendu le 3 mars 1781," in *Règlements concernant les consulats, la résidence, le commerce et la navigation des français dans les échelles du Levant et de Barbarie* (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1812), 160.
 74. Paris 1957: 258, 324.
 75. CCM, AA1801, J.950 (letter of 5 May 1746).
 76. CCM, AA1801, H.56 (Livorno, 27 January 1702).
 77. CCM, AA1801, G.5 (Livorno, 3 December 1711). On Michel Calvo de Silva, see Filippini 1979b.
 78. Carrière 1973: 305.
 79. Paris 1957: 16.

80. ANP, AE, B/I/76 (10 July 1699 and 15 April 1700). Jean-Pierre Blanc was also critical of mercantilistic restrictions against the import of Indian cotton textiles to Marseilles. Other French consuls were less fearful of other European states' competition but never succeeded in imposing more restrictive measures. See, e.g., ANP, AE, B/I/84 (28 August 1743).
81. Schwarzfuchs 1984: 713. A reform law passed in 1681 forbade French consuls in the Mediterranean from engaging in private trade and paid them a fixed salary but allowed them to impose a small tax (the *droit d'avarie*) on ships sailing under a French flag in order to subsidize their expenses overseas (Paris 1957: 210-16, 314-15). These norms, too, were often abused. In 1711, for example, the French chancellor in Aleppo was caught doing business with Abraham Aghib (Fukasawa 1987: 73).
82. Lutzky 1940; Milano 1949: 172; Schwarzfuchs 1984: 709; Rozen 1992: 147. In 1711 a petition to Comte de Pontchartrain signed by the most prominent partnerships among the Western Sephardim in Aleppo (Lopes, Pinheiro and Farro, Jacob and Joseph Belilios, Ergas and Silvera, and Medina and Chaves) maintained that their coreligionists had been under French protection for forty-two years (ANP, AE, B/I/77, 4 August 1711). The reference may also be to the date (1669) when Colbert expressed the intention, soon opposed by the Chamber of Commerce, to readmit Jews to Marseilles.
83. The reasons why Western Sephardim preferred Aleppo are not clear, especially considering that at the time Smyrna was a busier port, despite a devastating fire in 1688. A Jewish spy for the French in Livorno claimed that diplomatic and fiscal protections conceded to the Jewish merchants from Livorno and Venice only applied in Aleppo and Salonica, and not in Smyrna and Alexandria (CCM, AA1801, K.80, letter of 16 July 1734). He likely mistook customary practice for legislation. On the temporary suspension of French protection for the Jews of Livorno in Smyrna in 1693, see ASF, MP, 1606 (letter by the Dutch consul in Smyrna, 12 October 1693).
84. The English doctor Alexander Russell estimated the number of Jews in Aleppo at "about 5,000" in the early 1750s (Russell 1794, 2: 58v). Masters (1988: 42, 89) calculates that about 5 percent of the population of Aleppo was Jewish and notes that in 1672, of 380 Jewish households, 73 were identified as "Frankish Jews," that is, Western Sephardim. In 1695 about 400 Jewish males were designated as "Franks" (Masters 1987: 39). For a discussion of Aleppo's demographic characteristics, see Raymond 1984; Masters 1988: 38-42.
85. ANP, AE, B/I/76 ("Memoire sur l'état de la ville d'Alep," 1698); CCM, AA1801, G.5; Fukasawa 1987: 76-78, 98n35. In 1753 there were nine French commercial establishments in Aleppo. By 1772 there were six or seven merchants amid many more who were coming and going (Russell 1794, 2: 5r). After 1685, French merchants had to obtain permission from the Chamber of Commerce of Marseilles in order to reside in the Ottoman Empire. In 1743 French authorities put a limit on the number of commercial partnerships that could operate overseas, setting the limit at nine in Aleppo and at forty-three across the Levant. In practice, however, these regulations were often disregarded. See also Stoianovich 1977: 231.
86. Fukasawa 1987: 115.

87. Masters 1988. France imported more raw cotton than Indian colored calicoes from the Levant. (Fukasawa 1987: 27).
88. Fukasawa 1987: 38.
89. Stoianovich 1977: 235.
90. Fukasawa 1987: 21–26.
91. R. Davis 1970: 195–96, 200.
92. Two series of data about French trade in Aleppo exist: those kept by the Chamber of Commerce of Marseilles and transmitted to the secretary of state and of the navy in Paris lump together the global value of trade in the Levant and North Africa from 1716 to 1772; those drawn up by the French consuls overseas and sent to Marseilles and forwarded to the same ministry break down the data by commodity from 1725 to 1780. I use the latter because they are more detailed and likely more reliable. On these sources, see Paris 1957: 499–503; Fukasawa 1987: 112–13. Like all statistics from the early modern period, these offer orders of magnitude rather than exact figures. Commodities are classified according to slightly different taxonomies in various years and cannot be compared precisely. Monetary evaluations were based on the tariffs set for the levy of consular duties in Aleppo rather than on market prices. Monetary evaluations made in Marseilles, moreover, might differ from those recorded in Aleppo because maritime transport costs are not included in the value of export goods, but the price of import goods probably incorporated transport costs. In addition, consular statistics are kept in Ottoman piasters. The silver currency used in these transactions (known as the *piaster iselotte*) was continually debased during the eighteenth century, but its exchange rate remained stable at three livres tournois (Carrière and Courduiré 1984: 24; Fukasawa 1987: 145n15; Eldem 1999: 163–64). Finally, Eldem (1999: 144) notes that French consuls had the habit of balancing their yearly statistical tables by referring to bills of exchange drawn from other French outposts in the Ottoman Empire. This practice constituted an accounting simplification rather than an accurate record of the total amount of bills of exchanges circulating among French merchants in the Levant. Note also that wherever these statistics contained computational errors, I have taken the partial numbers as valid and updated the final sum; as a result, totals in my tables occasionally differ from totals in the original documents.
93. Paris 1957: 406–10, 470–77, 488–91. In 1744 and 1748, the maritime war with England and other factors led French exports to Aleppo to lag behind imports. In 1743, thirteen ships arrived in Aleppo from Marseilles and seven sailed in the opposite direction; in 1744 only one ship reached Aleppo and five departed thence. Moreover, 67 percent of the goods imported by the French to Aleppo in 1743 remained unsold as of 1 January 1744 (CCM, AA1801, J.949).
94. Paris 1957: 417; Fukasawa 1987: 104n73, 138–40, 146n22.
95. Fukasawa 1987: 126.
96. CCM, AA1802, J.1586 (Versailles, 22 June 1772).
97. Filippini 1984b, 1998, 3: 256–73. These figures are based on the value of goods insured in Livorno. As Filippini admits, Jewish merchants insured only about 50 percent of their cargo in Livorno and purchased policies abroad for the rest. Filippini does not, however, explain how he constructs various coefficients that he uses to calculate the value

- of total exports on the basis of these insurance policies. See Filippini 1984a: 640, 1998, 1: 27, 3: 255. Marzagalli (1999: 60, 134) also expresses caution about Filippini's data. For data on Livorno's trade with North Africa from the 1790s to 1830, see Valensi 1977: 97.
98. Thomson 1982.
99. Trivellato 2000: 171–87, 219–45.
100. CCM, AA1801, K.80 (letter of 12 October 1712).
101. Braude 2001, 2007.
102. Bembo is quoted in Welch 2007: 60–61. The French merchants are quoted in Eldem 1999: 224.
103. The new edition included, among other things, a section titled “Mémoire pour l'instruction du commerce de Livourne,” which stated, “Les Juifs, et Arméniens y ont un établissement considerable, et font la plus grande partie des affaires” (Savary 1679: bk. 2, chap. 4, p. 157).
104. Ibid., bk. 5, chap. 3, pp. 492–93.
105. Addison 1705: 394.
106. Savary des Bruslons and Savary 1759–65, 3: col. 461 (s.v. “Juif”).
107. Morineau 1976: 145.
108. The figure of 31 percent of French customs duties being paid by Sephardim in Aleppo in 1739–41 is consistent with these estimates (see Schwarzfuchs 1984: 713, as cited in n. 81).
109. Paris 1957: 98–101.
110. Filippini 1990: 261.
111. Fukasawa 1987: 140–41, 155n108, 221, 1999: 581; Eldem 1999: 247.
112. On 22 September 1742, the French merchants in Aleppo appealed to their ambassador in Constantinople. They expressed “la répugnance que nous avons à nous trouver avec ces gens là [the Jews],” and added, “Les juifs en marchant à notre suite nous couvrent de honte auprès des gens du pays” (ANP, AE, B/1/83, fols. 398r, 399r). They had already expressed their “répugnance” at the passing of the order in 1739 (CCM, AA1801, J.947, letter of the Deputies of the French nation in Aleppo to the Chamber of Commerce in Marseilles, 17 October 1739).
113. ANP, AE, B/1/83, fols. 391r–394v (letter to the secretary of state and of the navy, Comte de Maurepas, 13 September 1742); CCM, AA1801, J.908 (letter of the French consul in Aleppo to the Chamber of Commerce in Marseilles, 23 September 1742). See also Schwarzfuchs 1984: 717; Philipp 1994: 315. In the 1740s, the participation of the Sephardim of Salonica in French public ceremonies drew similar consternation among French officials (Rozen 1988: 334). “European Jews” is the phrase that Pietro della Valle (1665: 277) also used to designate Western Sephardim in Aleppo after traveling there a century earlier.
114. CCM, AA1801, J.951 (Aleppo, 9 August 1747); ANP, AE, B/1/85, fols. 135r–138v. French merchants alleged that Carvaglio had denounced a number of Jews under French protection who supposedly corrupted the British consul and shipped a cargo of 258 sacks of galles (a dyestuff) in his name. After Carvaglio's denunciation, British authorities were able to intercept the caravan and seize the goods. As compensation, Carvaglio was allowed to ship his goods on British ships with no competition. On

- Carvaglio's arrival in Aleppo, see ANP, AE, B/1/85, fols. 57r–v (24 October 1746). This document is also mentioned in Philipp 1994: 325n31, although with the wrong date of 25 October 1745. The fragmentary records of the British Chancery in Aleppo for the years 1745–57 shed no further light on the case of Manuel Baruch Carvaglio. See also Chap. 8.
115. Masson 1911: 385; Schwarzfuchs 1984: 715–16; Rozen 1992: 150–51; Philipp 1994: 323. The board of the Levant Company transmitted the order to the British ambassador in Constantinople on 26 January 1748 and directly to the British consul in Aleppo on 26 April 1748 (PRO, SP, 105/118, fols. 61, 69). In July 1748 the British consul in Aleppo was given an "Imperial patent" (PRO, SP, 105/118, fol. 79).
116. When Russia annexed Crimea in 1783, the Jews of Livorno voiced their apprehension at the prospect of war between the Turks and the Habsburgs and requested assurances that they would be able to choose a different diplomatic sponsor if necessary (ASL, GCM, 974, fol. 172r–v).

5. MARRIAGE, DOWRY, INHERITANCE, AND TYPES OF COMMERCIAL ASSOCIATION

- The Dutch Levant Company (1625–1826) was an organization of private merchants that did not receive a patent from the state. For a comparison between the Dutch and the English presence in the eastern Mediterranean and discussion of their cooperation and rivalry, see Hamilston, de Groot, and van den Boogert 2000.
- Bibliographical references are too numerous to list. Some are reviewed below. For a synthetic reiteration of the importance of family relations in the construction of entrepreneurial strategies in early modern Europe, see Mathias 1995; Kooijmans 1995. Julia Adams (2005) recently placed patriarchal families at the center of her interpretation of early modern Dutch capitalism.
- Jewish law did not prescribe marriages among relatives, but the Bible gives numerous examples: Abraham married his half-sister, Isaac, Esau, and Jacob married their cousins, Nahor married a niece, and Moses' father married his aunt (L. Epstein 1942: 146; *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 1971–72, vol. 11, cols. 1051–52; Menachem 1974: 361). On exogamy as the rule in Christian Europe during the early modern period, see Sabeen 1998: 63–98. Consanguineous marriages such as those between first cousins or between uncle and nieces appear to have been rare in late fifteenth-century Florence (Molho 1994: 261–66) as well as in early modern Spain (Casey 2007: 115–16) and southern Italy (Delille 1985: 227–37), although in all of these cases families devised ways of intermarrying within small circles. The Catholic Church was more lenient in issuing dispensations to the inhabitants of isolated communities such as Alpine villages where it often proved impossible to avoid consanguineous marriages (Merzario 1981).
- ben Israel 1645–47, pt. 5 ("Tratado do matrimonio"): 82.
- On the Estates of Holland, see Swetschinski 2000: 18–19; Huussen 2002: 36. On Italy, see Colorni 1945: 185–87.
- ASV, NT, Giovanni Piccini, 756.21. Two generations later, in 1702, Samuel Camis reiterated the injunction to his nieces (ASV, NT, Luca Calzavara, 247.115).
- Primogeniture was often accompanied by the creation of an entail for the intergenerational transfer of the estate (*fideicommissum*; pl., *fideicommissa*). Fideicommissa were linked to declining investments in liquid assets and the rise of investments in real estate, among other things. On Venice, see J. Davis 1962: 68–72; Sperling 1999: 42–50; Chauvard 2005: 323–31. On Florence, see Litchfield 1969a; Calonaci 2005. On southern France, see Derouet 2007.
- ASF, MNT, Giovanni Battista Gargani, 26286, fols. 19r–22r, no. 12. In Venice, in 1701, Moses Baruch Carvaglio left special instructions in the undesirable event that his sons decided to part ways (ASV, NT, Carlo Gabrieli, 518, fols. 234v–240v). See also Boccato (1993b, 2006: 55) for Venice and Bonazzoli (1993: 144) for Ancona.
- Abraham Attias was probably the first Jew in Livorno to stipulate a fideicommissum in 1694 (Frattarelli Fischer 1983: 884). Examples from Venice are found in ASV, NT, Giuseppe Uccelli, 1123.74; ASV, NT, Carlo Gabrieli, 516.166 (note that when Grazia Baruch Carvaglio created a fideicommissum for the six thousand ducats she had invested in the Venetian public debt, she bequeathed it in equal shares to all four sons).
- Bellomo 1961: 46–59; Owen Hughes 1978: 271–72. After the twelfth century, the dower (also called *donatio propter nuptias* in Roman law) all but disappeared in Florence (Klapisch-Zuber 1985: 211–46; Kirshner 2002: 87–96). In seventeenth-century Rome, marriage contracts sometimes included a 25 percent *donatio propter nuptias* (Ago 1995: 114, 120, 122–23). Smaller dowers were frequent in sixteenth-century Venice (Bellavitis 2001: 175–78, 193–99; Sperling 2005: 34) and in the region of Padua in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Lavarda 1998: 366–67). In what appears to be an exceptional case, a Greek merchant in Livorno paid a dower of more than 100 percent to his bride in 1745 (ASF, NMP, Giovanni Battista Gargani, 26274, fols. 80r–82r, no. 64).
- The mohar corresponded to the Talmudic prescription that husbands pay two hundred *zuzim* (silver coins) to a woman at her first marriage or one hundred *zuzim* at a levirate marriage (L. Epstein 1942: 120n144). In medieval Egypt it was unclear whether the payment of silver money was actually made or an equivalent value was included in the main gift, which at the time was invariably in the form of gold (Goitein 1967–93, 3: 119). It is not clear whether the sum of two hundred coins, which is mentioned in most marriage contracts among Jews in Livorno, was always paid. When it was paid, its value varied greatly. It could be worth as little as twenty-five or thirty pieces of eight (ASF, NMP, 21693, Leo Bichi, fols. 99r–101v, no. 163 [1702]; ASF, NMP, 23703, Giovanni Giuseppe Mazzanti, fols. 170r–175v, no. 36 [1731]; PRO, PROB, 11/962, fol. 173v [1770]) or as much as two hundred pieces (ASF, NMP, 27236, Roberto Micheli, fols. 177v–179r [1747]; ASF, NMP, 26731, Giovanni Matteo Novelli, fols. 93r–96r, no. 167 [1763]).
- A Talmudic prescription imposed the payment of a dower (Menachem 1974: 390). The percentage could vary according to place and time, but the dower was a standard

- practice among the Jews of early modern Italy (Milano 1963: 560). Exceptions existed in Livorno, too. In 1718 Salvatore Recanati paid the equivalent of only 20 percent of his bride's dowry (ASF, MNP, Giovanni Battista Gamera, 25271, fols. 3r–4v, no. 3). In sixteenth-century Milan, dowries comprised a cash portion added by the husband *more hebraico teutonico* (according to the Germanic Jewish custom) that was somewhere between 25 and 50 percent of the dowry (Meron 1998). In Padua, in 1506, Rabbi Judah Mintz declared that dowers could be no more than 150 percent of dowries and that the latter could not amount to less than one hundred ducats (Bonfil 1991: 258). In sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Rome, the *tosefet* generally amounted to one-third of the dowry (Stow 1995a: 453). In Ancona, the dower ranged between 20 and 50 percent of the dowry (Bonazzoli 1993: 141–42, 1998: 144n88, 145n95). In Modena it was only 10 percent (Bonazzoli 1993: 150). The Italian Jews who arrived in Livorno brought with them slightly different customs. From the testament of Sarah Levi, a Jewish woman born in Pitigliano and married to another Italian Jew, Samuel Gallico of Siena, we infer that her dower amounted to 10 percent of her dowry (ASF, NMT, Antonio Mazzinghi, 28055, fols. 13v–14r).
13. Milano 1963: 560; Todeschini 1994b; Lamdan 2002: 196; Siegmund 2002.
 14. ASL, CGA: *Atti civili*, 429, no. 203. The *kettubah* (pl. *kettubot*) is the final marriage contract given to the bride that documents all the financial transactions (dowry, dower, and *mohar*) that have been agreed on with the groom. It is written in Aramaic or in Hebrew. For a description of these documents and their potential for study of the history of Italian Jews, see Vitale 1997. A *kettubah's* content was often also recorded with Christian notaries. It is not clear why some but not all marriage contracts made in Livorno are registered in notary records. It is possible that Jews went before a Christian notary to register them only when they felt the need to add further legal protection. In Rome, papal officials required this second registration (Stow 1995a: 473n105).
 15. ASF, NMP, Giovanni Giuseppe Mazzanti, 23703, fols. 170r–175v, no. 36. The dowry of 5,000 pieces and a 50 percent dower exchanged between Moses and Rebecca indicate a union between a man and a woman from the upper-middle stratum of Sephardic society.
 16. Oliel-Grausz 2006: 63. Ashkenazim rejected polygamy in the eleventh century; Sephardim continued to practice it (Zimmels 1958: 166–68; L. Epstein 1942: 25–33; Falk 1966: 9–15; Lamdan 2002: 139–57). As a general rule, rabbinic authorities in the Sephardic world preferred to enforce the rule requiring levirate unions, whereas Italian and Ashkenazic Jews practiced *halizah*. This was also the preference among Sephardic rabbis in early modern Italy, including Livorno (Gershon 1957: 69, 143, 239–40, 250). In sixteenth-century Rome, a Jewish man petitioned the papal authorities to take a second wife after he had been married for fifteen years (Stow 2001: 53). Levirate marriages are also mentioned in seventeenth-century Ancona (Bonazzoli 1998: 77). On levirate unions in early modern Italy, see also Adelman 1994.
 17. ASF, MNP, Roberto Micheli, 27236, fols. 177v–179r.
 18. R. Toaff 1990: 586. In 1661 the Jewish nation had established that a man could not marry his late brother's wife if she had children or had been married to her uncle. The

- prohibition was repeated in 1671, suggesting that these unions were common enough to require regulation (*ibid.*, 574, 612). C. Galasso (2002a: 27–41) illustrates several cases of male bigamy among the Jews of Livorno in the seventeenth century.
19. ASF, NMP, Nicolò Mazzinghi, 27112, fols. 70v–71v, no. 129.
 20. Because we lack the account books from the early days of Ergas and Silvera's partnership, we cannot gather precise information about its capitalization. The dowries paid to the partners on behalf of Esther Rodrigues da Silva, Blanca Rebecca Baruch Carvaglio, and Deborah Ergas are recorded in ASF, LCF, 1933 (11 September 1730; 22 October 1730), ASF, LCF, 1946 (22 August 1735); ASF, LCF, 1954 (21 March 1741).
 21. ASF, MNP, Giovanni Battista Gamera, 25273, fols. 80r–81r, no. 80. The capital was only transferred into the partnership's accounts in 1759 (ASF, MNP, Giovanni Battista Gamera, 25277, fols. 162r–163r, no. 416). The same provision had been registered in 1718 by Salvatore Recanati (ASF, MNP, Giovanni Battista Gamera, 25271, fols. 3r–4v, no. 3). As the brothers Jacob and Daniel Navarro stated when they dissolved their partnership in Venice in 1661, they had to "purify their accounts of the dowries" before they could divide the remaining assets between themselves (ASV, NA, Angelo Maria Piccini, 11068, fol. 162v).
 22. Two Italian Jews of modest means married in 1733 with a dowry of four hundred pieces (ASF, NMP, Giovanni Giuseppe Mazzanti, 23704, fols. 134r–137v, no. 121). In 1741 Rabbi Abraham Joseph Canette of Constantinople married Rebecca Spinosa in Livorno with a dowry of twelve hundred pieces and a dower of six hundred pieces (ASF, NMP, Giovanni Battista Gargani, 26272, fols. 141v–142r, no. 95). My conclusion is drawn from a large but not necessarily representative sample of surviving records. More systematic comparisons would require the examination of the twelve registers of *kettubot* preserved in the archives of the Jewish community of Livorno, the copies of these and other *kettubot* that surface among court records, and the numerous dowry contracts (*confessiones dotis* and *restitutiones dotis*) registered before Christian notaries.
 23. These were the sums transferred between Raphael Ergas and Leah Ergas (PRO, PROB, 11/962, fol. 174r) and between David Ergas and Sarah Nunes Franco in 1719 (ASF, NMP, Agostino Frugoni, 24732, fols. 6r–7r). In 1750 Esther Attias married Jacob Ergas with a dowry of five thousand pieces and a 50 percent dower (ASF, NMP, Nicolò Mazzinghi, fol. 131r–v, no. 228).
 24. Frattarelli Fischer 1983: 893n28; Conforto and Frattarelli Fischer 1982: 57.
 25. In 1694 Manuel Ergas married Rachel Ergas, who brought a dowry of fifty-five hundred pieces and received a dower of twenty-five hundred, for a total of eight thousand pieces (ASF, NMP, Roberto Micheli, 27236, fols. 177v–179r). The union of Leah Ergas (second cousin of the founder of Ergas and Silvera) and Jacob Baruch Carvaglio was sealed in 1744 with a dowry of six thousand pieces plus the customary 50 percent. Leah's dowry included forty-five hundred pieces in cash left by her father and fifteen hundred pieces invested in a portion of a building in via Ferdinanda that his brothers owned (ASF, NMP, Giovanni Battista Gamera, 25267, 99r–103r, no. 15).
 26. Other women of the Medina family in Livorno had dowries ranging between 4,000 and 18,100 pieces in those years (ASL, CGA: *Cause delegate*, 2500).

27. ASF, NMT, Giovanni Battista Gargani, 26285, fols. 85r–86v. For a comparison to the value of the Ergas and Silvera properties inventoried in 1746, see Chap. 3, n. 102.
28. In 1608 one Eleonora Rodrigues married one Pietro Brandon with a dowry of 12,131 Venetian ducats and a dower of 6,065. In 1611 one Paulina Rodrigues married one Giorgio Rodrigues Giorgi with an enormous dowry of 22,500 ducats and a dower of 11,280 ducats (Ruspio 2007: 139). In 1575 the Venetian government passed a sumptuary law that set the ceiling for dowries at six thousand ducats (Huněcke 1997: 155), but the law was often infringed on. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, dowries between two thousand and four thousand ducats were the prerogative of poor patricians and the nonpatrician upper classes (Cowan 1982: 157; Bellavitis 2001: 184–85).
29. ASV, NA, Angelo Maria Piccini, 11062, fol. 27r–v.
30. ASL, CGA: *Atti civili*, 429, no. 203; ASF, NMP, Leo Bichi, 21693, fols. 99r–101v, no. 163.
31. Rachel Nunes Carvaglio married Saul Bonfil in 1712. The kettubah stipulated that if Rachel died without delivering a child, he would keep half of the dowry of forty-six hundred ducats; this eventuality came to pass in 1740 (ASF, NMP, Giovanni Battista Gamera, 25265, fols. 42r–43r). When Sarah Belilios married Abraham Baruch Carvaglio in 1721, Abraham's father promptly registered the dowry of five thousand ducats in his family partnership's account books (ASV, NA, Carlo Gabrieli, 7115, fol. 496r–v). In 1733 Moses Baruch Carvaglio married Esther Nunes Franco and paid 3,750 ducats to match the dowry of seven thousand ducats (ASF, NMP, Giovanni Giuseppe Mazzanti, 23704, fols. 121v–123v, no. 108).
32. ASF, NMP, Raffaello Tortolini, 27858, fols. 91r–92r.
33. ASF, NMT, Giovanni Matteo Novelli, 26739, fols. 24v–28v, no. 25.
34. For Jewish law, see the entries for "Contract" and "Partnership" in Menachem 1974: 247, 276. Several types of partnerships existed in Roman law, but in the absence of a written proof, the equal division of profits and losses was presumed (Sherman 1917, 2: 354). On the acceptance of verbal agreements in mercantile custom, see Lévy-Bruhl 1938: 70.
35. ASF, NMP, Giovanni Battista Gamera, 25260, fols. 132r–139v, no. 136 (see also Filipini 1987: 55–56). Other cases of contracts drafted between immediate relatives for specific business ventures can be found in ASF, NMP, Giovanni Battista Gamera, 25263, fol. 87r–v, no. 112, and 25264, fols. 83v–85r, no. 115. The existence of a written partnership agreement between Manuel Baruch Carvaglio and Moses Rosa in Aleppo is mentioned in the sentence issued by the British consul in 1748 to settle their accounts after Manuel's death. The sentence suggested a distribution of two-thirds of the profits to the former and one-third to the latter (PRO, SP, 110/72, pt. 3, fol. 579r).
36. Raposo 1989: 172. Gabriel de Silva lived his life as a New Christian but in 1763 was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Bordeaux (*ibid.*, 290).
37. For this conclusion I relied on the collection of English summaries of notary records underwritten by Jews that is found in Urbani and Zazzu 1999.

38. This observation is based on the English summary of notary records concerning Portuguese New Christians and New Jews registered in Amsterdam from 1595 to 1639 and published as an appendix to most issues of the journal *Studia Rosenthaliana* beginning in 1967. Cátia Antunes (2004: 134, 136) mentions in passing notary deeds that record financial transactions between Jews and non-Jews in seventeenth-century Amsterdam. Her current project aims to clarify the nature of these contracts between Amsterdam Sephardim and non-Jews.
39. Weber 1968: 378–79 (emphasis in original). As Sylvia Yanagisako (2007: 42) noted, however, Weber failed to distinguish between a separation that was created for legal and accounting purposes in order to limit the financial liability of family members and an actual separation between family and business relations.
40. In medieval Italy, family firms introduced the use of such a fund (called the *sovraporto*). See Weber 2003: 162–66; de Roover 1963b: 77.
41. JFB, 1726fMe, fols. 97r–98v, 101v, 102r, 104r, 108r–v, 119r–v. Other Ergases occasionally signed separate contracts with new associates (see Chap. 1, n. 32).
42. Normally the copies of Ergas and Silvera's outgoing letters were not signed because the partnership's joint liability was implicit. Signatures were, however, recorded on a few special occasions. For example, when any partner signed a letter with a Christian pseudonym, it was generally recorded to make it easier to trace orders and transactions in the future. On one occasion Abraham Ergas, son of Moses, signed with his own name alone because the letter contained delicate and rather secretive instructions to a traveling agent (ASF, LCF, 1957, letter to Moses Cassuto in Florence, 8 July 1743). On Ergas and Silvera's relationship with Cassuto, see Chap. 10.
43. ASF, LCF, 1931, letter to Aguiar Raposo and sons in Livorno (29 October 1706).
44. Examples are found in ASF, LCF, 1931, letter to Zuanelli and Iolotta in Venice (15 March 1705); ASF, LCF, 1935, letter to Lazzaro Sacerdoti in Genoa (15 February 1715).
45. ASF, LCF, 1931, letter to Courei and Cruvellier in Cyprus (18 December 1704).
46. ASF, LCF, 1931, letter to Stefano Ceccato in Venice (20 January 1708): "tanto qui che in Aleppo, dove haviamo la nostra casa con le nostre Ergas e Silvera di quale vi prometiamo un puntuale e bon trattare." The account books that Ergas and Silvera kept in Livorno do not include transactions carried out in Aleppo or evidence that the two branches settled their accounts on a regular basis, as was customary. Given the lack of international auditing systems, it was difficult for the tribunals in Livorno to ascertain the financial status of the partners in Aleppo and to seize their goods. As a result, available records do not illuminate the methods used by Ergas and Silvera in Livorno to check on Elijah Silvera in Aleppo.
47. The massari issued their sentence on 27 May 1757. On 21 June 1757 Pardo Roques declared that he would not appeal the sentence to a higher civil tribunal (ACEL, *Tribunale dei massari*, filza 283, no. 17).
48. ASV, VS: *I serie*, 185, fols. 102r–103r (24 July 1756). In June 1756 the Venetian consul in Aleppo arrested Isaac Belilios, son of Emanuel, in order to ensure the payment of his creditors in Europe. This action confirms that the Venetian authorities consid-

- ered the Belioses of Aleppo and those in Venice mutually liable. They nonetheless recognized individual legal responsibility, and when Isaac Belios, son of Joseph, was shown to have no interest in the "Isaac and Joseph Belios" partnership, he was released (ASV, VS: *I serie*, 603, folder "Aleppo"). See also Chap. 4, n. 66.
49. Filippini 1987: 55.
50. R. Davis 1967: 147-48. On the obsolete information that partners in London dispatched to their factors in Aleppo, see also Grassby 1994: 45, 47.
51. Eldem 1999: 208-9. On the prevalence of limited liability partnerships in eighteenth-century Marseilles, see Carrière 1973: 879-81; Carrière and Courduiré 1984: 11.
52. Lévy-Bruhl 1938: 30; Lapeyre 1955: 146-52. For Venice and Tuscany, see the literature cited in notes 54 and 76 below. For the Netherlands, see Brulez 1959: 35-123; P. W. Klein 1965: 224-25, 379-88, 418-21; Jonker and Sluyterman 2000: 89-90.
53. The *commenda* (pl. *commende*) was a nearly ubiquitous contract for mercantile associations in the medieval Mediterranean. Among its many versions were the unilateral and the bilateral contracts. In unilateral *commende*, a sedentary partner provided all the liquid capital necessary for the venture and a traveling partner undertook the trip overseas and acted as commission agent for the two partners in exchange for a share of the profit (usually set at 25 percent). Bilateral *commende* normally stipulated that the traveling partner contribute one-third of the capital and receive one-half of the profit. All *commende* were limited in time to the duration of the voyage. On *commende* see Weber 2003; Lopez and Raymond 1955: 174-79; Udovitch 1970a; Pryor 1977.
54. On Tuscan *accomandite* during the early modern period, see Carmona 1964; Litchfield 1969b; Goodman 1981: 424-29; Bertini 1994. The legal clauses concerning Tuscan *accomandite* are recapitulated in Fierli 1803. For a list of the most prominent Christian merchant houses operating in Livorno in 1674, many of which raised capital with *accomandite* contracts, see ASF, *Archivio Magalotti*, 225, and Malanima 1995: 153-54 (see also Chap. 8, n. 139). On French contracts *en commandite* in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Lévy-Bruhl 1938: 33-40.
55. ASF, *Mercanzia*, 10854, fols. 39r-40r, 88r-89v; 10855, fols. 36v-37r; 10856, pp. 21-22, fols. 60r-61r, 91v-92r. Medici and Beroardi rescinded their *accomandita* in November 1736. Each continued to use this type of contract to raise capital for a new partnership with Giuseppe Sartori and Luigi Niccolini, respectively (ASF, *Mercanzia*, 10856, fols. 114r-115v, 126v-127v, 142r-v; 10857, fols. 36r-37r). At Medici's death in 1743, Niccolini started a new business with Giuliano Galli in Lisbon and again raised money in Florence through a series of *accomandite* (ASF, *Mercanzia*, 10858, fols. 38r-v, 125v-126r; see also Litchfield 1969b: 697).
56. This and the following observations are based on an examination of the copies of Tuscan *accomandite* registered in the merchant court of Florence from 1632 to 1777 (ASF, *Mercanzia*, 10841-10859).
57. ASF, *Mercanzia*, 10853, fols. 125v-126r, 136r-137r. On the disputes between Jacob Ergas and his sons, see Chap. 1, n. 19. At the time, most *accomandite* had a capitalization of twenty thousand to thirty thousand pieces and lasted for three years (Frattarelli Fischer 1997c: 81).

58. ASF, NMP, Giovanni Giuseppe Mazzanti, 23704, fols. 152r-155v, no. 137.
59. *Accomandite* between Jewish merchants in Livorno include those between Moses Franco Albuquerque and Moses Alatone in 1670 (ASF, *Mercanzia*, 10847, fols. 56v-57r), Lopes Pereira and Raphael Ergas in 1734 (ASF, *Mercanzia*, 10856, fols. 34r-35), Isaac Henriques Lopes and Abraham Melo in 1739 (ASF, *Mercanzia*, 10856, fols. 132v-133v and 10857, fol. 52r-v), Isaac Pardo Roques and Manuel Finzi in 1757 (ASF, *Mercanzia*, 10858, fol. 198r-v and 10859, fol. 15r-v), and those between Cesare Leone and Solomon Conegliano in 1761 (fols. 36v-37r), Samuel Tedesco, Vital Funaro, and Abraham Caivano in 1764 (fols. 73v-74r), Jacob Franco d'Almeida, his wife, and the Leone brothers in 1765 (fols. 82v-83r), the Tedescos and Mordechai Cohen in 1766 (fol. 88r-v), Joseph Cohen and Joseph Velluti in 1770 (fol. 128r), Manuel Supino and the Fano brothers in 1769 (fol. 127r), Jacob Franco de Miranda and Moses Belmonte in 1771 (fol. 140r-v), Isaac Pegna and Daniel Finzi in 1775 (fol. 181v), Gabriel Semach and Vital Funaro in 1775 (fol. 185r), Lazzaro Recanati and Sabato Montecorboli in 1776 (fols. 189v-190r), and Aaron Acciaiuoli, the Coen brothers, and the Bondi brothers in 1777 (fols. 197v-198r) (all in ASF, *Mercanzia*, 10859). The *accomandita* signed by Manuel Monseles, a Jew, and Jacopo Anton Guidetti, a Christian, in 1764 (ASF, *Mercanzia*, 10859, fols. 161v-162r) was unusual. Other examples are found in ASF, *Mercanzia*, 10859, fols. 130r-v (Salomon Aghib, Settimio dell'Aquila, and Valentino Fedeli) and 175v (Samuel de Paz and Francesco Berlan).
60. Yogev (1978: 146-48) mentions the existence of partnerships between Jews and non-Jews among merchants involved in the Anglo-Indian diamond trade in the eighteenth century but does not illustrate the terms of these agreements. For Amsterdam, see n. 38.
61. ASV, NA, Angelo Maria Piccini, 11062, fols. 27r-29r; ASV, NT, Andrea Calzavara, 260.830.
62. One of the difficulties of identifying these types of agreement among the papers of Jewish merchants is that the term *compagnia* had both a specific meaning and a generic one. In the latter case, it could refer to any type of commercial partnership, as did the expressions *compagnia di negozio* and the more common *società*. Thus, for example, the brothers Moses and Isaac Baruch Carvaglio called their Venice-based business a "fraterna e compagnia" (ASV, NT, Cristoforo Brambilla, 167.281). The agreement signed by Solomon Henriques and Joseph Franchetti in 1782 seems to establish a *compagnia* in the strict sense of the term to operate in Tunis, Livorno, and Smyrna (the contract is transcribed in Filippini 1999: 143-44; see also Fukasawa 2000: 72n19). Filippini (1984a: 642-43, 1998, 3: 245) mentions other examples of associations formed by Jewish merchants that resembled *compagnie* but stressed that they were predicated on kinship ties. See also n. 49.
63. On fourteenth-century *compagnie* with headquarters in Florence, see de Roover 1948: 31-34, 1963a, 1963b: 44, 78-85; Padgett and McLean 2006. In Venice, *fraterne* gave way to *compagnie* as primogeniture became widespread after the sixteenth century. Examples of *compagnia* contracts are found in Lopez and Raymond 1955: 185-211.
64. Brulez 1959; Jeannin 1967; Lapeyre 1955.

65. Bonazzoli 1987: 740, 759n93, 1998: 45–67.
66. Sahlins 1972: 193–94; Ensminger 2001: 187–88.
67. ASF, LCF, 1931, letter to Fouquier Lombard and Co. in Cyprus (19 November 1706).
68. Sahlins 1972: 194–95; Ensminger 2001: 188.
69. For the expression “anticategorical imperative,” see Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994: 1414–15. Originally developed by British social anthropologists studying complex European and African societies, social network analysis has been applied fruitfully to historical research, especially in the study of kinship forms, gender relations, neighborhood associations, occupational stratification, patronage, and political clientele. The literature about network analysis, network approach, network theory, and their applications to historical investigation is vast. Classic formulations can be found in Boissevain and Mitchell 1973; Mitchell 1969, 1974; Boissevain 1974; Wellman and Wetherell 1996; Podolny and Page 1998; Scott 2000. On networks and markets in the contemporary world from theoretical and empirical perspectives, see Nee 1998; Casella and Rauch 2001; Rauch 2001. Surprisingly, a recent survey reveals that social network analysis has had comparatively little impact on the history of long-distance trade (Lemerrier 2005). Important exceptions include a book about two Swedish commercial partnerships (Müller 1998), several studies of contraband in Latin America (Moutoukias 1992, 1997), and recent work on the early modern Atlantic wine trade (Hancock 2005a, 2006). Murdoch (2006) maps a variety of kin, friendship, economic and diplomatic networks linking Scotland and Sweden in the early modern period. For a sympathetic but hard-hitting critique of the tendency among historians of long-distance trade to idealize networks as adaptable, harmonious, and antihierarchical associations, see Hancock 2005b.
70. This point is emphasized by Imízcoz Beunza (1998).
71. Hardin 2002: 9–10. Hardin’s volume is a landmark in the burgeoning literature in sociology concerning trust and social capital. See also Gambetta 1998; Cook 2001; Kramer and Cook 2004; Hardin 2004; Cook, Hardin, and Levi 2005; Tilly 2005.
72. Harlaftis 1993: 9–23, 1996: 39–103; Colli 2003; James 2006; Landes 2006.
73. Weber 1968: 637.
74. Goldthwaite 1983, 1987. Paul McLean and John Padgett (2004: 206) estimate that about 30 percent of all partnerships in fifteenth-century Florence were sealed among kin, and the rest were “more ‘modern,’ expansive, and cosmopolitan” in the selection of partners.
75. Greif 2006: xiii, 25–26, 251–53, 285–87, 299. See also Greif 1996. His interpretation blends together two strains of Weber’s theories about the rise of capitalism: the one that insists on the role of institutions, in particular medieval Italian limited liability partnerships, and the one that emphasizes the importance of ethics (although Weber considers seventeenth-century Puritan capitalist rationality superior to that of medieval Florentine merchants). See especially Weber 1968: 375–80, 1212–372 and 1952: 202–3n29. Greif implicitly follows Weber by presuming that commenda contracts provide evidence of individualistic “cultural beliefs.” Abraham Udovitch (1970a), however, has demonstrated that commenda contracts were used in the medieval

- Muslim world before they came into use in Italy. Timur Kuran (2004: 78–80) solves this apparent contradiction by showing that in Islamic law, at the death of one of the partners in a commenda, the contract became null and the partnership’s assets had to be divided equally among the deceased’s heirs and all surviving partners. This inheritance system worked against the concentration of capital and possibly stifled commercial investments more generally.
76. Lane 1944b; Lopez and Raymond 1955: 185–86. Only in 1619 did the Venetian government pass a law that distinguished between individual liability for the portion of a patrimony that a man administered on his own account and whatever he managed as part of a *fraterna* (Weber 2003: 106).
77. Müller 1998.
78. Hancock 1995: 105–6. On seventeenth-century Amsterdam, see P. W. Klein 1965; Klein and Veluwenkamp 1993; Lesger and Noordegraaf 1995. On the importance of family partnerships in the British Atlantic in the eighteenth century, see Price 1986, 1991, 1992. In contrast, Kenneth Morgan (2000: 46–47) has identified a marked increase in the number of partnership documents sent together with the correspondence of private traders in the British Atlantic during the second half of the eighteenth century. This evidence would suggest that the middle of the eighteenth century marked an important change in long-standing business traditions.
79. Hansmann, Kraakman, and Squire 2006: 1372–74.
80. In his analysis of the internal organization, ownership, and boundaries of firms, Oliver Hart (1995), unlike most economists, considers power to be exogenous to the market. He does not, however, define exactly what he means by *power*, nor does he contextualize its forms.
81. Granovetter 1973, 1974, 1983.
82. Bonazzoli 1998: 53–57 (in Italian, this type of contract was known as an “*associazione per reciproca rappresentanza commerciale*”). In Venice, the Costantini belonged to the congregation of Levantine Jews (ASV, NT, Angelo Maria Piccini, 11068, fol. 162r).
83. Bonazzoli does not raise the issue of the religious identities of merchants with whom the Costantini brothers engaged in temporary associations, but her book includes the mention of only one Christian merchant among them. More Christians are named in the marine insurance policies held by the Costantini (Bonazzoli 1998: 69n1, 178–81).
84. Herzig 1991: 160–73, 223–30, 1993; Aslanian 2007a: 318–42, 2007b: 149–50.
85. Herzig 1991: 231.
86. Aslanian 2006, 2007a: 237–52, 280–83. Although there is compelling evidence that the commenda was “the single most important source of the dramatic expansion of Julfan commerce in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,” when compared to commission agency, it is not clear that it was also “the ideal means for the circulation of merchants, goods, and credit across vast distances” (Aslanian 2007b: 125). For the accounts kept by a commenda agent traveling to Nepal and Tibet, see Khachikian 1966. Bhattacharya (2008: 76) shows that in practice some traveling agents gained autonomy by working away from home and accumulating capital of their own.

87. Aslanian 2007a: 241n54.
88. Van Rooy 1966: 347. On average, the number of Armenians identified by means of Amsterdam notary records peaked at forty-one per year from 1701 to 1720 (Bekius 2003: 25, cited with the author's permission). See also Herzig 2004: 159–61.
89. In 1653, seventy-three adult men elected the new priest of the Armenian Church in Venice. In 1710, thirty-six Armenians were counted as being in transit through Venice and twenty-seven as permanent residents. About forty years later, seventy lay Armenians and 17 clergymen dwelt there (Gianighian 2004: 62).
90. For figures concerning the Armenians present in Livorno, see Chap. 3.
91. Herzig 2004: 153.
92. A few Armenians operated in Cadiz, a Spanish port on the Atlantic, from the 1660s to the 1720s (Aghassian and Kévonian 1988: 163; Aslanian 2007a: 144–48). Aslanian (2007a: 105–17) also offers new evidence for the presence of Armenians in the Pacific, especially in the Philippines.
93. Aslanian 2006: 393–99, 2007a: 252–78. The Assembly of Merchants was formed by a Julfan representative (*kalantar*) who acted as delegate of and intermediary with the shah and twenty other officials. Whenever necessary, Armenian merchants also initiated lawsuits against fellow Armenians in British courts in eighteenth-century India (Bhattacharya 2008: 79–81).
94. Bhattacharya 2005: 291, 293–300; Herzig 2006, cited with the author's permission. The Sceriman family possibly relied on a Hindu agent to acquire diamonds in Goa (Aslanian 2007a: 334, 2007b: 156). Indian merchants in central Asia used *commende* when dealing with Turks, Armenians, Afghans, and Russians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (S. F. Dale 1994: 66, 120).
95. In 1732 they bought an amount of indigo worth about 556 pieces of eight from one "David di Jacoppo Armenio"; ASF, LCF, 1942, fol. 17 (Debts, 19 March 1732). The following year, they sold cacao to one "Giovani di Gaspari Armenio"; ASF, LCF, 1942, fol. 4 (Credits, 24 April 1733). In 1731, Ergas and Silvera had a credit of seventy pieces of eight with "Gregorio de Pietro Armenio," to whom Touche and Jauna of Cyprus had remitted a bill of exchange; ASF, LCF, 1942, fol. 11 (Credits, 17 December 1731). Purchases made by Ergas and Silvera on account of Armenians in Livorno are mentioned in ASF, LCF, 1945, letters to Ergas and Silvera in Aleppo (6 May 1738) and to Medici and Niccolini in Lisbon (3 August 1739).
96. Bhaswati Bhattacharya (pers. comm., February 2007) provided evidence from the diary of the English factory in Surat at the State Archives of Maharashtra, India.
97. Bekius 2003: 26–34.
98. Already in 1629 a prosperous merchant from Isfahan had married a woman from Livorno following the rites of the Council of Trent (Frattarelli Fischer 1998b: 29). On the marriage alliances between the business elite of Livorno and Armenians, see also Frattarelli Fischer 2006d: 29. The Scerimans, the richest Catholic Armenian family in the diaspora, married into patrician Venetian families (White 1961: 19n3). Virtually no Armenian women emigrated to Amsterdam, where Armenian men are recorded as having married the sisters and daughters of Dutch merchants (Van Rooy 1966: 354). For Armenian women who married officers of the Dutch East

India Company in Surat in the late seventeenth century, see Bhattacharya 2005: 306. In Smyrna, Persian Armenians married among themselves; only a few built kinship ties to resident French merchants (Kévonian 1975: 210; Smyrnelis 1995: 38–39).

6. COMMISSION AGENCY, ECONOMIC INFORMATION,
AND THE LEGAL AND SOCIAL FOUNDATIONS
OF BUSINESS COOPERATION

1. ASF, LCF, 1941, letter to Daniel Bonfil in Venice (12 December 1732).
2. "Mercatores male agunt qui relictis veteri simplicitate subtilizant in Foro" (Ansaldi 1689: 622).
3. ASV, NA, Angelo Maria and Giovanni Piccini, 10840 (4 August 1661).
4. Carruthers and Babb 2000: 52.
5. Classic studies are found in Sardella 1948; Renouard 1961; Melis 1962, 1: 13–17; Melis 1972: 14–27, 136–229; Melis 1973; Doria 1986.
6. For Lopez and Raymond (1955: 378) there exists "no better key to the psychology of the merchant than his correspondence." Throughout his work about Maghribi Jews, S. D. Goitein (1973b: 11) draws abundantly from business letters to illustrate the "sociological" rather than the "economic aspects" of this community.
7. The work of Avner Greif is again a point of reference in these debates.
8. Jeannin 2001: 245; G. Levi 1997: 225.
9. The catalogue of the James Ford Bell Library in Minneapolis describes this 149-page correspondence as a "Letterbook of the Florentine mercantile company of Medici and Beroardi and their successors in Lisbon, 1726–1742" (JFB, 1726fMe). In reality, the letter book only contains copies of the letters sent by Paolo Girolamo Medici as an individual and not as a partner of Beroardi and later Niccolini. None of Medici's surviving letters are addressed to Ergas and Silvera because the latter only traded with the partnerships that Medici had with Beroardi or Niccolini. For this distinction, see Chap. 5 and Chap. 8, n. 128.
10. The surviving business papers of the Mhamai Kamats pertain to the period 1759–1819. About one-third are written in European languages—the bulk in Portuguese, and the rest in French and English. For a description and analysis of these records, see de Souza 1985, 1989; Pinto 1994; Borges 1998: 672–84; Carreira 1998: 119; Sood 2007. Unlike Ergas and Silvera's letter books, the correspondence of the Kamat brothers includes some incoming letters and several drafts of outgoing letters (*burradores*). This collection is particularly important because of the paucity of private business records documenting the activities of Hindu and Muslim merchants in India, as lamented by Chaudhuri 1985: 100 and Das Gupta 1970: 181–82.
11. Pomeranz and Topik 1999: 7.
12. Hancock 1995: 56, 2005b: 481–82. For more examples from the British Atlantic in this period, see Haggerty 2006: 109–10.
13. Studnicki-Gizbert 2009: 87, 93. Antwerp merchants in the second half of the sixteenth century also arranged for their daughters to marry their preferred successors

- and thus passed the family firm on to their sons-in-law (see Wijnroks 2003, which Oscar Gelderblom kindly suggested to me).
14. Menkis 1988: 106–7.
 15. *Ibid.*, 129–31, 151–77; Menkis 1990: 31, 33–37.
 16. Greif 2006: 333.
 17. *Ibid.*, 78, 58–59, 288–300. Greif distinguishes between an exchange system that is profitable to its members and one that is economically efficient (*ibid.*, 289). Although I recognize the importance of this distinction, a comparative assessment of the Sephardic and the Livornese economies is beyond the scope of my work. I am more interested in developing what Greif also advocates, namely, “an integrative framework that captures the fact that various factors—social, normative, and materialistic—can simultaneously influence behavior” (*ibid.*, 147), but I do not take recourse to game theory, as does Greif.
 18. On the socioeconomic hierarchy of partners in Genoese commende, see *ibid.*, 285–86. For the mention of agency relations between Genoese and non-Genoese, see *ibid.*, 288.
 19. North 1991a: 97 (my emphasis).
 20. Greif (2006: 70–71) defines “merchants’ law” as “a set of cultural rules of behavior . . . that specified how agents needed to act to be considered honest in circumstances not mentioned in the merchants’ instructions” but adds, “Little is known about the content of the merchants’ law.” Students of the new institutional economics make frequent reference to Benson (1989), an economist’s account of the (medieval) European law merchant that emphasizes its spontaneous evolution and self-enforcing character. More systematic and historically accurate illustrations of the doctrine of European commercial law and its transformation from the medieval era to the early modern period can be found in Lattes 1884, 1899; Galgano 1976; Lafon 1979; Hilaire 1986; Piergiovanni 1987, 2005b; Szramkiewicz 1989; Padoa Schioppa 1992; Cerutti 2003. These authors all stress the complex doctrinal, institutional, and political processes and conflicts that led to the adoption of the *lex mercatoria* in certain tribunals and its relation to other sources of law.
 21. New tribunals with jurisdiction over commercial disputes were created in Genoa in the sixteenth century; they included the Rota Civile in 1529 and the Conservatori del Mare in 1575. In the same period, a number of legal treatises that began to systematize this doctrine appeared in Italy. The first of these treatises was published in Venice in 1553 by Benvenuto Stracca (1509–78). See Lattes 1909; Verrucoli 1981; Piergiovanni 2005a; Donahue 2005.
 22. Cleirac 1647. Cleirac’s work was reprinted in Bordeaux in 1661, in Rouen in 1671 and 1682, and in Amsterdam in 1788. An English translation appeared in London in 1686. I am currently engaged in a study of this author and his legacy.
 23. On the Consoli del Mare, see Sanacore 1982–83; Addobbati 2003. The only thorough study of the Mercanzia of Florence is limited to the first half of the fourteenth century but delineates its prerogatives well (Astori 1998). Between 1722 and 1726, a body of merchants founded in Livorno in 1717 (Deputazione di commercio) also acted as a tribunal for all commercial disputes involving sums smaller than five hundred pieces. It ruled according to commercial law and its sentences could not be appealed. This

- tribunal, however, was a short and largely unsuccessful experiment (Mangio 1978a; Baggiani 1992).
24. Since the late sixteenth century the governor of Livorno had held greater jurisdictional powers than had the representatives of the Medici in other towns in the grand duchy. The first governor was named in 1595, and after 1606 he also administered civil and criminal justice. After 1624, a professional justice trained in *utrumque iuris* called the *auditore* was appointed to perform these tasks (Casini 1962). The independence of this court, and its jurisdictional prerogatives with respect to the high tribunals of Florence, are illustrated in a report made by Giuliano Capponi in 1738, at the time of the transition from the Medici to the Lorena rulers (ASF, MP, 1807, no. 28, also quoted in Baggiani 1992: 686n22).
 25. On these tribunals, see Chaps. 3 and 10.
 26. On the jurisdictional conflicts in matters of commercial disputes in eighteenth-century France, see Kessler 2007: 255–69.
 27. ASF, MNP, Agostino Frugoni, 24731, fols. 167v–169r.
 28. “E quanto alla dimandata revisione dell’Ebreo tripolino è nelle regole che gli debba essere concessa perché una sola sentenza in Toscana non fa realmente cosa giudicata e perciò si concede l’appello o revisione della medesima per dar luogo alla parte di poter soggiungere altre ragioni e tentare l’esito del secondo giudizio coll’elezione di giudici da concordarsi” (ASL, GCM, 963, fol. 94r).
 29. Marrara 1965; Pansini 1992. For evidence of this continuity in the courts of Livorno, see also the report drafted by the Governor Bourbon del Monte in 1767 (ASL, GCM, 1, fols. 501–533).
 30. Malynes 1622: 211. The Chancery of London was the only court that ruled on the basis of equity rather than common law in England. In the second half of the sixteenth century, the Chancery took three years on average to adjudicate a lawsuit (Jones 1967: 306). The average duration of a trial there increased in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Horowitz and Polden 1996: 52–55).
 31. My identification of the lawsuits in which someone named Ergas appeared as a plaintiff is dependent on the index available in ASL, CGA: *Atti civili spezzati*, 2464. Though incomplete, this old index is a useful tool with which to navigate the important and yet chaotic records of the civil litigation adjudicated by the tribunal of the governor of Livorno.
 32. ASF, LCF, 1631, letters to Medici and Beroardi in Lisbon (27 November 1722, 8 October and 8 December 1723). Other cases when merchants faced with potential lawsuits notarized passages of their business letters are mentioned in ASV, NA, Angelo Maria Piccini, 11076, fols. 266v–267r; ASF, NMP, Giovanni Giuseppe Mazzanti, 23704, fols. 137v–140v.
 33. ASF, NMP, Niccolò Mazzinghi, 27111, fols. 31–v.
 34. ASF, MNP, Agostino Frugoni, 24731, fol. 6v; 24733, fols. 36v–37r.
 35. ASF, NMP, Giovanni Giuseppe Mazzanti, 23691, fols. 20r–v, no. 28.
 36. ASF, NMP, Giovanni Battista Gamerra, 25263, fols. 87v–89v, no. 113; ASF, NMP, Giovanni Giuseppe Mazzanti, 23687, fols. 95v–97r, no. 106.
 37. ASF, MP, 2479, fols. 64–67; 2509, fols. 185v–186r. Declarations signed by merchants were commonly accepted as proof in civil courts that incorporated maritime customs

- in their rulings. Another source records that a letter traveled from Livorno to Amsterdam in precisely seventeen days in 1763 (ASL, CGA: *Atti civili*, 107, no. 711). But see Chap. 8, n. 3.
38. The Tuscan authorities often heard complaints about the partiality of rulings issued by the massari (Bedarida 1984: 613–14, 622). These complaints inspired the governor of Livorno to intervene in order to prevent the massari from excommunicating Jews who initiated a lawsuit before secular tribunals in the first instance (ASL, GCM, 961, no. 26).
 39. Dasgupta 2000: 387–88. See also Dasgupta 2003.
 40. Sephardic merchants suffered greater legal discrimination in London than in Amsterdam and Livorno because aliens were excluded from English colonial trade. For the impact of this exclusion on the day-to-day conduct of the Atlantic trade in the seventeenth century, see Snyder 2006, 2009. As late as the eighteenth century, all foreign merchants in Amsterdam remained vulnerable to collective reprisals in cases of interstate diplomatic crisis or major financial defaulting (Gelderblom forthcoming).
 41. Gluckman 1955: 19–21. Whereas Gluckman emphasized conflict and legal resolution as two characteristics associated with “multiplex relationships,” the more recent sociological literature concerning “social capital” largely deprived the concept of all references to conflict. See Bourdieu 1980; Coleman 1988: esp. S108–S109; Putnam 1993. For a critique of the idealized and consensual notions of social capital with reference to the history of early modern European guilds, see Ogilvie 2004.
 42. ben Israel 1645–47: 128–29 (chap. 13, *De vendas e compras*).
 43. Sprunger 1991.
 44. Price 1986: 386.
 45. Oliel-Grausz 2006: 72.
 46. See, in particular, Muldrew 1999; Finn 2003. On the Netherlands, see Goldgar 2007.
 47. Dasgupta 2003: 333, 376.
 48. M. R. Cohen 1988: 144. See also Ravid (1978: 9–18, 51–53) on the collective blame that befell the Jewish community in Venice in those years on account of a corruption scandal involving several lesser noblemen.
 49. Israel 2002a: 453–54.
 50. C. Roth 1964: 188; Katz 1994: 171.
 51. On the stock market crash, see Y. Kaplan 2002c: 162–63. On the discounted bills of exchange, see Yogeve 1978: 261.
 52. Vlesing (2002: 149) has sought to attribute the herem against Spinoza in 1656 to his father’s bankruptcy rather than to the philosopher’s opinions in matters of religious revelation. Israel (2002c: 135), in contrast, suggests that in 1655 his family’s financial breakdown may have accelerated Spinoza’s abandonment of commerce in favor of philosophy.
 53. Malkiel 1991: 150–51, 346–47.
 54. Y. Kaplan 2000: 143.
 55. R. Toaff 1990: 562, 568, 587–88, 605, 632. A penalty of twenty-five pieces of eight applied to those who counterfeited perfumes (*ibid.*, 583).

56. ASL, GCM, 961, no. 12.
57. ASL, GCM, 961, no. 26; ACEL, *Recapiti*, no. 26.
58. This episode was reported by a Jewish informer to the Chamber of Commerce in Marseilles (CCM, AA1801, K.80). See also Chap. 4, n. 77.
59. Goldish 2008: xlvi, 21–22.
60. AIU, MS 501 I, H. After a series of lawsuits in the tribunals of Livorno and Genoa that lasted for sixteen years, Nataf was reconciled with his relatives not in court but by mutual agreement with his cousins that he marry their sister in 1774 (Urbani and Zazzu 1999: 956–59). See also Trivellato forthcoming.
61. ASF, MP, 2495 (4 January 1730).
62. Savary 1675, bk. 2, chap. 47, p. 33. On Savary and his work, see Hauser 1925; Perrot 1981. For a systematic bibliography and analysis of the literature for and by merchants that was published in Europe between 1470 and 1700, see Hoock, Jeannin, and Kaiser 1991–2001.
63. “Il n’y a rien qui maintienne tant le commerce, que les commissionaires ou correspondans” (Savary 1675, bk. 2, chap. 55, p. 143).
64. Malynes 1622: 111. In this context the word *factor* indicates a commission agent. In medieval Europe, the term usually referred to salaried employees who did clerical work for a merchant or financial company (de Roover 1963b: 78).
65. Daniel Defoe, *Colonel Jack* (London, 1722), quoted in Hancock 2005b: 472.
66. On the evolution of doctrine in medieval Italy, see Fortunati 1996. On the adoption of these norms in Flanders and the Low Countries, see Gelderblom forthcoming. By the middle of the fourteenth century bills of exchange, too, ceased to require a notary seal (de Roover 1953: 19).
67. See, e.g., Balducci Pegolotti 1936; F. Borlandi 1936; A. Borlandi 1963; Cortugli 1990.
68. Peri 1638, 1: 92–94 (chap. 11), 97–100 (chap. 12), 108–11 (chap. 14). Similar considerations can be found in the treaties of merchant law such as the *Discursus legales* by Giuseppe Maria Casaregi (1729), quoted in Fortunati 1996: 82–84.
69. Savary 1675, bk. 2, chap. 43, pp. 7–8. Savary quoted art. 7 of the 1673 Ordonnances as prescribing that merchants involved in long-distance trade keep copies of their correspondence for legal purposes. Ricard (1700: 531–32) repeated the same precepts.
70. ASF, LCF, 1957, letter to Schutte and Buess in Lisbon (7 June 1743).
71. ASF, MNP, Giovanni Battista Gamerra, 25267, fols. 49v–51v. They drafted three powers of attorney, one for each of the three names (Ergas and Silvera, Abraham Ergas, and Ventura Benedetti) under which their merchandise was registered in the bill of lading.
72. ASF, LCF, letter to Paul Prepaud and Son in Malta (18 December 1744).
73. Greif 2006: 69.
74. ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Pietro Trevano in Venice (14 April 1741).
75. “[S]endo sicuri che ci traterete con ogni afeto e con il mede[s]imo ci troverete a noi in quanto ci comanderete.” ASF, LCF, 1936, letter to Pousadet and Co. in Leiden (30 September 1716).
76. “[E]stando certo que procurará tudo a minha vantagem tanto na venda do coral como no investimento dos retornos fazendo como cousa propria.” XCHR, MCH/P, 7355.

77. XCHR, MCH/P, Outgoing Correspondence, vol. 2, fol. 6 (28 February 1782).
78. Court 2004: 997.
79. "[B]ramoso ancor io dell'onor di molti vostri comandi resto" (JFB, 1726 fMe, fol. 2r).
80. ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Honoré Bres in Marseilles (14 January 1743).
81. Menkis 1988: 118, 1990: 27–28.
82. Lane 1944a: 97–99.
83. McCusker and Gravesteyn 1991: 253–63; Gremigni 1996.
84. ASF, MP, 2275, letter of Governor Giacinto del Vigna to Marquis Rinuccini (18 January 1723).
85. Surviving collections of Tuscan avvisi include ASF, MP, 2328A ("Avvisi di Livorno," 1686–1704); ASF, MP, 1540–1561, 1612–1628 ("Avvisi di mare," 1664–1715); ASF, MP, 4277–4278 ("Avvisi da Costantinopoli e da altre località del Levante," 1543–1625); ASF, MP, 1605–1606 ("Avvisi di Levante, India et Barberia," 1665–93). On the continued importance of manuscript avvisi in early modern Italy, especially through the mid-seventeenth century, see Infelise 2002.
86. ASF, LCF, 1942, fols. 28, 32; ASF, LCF, 1938, letter to Isaac and Joseph Belilios in Aleppo (25 February 1724).
87. Habermas 1989: 16–21.
88. Gauci (2001: esp. 160–80) shows how the proliferation of tracts and periodicals about economic matters contributed to making commerce a political issue in late seventeenth-century England.
89. McCusker 2005.
90. Jeannin 2001. On the combined importance of correspondence, personal exchanges, and the printing press in the shaping of Amsterdam as a center of economic information between 1550 and 1630, see Lesger 2006: 214–38. See also Marzagalli 2007.
91. Hancock 1995: 32–33, 1998, 2000.
92. Neal 1990.
93. Menard 1991. On the risks of sea transport and the slow avenues of communication in Europe and the Mediterranean during the sixteenth century, see Braudel 1972–73, 1: 355–74, 1981–84, 1: 415–30. On the postal services operating between Marseilles and the Levant in the late eighteenth century, see Carrière 1973: 782–92. After the invention of the telegraph, not every merchant had equal access to it because of its high cost (Markovits 2000: 181).
94. Steele 1986. The French were less effective than the English in establishing reliable communication networks across the Atlantic in the eighteenth century (Banks 2002).
95. Pearson 2003: 186–87.
96. ASF, LCF, 1936, letters to Pietro Francesco Ravara and Co. in Lisbon (7 February and 18 March 1716), to Gopala and Nilea Camotim in Goa (14 February 1716), and to Giacomo Manzoni in Lisbon (18 March 1716).
97. ASF, MNP, Giovanni Battista Gamera, 25273, fols. 18v–19r, no. 20.
98. ASF, MNP, Giovanni Battista Gamera, 25277, fols. 7v–18r, no. 298.
99. JFB, 1726fMe, fol. 102r.
100. For the route via Mantua, see ASF, LCF, 1945, letter to Ferdinand Rodrigues Silva

- in Amsterdam (21 January 1737). For the route via Lyon, see ASF, LCF, 1953, letters to Guintraud, Prudent, and Bres in Marseilles (4 December 1742) and to Benjamin Alvarenga and Co. in London (7 January 1742).
101. ASF, LCF, 1957, letter to Benjamin Mendes da Costa in London (3 June 1745).
102. ASF, LCF, 1945, letter to Ephraim and David Cassuto in Florence (17 January 1738).
103. ASF, LCF, 1945, letter to Moses Cassuto in Marseilles (28 May 1741).
104. A few original issues of this publication dated between 7 January 1675 and 3 July 1690 survive in the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, University of Amsterdam. See also Boer 1988; Méchoulan 1991: 112.
105. ASF, LCF, 1953, letters to Moses Cassuto in Marseilles (28 May 1741) and to Ergas and Silvera in Aleppo (13 August 1741).
106. ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Pietro Trevano in Venice (20 January and 27 January 1741).
107. ASF, LCF, 1939, letter to Roux and Saint-Etienne in Alexandria (20 November 1726).
108. ASF, LCF, 1936, letters to Hoffman and Bachmair in Hamburg (3 September, 15 October, and 5 November 1714).
109. JFB, 1726 fMe, fol. 21r.
110. For examples from the letters of Portuguese merchants in the early modern Atlantic, see Studnicki-Gizbert 2009: 93–94.
111. Gelderblom forthcoming.
112. Hoppit 1987: 43–74.
113. Price 1979: viii.
114. JFB, 1726fMe, fols. 122r–123v. The Florentine correspondent was Baron Andrea Franceschi; he had complained about a shipment of silk textiles to Brazil over which Medici had taken charge.
115. Raposo 1989: 243, 247.
116. Udovitch 1977: 63.
117. Quoted in Steele 1986: 214.
118. Cooter and Landa 1984; Dixit 2004; Greif 2001 and 2006; Bueno de Mesquita and Stephenson 2006.
119. L. Bernstein 1996: 1787–88. See also Macaulay 1963.
120. On the tension between English and Indian merchant law in Coromandel, see Arasaratnam 1986: 274–93. On legal regimes and European colonial expansion more generally, see Benton 2002.

7. CROSS-CULTURAL TRADE AND THE ETIQUETTE OF MERCHANTS' LETTERS

1. Among the few exceptions are the studies of eighteenth-century letter writing in the Atlantic (Ditz 1999: esp. 64–65) and in Islamic Eurasia (Sood 2007; Aslanian 2008: 141–49). Carlos Petit (1997: 64) has noted the contractual meaning of expressions of gratitude and affection in merchants' letters. For a close reading of the ways in which judgments about merchants were conveyed in the letters of the Old Cairo Geniza, see Goldberg 2007.
2. Chartier 1991.

3. Tavor Bannet 2005: x-xi.
4. Business records written in Arabic are more common among the papers of Livornese Jewish merchants trading with North Africa than those trading with the Levant (see Filippini 1999: 134).
5. ASF, LCF, 1935, letter to Abraham Lusena in Genoa (18 October, 1 November, 29 November, 6 December, and 13 December 1713); ASF, LCF, 1936, to Almeida and Flores in Alexandria (31 August 1716).
6. Only one other letter, one addressed to Hayyim Samuel Aguiar of Tripoli, is dated according to the Hebrew calendar (ASF, LCF, 1937). The letter in Hebrew was addressed to a Persian Jew (see Chap. 10). It is impossible to say whether a partner of Ergas and Silvera or one of their salaried employees penned this and other letters. See also Chap. 8, n. 3.
7. Stow 1977: 296.
8. Filippini 1989: 142. When Moses Franco dissolved his partnership in 1731, he had his account books translated from Portuguese into Italian (ASF, NMP, Giovanni Giuseppe Mazzanti, 23703, fols. 52r-54r, no. 37).
9. Relatively long excerpts from Ergas and Silvera's correspondence can be read in Chap. 1, n. 1; Chap. 9, n. 101; and throughout this chapter. Tavani (1959) offers a close examination of the Livorno Sephardim's proficiency in the Portuguese language.
10. Teensma 1993.
11. Raposo 1989: 197.
12. The Recanati corresponded in Italian with a French partnership involving the Roux family in Marseilles (CCM, AA1801, L.IX/920-925). The seventeenth- and eighteenth-century papers of the English (later British) Levant Company include many documents drafted in or translated into Italian. See also Russell 1794, 2: 2; Boogert 2005: 8.
13. Examples are found in XCHR, MCH/E, 54, 136; XCHR, MCH/F, vol. 1, 51, 85 and vol. 2, 16-18, 33-34; XCHR, MHC/P, 233, 2437, 12047, 15051, 6434; XCHR, *Undated Letters and Other Documents in Portuguese*.
14. On the relations between the Kamats and the French, see de Souza 1989. On the role of Luso-Indian translators in letter-writing, see Sood 2007: 178-82. See also Chap. 8.
15. XCHR, MCH/P, *Outgoing Correspondence*, vol. 2, fol. 27v. After 1663 Cochin was under Dutch control. It remained home to a Jewish settlement until the twentieth century.
16. XCHR, MHC/P, 233.
17. XCHR, MHC/P, 15667; XCHR, MCH/P, *Outgoing Correspondence*, vol. 6, fol. 3v.
18. Examples are found in XCHR, MCH/P, *Outgoing Correspondence*, vol. 1, 19 October 1778, and vol. 2, fols. 3, 19; XCHR, MCH/E, 112, 136; XCHR, MCH/F, vol. 2, nos. 16-18, 33-34.
19. Letter to David Raby in Cochin to "certify" outstanding credit (XCHR, MCH/P, *Outgoing Correspondence*, vol. 2, fol. 19v-20r).
20. Williamson 1985: 398.
21. Studies of European merchants' professional culture are found in Angiolini and Roche 1995.

22. ASF, LCF, 1953, letters to Ephraim and David Cassuto in Florence (21 April 1741) and to Moses Cassuto in Livorno (16 May 1741).
23. ASF, LCF, 1936, letters to Pietro Francesco Ravara in Lisbon (10 January and 9 July 1715); ASF, LCF, 1957, letter to Schutte and Buess in Lisbon (10 June 1743).
24. ASF, LCF, 1957, letter to Benjamin Mendes da Costa in London (8 July 1743).
25. ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Ephraim and David Cassuto in Florence (12 November 1742).
26. Tadmor 2001: 167-236.
27. An example is found in ASF, LCF, 1957, letter to Benjamin Mendes da Costa in London (12 July 1745), sent at the time of his only son's death.
28. Ergas and Silvera urged the Cassutos to ask for anything they needed and assured them of their reciprocal love ("che tutto sta molto bene desiderando ci comandate in quello vi farà bisogno per esser reciproco nel amor"); ASF, LCF, 1945, letter to Ephraim and David Cassuto in Florence (17 November 1737). Four years later they claimed to have demonstrated to the Cassutos that they corresponded with them in friendship and with sincere affection ("abbiamo voluto noi dimostrarvi avere corrisposto con l'affetto della nostra sincera amicizia"); ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Ephraim and David Cassuto in Florence (21 April 1741).
29. When they encouraged a Genoese correspondent to place orders with them and their partner in Aleppo, Ergas and Silvera promised him that he "would be served with all diligence and affection" ("se comandarete tanto a loro che a noy sarete servito con ogni deligenza e afeto"); ASF, LCF, 1936, letter to Lazzaro Sacerdote in Genoa (15 February 1715).
30. Writing to a Sephardi in London, Ergas and Silvera claimed to be sure that he would sell their red wool because they knew of the love he had for them ("stando certi di vostro amore procurerete anche l'esito della nostra lana rossa"); ASF, LCF, 1945, letter to Nathan Levi Sonsino in London (29 April 1737).
31. JFB, 1726fMe, fols. 98v, 99v.
32. ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Benjamin Alvarenga and Co. in London (5 November 1742).
33. "[S]iendo che tomamos la confiansa em Vms y en los senhores Fuà." ASF, LCF, 1957, letter to Giuseppe Giustiniani in Genoa (24 April 1743).
34. XCHR, MCH/P, *Outgoing Correspondence*, vol. 6, fol. 38.
35. Raposo 1989: 244. See also Bartolomei 2007: 92, 102.
36. ASF, LCF, 1936, letter to Giuseppe Scolari in Reggio Emilia (17 September 1716). Other examples are found in ASF, LCF, 1935, letter to Matteo and Giacomo Zupana in Venice (21 June 1709); ASF, LCF, 1945, letter to Federico Latuda in Milan (23 September 1739).
37. "Elle se sirva mandarno as todas boas novas que podendolhas, estem certos que não faltaremos de corresponder a nossa obrigação e ho estamos de que são amigos de sus amigos e como conhesem noso natural não tiramos adiante em serimonias rogan-dolhes que se capitarem otras cartas nos fazem a merced de estas." ASF, LCF, 1939, letter to Jacob and Joseph Belilios in Venice (1 February 1726).
38. ASF, LCF, 1931, letter to Gulhermi and Maron in Tripoli, Lebanon (31 October 1708).

39. "Hontem recebi huma carta de Gorinda Nayque a qual mi fez apaixonar muito por ver que senhor o impertinente elevantado Mathias se não quer conduzir come he justo na recepção das fazendas fazendo hum tão grande prijuízo as negociações e querendo que eu o faça responcavel por todos os dezapontamentos que a sua omissão cauzar." XCHR, MHC/P, 18333. That Naik was a cousin of Camotim is evident from XCHR, MCH/P, Outgoing Correspondence, vol. 6, fol. 1.
40. XCHR, MHC/P, 6437.
41. XCHR, MCH/P, Outgoing Correspondence, vol. 2, fol. 13.
42. XCHR, MCH/P, 18348.
43. Raposo 1989: 245–46.
44. "Faites nous le plaisir Monsr. de nous marquez entre nous quelle opinion vous avés du caractere de Mons. Paul Nairac de vótre ville, qui vient de nous être recommandé d'une maison de chez vous." Raposo 1989: 243.
45. XCHR, MHC/P, 6437.
46. Quoted in Vanneste 2006: 46, cited with the author's permission.
47. Examples are found in the letters to Joseph de los Rios (ASF, LCF, 1937, 18 September 1719; ASF, LCF, 1938, 29 September 1729) and to Jacob Silvera (ASF, LCF, 1945, 4 March 1737), both in Amsterdam, as well as to Benjamin Mendes da Costa in London (ASF, LCF, 1957, 8 April 1743).
48. Examples are found in some letters to Italian Catholic merchants and to Hindu Brahmins: ASF, LCF, 1936, letter to Pietro Francesco Ravara in Lisbon (6 November 1715); ASF, LCF, 1937, letter to Medici and Beroardi in Lisbon (28 April 1729); ASF, LCF, 1945, letters to Fondu Camotim and Babuxa Quenny in Goa (20 February 1736, 16 February 1739). Thanking the Tuscan secretary of war for the reassurances they received that their inheritance would not be affected by their uncle's conversion, Ergas and Silvera ended their letter with a formulaic promise to pray to God for the royal household's prosperity ("non mancaremo di porger li necezarij vuoti del signor Iddio per la prosperità delle prefate Altezze Sue Reali e di tuta la sua Real Casa"). ASF, LCF, 1939, letter to Carlo Rinuccini in Florence (19 December 1725).
49. XCHR, MCH/P, 17053.
50. Examples are found in XCHR, MCH/P, 6437, 14001, 14012.
51. Vanneste 2006: 38.
52. Letter of George Clifford to James Dormer, quoted in Vanneste 2006: 40.
53. Goitein 1973b: 7.
54. Goitein 1971: 486.
55. "I firmly believe that you have had a good friend in me" ("credo por cierto que vos abedes tenido en mí bon amigo"), wrote a correspondent from Ibiza to the director of Datini's business in Barcelona in 1398 (Melis 1972: 182). The epistolary exchange between Datini and the Florentine notary Lapo Mazzei is also filled with a wide range of expressions of friendship (Trexler 1980: 136). On the different meanings of *friendship* in fifteenth-century Florence, see Klapisch-Zuber 1985: 68–93; McLean 2007, esp. 29–30.
56. "La premiere chose que doivent avoir deux Associez est l'amitié et la deference l'un pour l'autre." Savary 1675: bk. 2, chap. 43, p. 2.

57. See, e.g., a French royal decree of 1727 that regulated the relationship between French merchants and Jews and other foreigners under French diplomatic protection in the Ottoman Empire in CCM, AA1801, J.1586.
58. Quoted in Hancock 1995: 42.
59. Lopez and Raymond 1955: 378. Judging from the published selection of Datini's letters, the most highly stylized ones were those written by Venetian patricians, who belonged to a distinctively higher social class than did Datini (Melis 1972: 192–200).
60. Quoted in Chapman 1992: 25.
61. Hancock 1995: esp. 279–81, 320–81.
62. As Amalia Kessler (2004, 2007: 271–85) has argued, *La noblesse commerçante* was the culmination of a process of legal and social transformation initiated by Colbert's creation of a uniform code of commercial law in 1673. This code raised the question of what qualified someone as a merchant and thus who was entitled to bring litigation in one of the specialized commercial courts of the kingdom.
63. Datini owned several handbooks containing compilations of units of measure (the so-called *pratiche di mercatura*), instruction manuscripts regarding textile manufacturing and accounting techniques, maps of coastal areas and wind patterns, but not manuals of letter writing (Melis 1972: 120–27). For two rare Latin manuscripts dating to the early thirteenth century, one containing a treatise on the art of writing letters and one including model letters for traders and shoppers alongside letters of great lords, see Carlin 2007.
64. Among the most popular at the time was Percy Sadler's *Art of Correspondence*, which was first published in English and French in Brussels in 1855 and translated into Italian as *Il segretario inglese-italiano* (Trieste: n.p., 1869). See also *Le Secrétaire du commerce* (Paris: Blanchard, 1821), which was divided into two parts: the first contained models for commercial contracts, and the second models for business letters.
65. *Lettres commynes et familiares pour marchands et autres: Ensemble contracts, obligations, quietances, lettres de change et d'assurance, tres-vtiles à vn chacun. Le tout composé en François par Ian Bourlier, Troyen: et mis en Flamen par Iean de Heyden* (Antwerp: Chez Ian Waesberghe, 1576). Chartier (1991: 167–69, 189–90) also mentions two works published before Bourlier's: Gabriel Meurier, *Formulaire de missives, obligations, quittances, lettres de change, d'asseurances* (Antwerp, 1558) and Gérard de Vivre, *Lettres missives* (Antwerp, 1576). I have not been able to examine these two rare books. Meurier was the author of several grammar and foreign-language textbooks as well as didactic works.
66. *Amsterdamsche Secretary, bestaende in Formulieren van Schepenen-kennissen, Quijtscheldingen, Schat-brieven, en andere, die gewoonlyk daar gebruikt werden* (Amsterdam: Jacob van Royen, 1700). This work was republished in 1714, 1726, and 1737. Responding to local needs, this book included, among other things, the Spanish formula for the oath that Jews took in court (p. 279).
67. On medieval and humanist models, see Najemy 1993: 42–57; Murphy 2001: 194–268; McLean 2007: 44–58. On sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italian epistolary literature, see Quondam 1981; Basso 1990; Morabito 2001. On the satirical remarks that these secretaries later attracted, see Costo and Benvenega 1991.

68. Cassuto 1918: 327–40. On the epistolary traditions of Italian Jews, and betrothal letters in particular, see Weinstein 2004: 41–33, 75–77, 138–39, 295–96, 352–57, 389–90.
69. Matthias Kramer, *Il segretario di banco: Overo, Stile di corrispondenza mercantile, spiegata in trè centurie di bellissime lettere di negotio in ogni genere di traffico* (Venice: Gio. Giacomo Hertz, 1697). This work was first published in Nuremberg in 1693. The book was reprinted in several editions in eighteenth-century Venice.
70. *Le Secrétaire du cabinet et celui des negocians imprimé ensemble dans un volume en faveur des commençans, qui desirent s'instruire dans le style épistolaire sur toutes sortes de sujets, précédé d'une introduction à l'art d'écrire des lettres et suivi des complimens de la langue française* (Frankfurt: Chez les Principaux libraires, 1763).
71. *Recueil de lettres françaises et italiennes de bienveillance et marchandes pour ceux qui souhaitent d'apprendre à bien écrire en italien selon les bons principes et la nouvelle orthographe avec un abrégé sur la manière de garder le cérémonial, et de dresser les lettres, selon le stile le plus moderne des italiens par Mr. l'Abbé Antonini* (Basel: Chez Manuel Tourneisen, 1761). Antonini was also the author of an Italian-French-Latin dictionary.
72. *The Compleat Letter Writer: Or, New and Polite English Secretary, Containing Letters on the Most Common Occasions in Life*, 3d ed. (London: S. Crowder and H. Woodgate, 1756), p. Azv. In subsequent editions of this work, the typographical error in the title (compleat) was corrected. Other affordable epistolary manuals of the time included *The British Letter-writer: Or Letter-writer's Complete Instructor* (London: J. Cooke, [1760?]); W. H. Dilworth, *The Complete Letter Writer; Or, Young Secretary's Instructor, Containing Great Variety of Letters on Friendship, Duty, . . . Business [sic], etc.* (Glasgow: Peter Tait, 1783); *The Accomplish'd Letter-writer: Or The Young Gentlemen and Ladies' Polite Guide to an Epistolary Correspondence in Business, Friendship, Love* (Newcastle upon Tyne: n.p., 1787); Henry Hogg, *The New and Complete Universal Letter-writer; Or, Whole Art of Polite Correspondence* (London: Alex Hogg, [1790?]); David Fordyce, *The New and Complete British Letter-Writer; or, Young-Secretary's Instructor* (London: n.p., [1790?]).
73. Johann Christian Sinapius, *Briefe für Kaufleute: Nebst einer Abhandlung über Wechselbriefe; Neue verbesserte Auflage* (Hamburg: Bey H. J. Mattheissen, 1782); J. C. Schedel, *Lettres à l'usage des négocians traduites de l'Allemand de J. C. Sinapius* (Hamburg: Chez H. J. Mattheisen, 1782).
74. Johann Carl May, *Lettres marchandes, fort propres à s'exercer dans le stile épistolaire du négociant*, 4th ed. (Leipzig: J. S. Heinsius, 1798).
75. *Secrétaire des negociants: Lettres françaises et italiennes suivant le style qui est le plus en usage aujourd'hui* (Turin: Chez les freres Raycent Guibert, 1763). The second title page of this work is in Italian.
76. Ignazio Paloma, *Le secrétaire de banque, espagnol et françois, contenant la manière d'écrire en ces deux langues des lettres de correspondance mercantille, pourtout genre d'affaire et de trafic, etc. / El secretario de banco, español y francés, en que se contiene el modo de escribir en estas dos lenguas las cartas de comercio, en todo genero de negocio y tráfico, etc.* (Paris/Lyon: Chez Briasson et alii; Chez les Freres Perisse et

- alii, 1768), p. xv. As Chartier (1991: 191) observes, these works often were written by language instructors rather than merchants. The *Secrétaire des negociants* (see n. 75) is authored by a “professeur,” Paloma identifies himself as a “professeur de langues italienne et espagnole à Paris,” and Sinapius (see n. 73) was a “maître de langue italienne” in Hamburg.
77. Charles Wiseman, *Epistolæ Commerciales, or Commercial Letters, in Five Languages, viz. Italian, English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese . . . To Which Are Added, Mercantile and Maritime Vocabularies, of Each Tongue* (London: Printed for the Author, 1779). This work was reprinted in 1794.
78. *Lettres marchandes, etc. en sept langues* (Amsterdam: Chez G. Holtrop, 1783). See also A. Hubert, *Lettres marchandes sur toutes sortes de sujets de negoçe* (Rotterdam: D. Vis, 1787).
79. Malachy Postlethwayt, *The merchant's public counting-house: Or, new mercantile institution; wherein is shewn, the necessity of young merchants being bred to trade with greater advantages than they usually are* (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1750), 22.
80. *Le parfait écrivain de lettres en françois, italien, et anglois*, 2d ed. (Livorno: Giov. Vinc. Falorni, 1796), p. 2. I was not able to identify the first edition of this work. A compilation of Italian business letters printed in Venice in small format decades earlier included Livorno in many of its examples. See Giovanni Garotti, *Lettere mercantili* (Venice: Antonio Perlini, 1756). The author was an arithmetic teacher.
81. The inventory of possessions drafted at the bankruptcy of Ergas and Silvera does not list any of the books that they owned (see Chap. 3, n. 102).
82. Sinapius, *Lettres à l'usage des négocians*, p. 21.
83. Wiseman, *Epistolæ commerciales*, p. 91.
84. *Ibid.* These and other formulas had already been used a century earlier by English merchants (Hancock 2002). Kenneth Banks (2002: 160) interprets the expression “My dear friend,” which the French secretary of state for war used in a letter to Abraham Gradis in 1761, as “an uncharacteristic mark of friendship” between the high French official and the Jewish merchant of Bordeaux. Although the two may have been more than acquaintances, the use of this greeting is not by itself evidence of a genuine friendship.
85. Examples are found in Gentil da Silva 1959–61.
86. Raposo 1989: 244–45.
87. JFB, 1726 fMe, fol. 2r.
88. XCHR, MHC/E, vol. 1, 41, 54, 61, vol. 3, no. 99.
89. XCHR, MHC/P, Outgoing Correspondence, vol. 2, fol. 5.
90. XCHR, MHC/P, Outgoing Correspondence, vol. 2, fol. 6.
91. *The Cabinet Secretary Comprehending Familiar Letters on Various Subjects, and Directions for Writing Them with Ease and Elegance*, translated from the French by John Steuart (Calcutta: J. Cashman, Hurkaru Press, 1815).
92. La Serre's *Secrétaire* was particularly successful: first published in 1634, it reappeared in at least six editions and in numerous translations. On the works of Puget and La Serre, see Chartier 1991: 169–77. Both texts were on display together with many of

- Abas's volumes at the exhibit *Duties of the Heart: Reconstruction of a Sefardic Rabbinical Library*, which opened at the Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek in Hamburg on 20 September 2005. On Abas's library, see Studemund-Halévy 2002; Y. Kaplan 2002b.
93. Abraham Meldola, *Traduccion de las cartas mercantiles y morales de J. C. Sinapius: En español y portuguez* (Hamburg: Bock, 1784). I thank Harm den Boer for calling this work to my attention. Meldola later published *Nova grammatica portugueza em VI partes* (Hamburg: M. C. Bock, 1785). On Abraham Meldola, see Körner 1994.
 94. Jacob de Metz, *Sendero mercantile, que contiene 240 preguntas fundamentales con sus respuestas, para saber distinguir entre deve a hade aver* (Amsterdam: J. Ewoutsz, 1697). See also Yamey 1971.
 95. Gabriel de Souza Brito, *Norte mercantil y crisol de quantas*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam: Juan ten Mouten, 1769–70). The first edition of this work appears to have been printed in Amsterdam in 1706 by Cornelio Hoogenhaisen. Brito's model was Bartolomé Salvador de Solórzano's *Libro de caxa y manual de cuentas de mercaderes y otras personas* (Madrid: Pedro Madrigal, 1590; reprint, Madrid: Instituto de Contabilidad y Auditoría de Cuentas, D.L. 1990). See also Hernandez Esteve 1985.
 96. ASL, CGA: *Atti civili*, 791, no. 361 ("Catalogo della libreria da vendesi in Livorno"). I am obliged to Lucia Frattarelli Fischer for providing me with a copy of this document.
 97. Tavor Bannet 2005: x.
 98. Examples are found in ASF, LCF, 1931, letter to Fouquier Lombard and Co. in Cyprus (19 November 1706); ASF, LCF, 1939, letter to Isaac and Jacob Belilios in Aleppo (3 September 1725). See ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Moses Cassuto in London (4 September 1741) for the reference to Mendes da Costa.
 99. When they sent coral to the Camotins, Ergas and Silvera wrote to say that the Hindus could count on their friendship because they had no intention of leaving the correspondence that they shared ("a nosa amizade par que nos não queremos a partar de sua corespondenza"). Two years later, they ordered more diamonds and expressed the desire to maintain their correspondence with the Camotins ("pello desejo temos de sua corespondencia" (ASF, LCF, 1938, letters to Gopala and Fondu Camotim in Goa, 21 January 1722 and 30 June 1734, respectively). When they complained about the services rendered to them in Goa by one of the Kamats, Ergas and Silvera wondered what kind of "correspondence" (i.e., relationship) their trading partners' behavior represented ("não savemos que dezer deste modo de coresponder"); ASF, LCF, 1939, letter to Gopala and Fondu Camotim in Goa, 23 January 1727.
 100. XCHR, MCH/P, 14001, 14011. A Portuguese merchant opened his letter to the Kamats in 1782 by saying that he trusted their "good correspondency" ("Confiando-me na boa correspondencia de VM com que me tratava, escrevoy representando que se achara a fazenda prompta de nossa negociação"). XCHR, MHC/P, 3032.
 101. Raposo 1989: 242.
 102. CCM, AA1801, L/III.372.
 103. ASF, LCF, 1945, letters to Ephraim and David Cassuto in Florence (24 November 1740) and to Moses Cassuto in Florence (23 December 1740).

104. Aslanian 2007b: 132–33, 151n76, 155–57.
105. Rothschild 2001. See also Hirschman 1977; Hont 1987.
106. Silver 1997.
107. Defoe 1726: 34–35.
108. Wiseman, *Epistolæ commerciales*, pp. v, vii.
109. Sinapius, *Lettres à l'usage des négocians*, pp. 3, 7–8.
110. "Votre recommandation pour Vita Aghib, juif très riche, qui vous a été recommandé par une autre maison juive. . . . Il faut qu'il vienne de votre part pour que nous en fassions le cas. La prophétie s'accomplit bien chez nous, car c'est une nation que nous n'aimons pas, n'ayant pas voulu traiter ni faire aucun commerce avec eux" (Carrière 1973: 283). Carrière suggests that such statements would not have been made in Marseilles.
111. Hancock 2006, quoted with the author's permission.

8. ERGAS AND SILVERA'S HETEROGENEOUS TRADING NETWORKS

1. Owing to space limitations, I do not examine all the Italian towns and the European and Mediterranean cities that figure among the destinations of Ergas and Silvera's letters. Suffice it to say that Rome was an outlet for various import goods shipped to Jewish families such as the Ascarelli and the Baraffaeli. Mantua was the base of the imperial postal service. Bologna was a node of the transportation network through which goods traveled overland between central Italy and Venice, as well as a manufacturing center in its own right. In Reggio Emilia, the partners acquired some of the finest silk cloth that they exported; their suppliers there were all Italian Jews. In Messina, they bought raw silk from a Christian supplier (Jews had been expelled from Sicily in 1492 and were never readmitted). On the expansion in the export of raw silk from Calabria and Sicily in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Aymard 1965; G. Galasso 1994: 217–20.
2. Banks 2002: 156.
3. A comparison between the writing in their letter books and the signature of David Silvera in a petition to the prince suggests that he, as one of the partnership's principals, personally transcribed some of the outgoing letters (ASF, MP, 2474, fol. 412r). The presence of several hands in the letter books of any given year indicates that more than one partner and possibly one or more salaried employees tended to this task. On receiving a letter, it was common for merchants to mark the date of its arrival. The absence of the letters received by Ergas and Silvera precludes any analysis of the time that they took to reach different localities. Outgoing letters, however, often mention the date of the letter to which they were replying. These annotations are not sufficiently systematic and precise to compile statistics of travel times, but they can give us some idea of orders of magnitude. A letter from Venice could arrive in Livorno in as little as four days (ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Jacob and Joseph Belilios in Venice [7 November 1742]), whereas one from Amsterdam normally would take twenty to thirty days (ASF, LCF, 1953, letters to Solomon Gomes in

- Amsterdam [5 November 1742] and to Moses Cassuto in Amsterdam [19 November 1742]).
4. For the distinction between ordinary and specialized letters, see Melis 1972: 14–40. Ergas and Silvera's letter books bear no evidence of the distinction that Raymond de Roover (1948: 34–35; 1963b: 90) has found among the Medici business correspondence between the "company letters" (which dealt with the routine of trade and included information about local exchange rates) and "private letters" (which branch managers sent to Florence and might include information that was best kept secret). The same distinction appears in the correspondence of Greek commercial houses in nineteenth-century Marseilles: general letters were written in French and addressed to the whole company, but private letters were written in Greek and contained confidential information (Mandilara 1998: 177–78, also quoted in Pepelasis Minoglou 2005: 178). For the suspicion that Ergas and Silvera might have kept a separate and secret correspondence with their partner in Aleppo when discussing a highly risky investment, see Chap. 10.
 5. Excluding thirty letters dated 1704 or 1746 (the two years for which only a few letters exist), Ergas and Silvera wrote an average of 333 letters per year. By comparison, Charles Marescoe and Jacob David in London received an average of 875 per year between 1668 and 1680 (Roseveare 1987: 14). A family firm of Stockholm wholesale merchants sent out between 600 and 1,000 letters per year in the 1650s and 1660s. In the period 1752–61, another Stockholm firm received between 1,100 and 1,300 letters annually (Müller 1998: 238). The largest collection of merchants' letters in Europe belongs to Francesco Datini, who received and preserved with obsessive care more than 100,000 letters in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries (Melis 1962, 1: 13–17; Dini 1991). About 50,000 letters received by Simon Ruiz of Medina del Campo between 1558 and 1598 are analyzed and edited in Lapeyre 1955, Gentil da Silva 1959–61, Vázquez de Prada 1960, and Rufz Martin 1965. The 78,274 pieces of correspondence of the Roux of Marseilles (1728–1843) are widely used in Carrière 1973 and Carrière, Gutsatz, Courdurié, and Squarzonei 1976. Though very precious, the business letters of mediéval Jewish traders that form the core of Goitein's studies number about 1,200 (Goitein 1973b: 3–4). Greif's study is based on 250 such documents (Greif 2006: 60n3).
 6. Menkis 1988; Raposo 1989. Smaller collections of business letters survive in Amsterdam. For the letters of the jewelry trader Manuel Levy Duarte, see E. Samuel 1978–80. The letter books of the Colaço brothers of Amsterdam and Bayonne (1722–73) only include the letters sent from the Bayonne branch to the head of the family in Amsterdam and a few other correspondents. They thus fail to illuminate issues of agency relations (CAA, *Arch.* 5060; I thank Evelyne Oliel-Grausz for calling my attention to this collection). On the Colaço partnership, see Pieterse 1973. The GAA (*Arch.* 946) also houses sparse letters and ledgers of the brothers Abraham and Isaac da Costa dating to the first three decades of the eighteenth century. Studnicki-Gizbert (2007: 91–121) identifies several commercial letters by Sephardim and New Christians operating across the Atlantic in the archives of the Spanish Inquisition. Probably the largest set of business correspondence from the Western Sephardic world

- remains largely unexplored. It pertains to Aaron Lopez, who was born in Lisbon in 1731, arrived in Newport, Rhode Island, in 1752, and died there in 1782. It is preserved in several archives and private collections in North America, including those of the Newport Historical Society, the Rhode Island Historical Society, and the American Jewish Historical Society. Holly Snyder has begun to inventory Lopez's letters at the American Jewish Historical Society (<http://www.cjh.org/nhprc/AaronLopez.html>). David Lindo's business letters (1730–41), preserved in the Archives Départementales de la Gironde in Bordeaux, also await a proper study (Frances Malino kindly brought these documents to my attention). In his 1978 work Yogev used the correspondence of Yehiel Prager, a London-based Ashkenazic diamond dealer, which was written in Yiddish in the 1770s and 1780s.
7. A notable exception with regard to the trade with the Levant is the business correspondence carried on by the Radcliffes between London and Aleppo, which forms the basis of R. Davis 1967. On the scarcity of similar sources for the Levant, see Frangakis-Syrett 1991: 109.
 8. R. Davis 1967: 237.
 9. Paris 1957: 569–70.
 10. Fukasawa 1987: 24.
 11. ASF, LCF, 1933, 1942.
 12. ASF, LCF, 1943, 1946.
 13. ASF, LCF, 1946, 1948.
 14. CCM, AA1801, K.80.
 15. ASF, LCF, 1954, 1955, 1956, 1961.
 16. ASF, LCF, 1945, letter to Jorge Henrique Janquel in Hamburg (22 October 1743).
 17. For the importance of Hamburg in the Atlantic trade at the time, see Jeannin 1971: 62.
 18. "[S]iendo que este Parlamento a hecho libre la Compagnia de Turquía, le ofrecemos nostra casa d'Aleppo para mandarlos en lo que fuere de su agrado." ASF, LCF, 1957, letter to Benjamin Mendes da Costa in London (22 June 1744). "Turkish Company" was the common name of the Levant Company at the time. On the 1744 policies, see Wood 1935: 153–54. Benjamin Mendes da Costa became a naturalized British subject in 1725 (Ross 1970–73: 69). Other wealthy Sephardim also became British subjects, including Francis Salvador in 1719, Levi Sonsino in 1742, Judah Supino in 1744, and Moses Montefiore in 1756 (W. S. Samuel 1968–69: 122–23, 126, 128, 131). See also n. 107.
 19. Arkin 1975: 116. These fears were summarized in a pamphlet published anonymously and with no typographical notes, most probably in 1744, titled *Reasons against the bill now depending in Parliament, intituled, A bill for inlarging and regulating the trade to the Levant seas* [n.p.: 1744].
 20. PRO, SP, 110/29, fols. 18v–19r, 49v, 52r–v. For a description of the perilous road across high mountains and desert plains from Alexandretta to Aleppo by the abbé Carré, see Fawcett 1947, 1: 38.
 21. Of the forty-six letters sent by Ergas and Silvera to Alexandretta, thirty-three are addressed to Pierre Longy and his sons. Born in Cyprus of a French merchant and a

- Greek woman, Longy had moved in 1711 to Alexandretta, where he became the main factor of French houses. He was also a merchant in partnership with François Daniel (Fukasawa 1987: 112).
22. CCM, AA1801, J.949 (6 March 1743).
 23. ASF, LCF, 1939, letter to Joseph de los Rios in Amsterdam (21 April 1727).
 24. An example is found in CCM, AA1801, K.80 (2 July 1724).
 25. Indian pepper imported via England and English tin are mentioned in ASF, LCF, 1938, letters to Ergas and Silvera in Aleppo (5 December 1721, 28 February and 25 August 1724).
 26. ASF, LCF, 1941, letter to Daniel Bonfil in Venice (12 December 1732); ASF, LCF, 1945, letter to Jacob and Joseph Belilios in Venice (5 April 1737); ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Jacob and Joseph Belilios in Venice (9 June 1741).
 27. ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Benjamin Mendes da Costa in London (25 March 1743).
 28. In 1690 Armenians in Aleppo were granted special exemptions from customs duties in view of their importance to the town's trade (Eldem, Goffman, and Masters 1999: 33). See also Ferrier 1986; Fukasawa 1987: 37; Masters 1988: 62, 80; Matthee 1999: 91, 144–45, 171–72, 224.
 29. Masters 1988: 24–33; Marcus 1989: 148–50; Herzig 1990, 1992; Matthee 1999: 223–25.
 30. R. Davis 1967: 133, 138.
 31. Wood 1935: 75. By 1623, the Ottoman authorities revised their policy and permitted the export of cotton on a regular basis (Faroqhi 1994: 458). On the expansion of cotton production in Anatolia and its exportation via Smyrna, see Faroqhi 1987.
 32. Paris 1957: 510.
 33. Filippini 1979a: 43, 1998, 2: 128.
 34. Of these twenty-five letters, seven were sent to Isaac and Joseph Belilios (1723–25), who were closely associated with Ergas and Silvera in Livorno and Venice. The remaining eighteen were addressed to various Jewish, French, English, and Italian merchants: Mignot and Fabre (1710), Jacques Minol (1710), Jacob Garbi (1712–13), Thomas Bind (1713), Nathaniel Harley (1714–15), Richard Boyston (1715), Noah Carbonnel (1715), the Salomon brothers (1721, 1725), Lucas and Everard Faulkener (1724), Samuel Cleghan (1725), and Daniel Jona (1729).
 35. Paris 1957: 512. In 1742 a legal dispute concerning the payment of cargo insurance to Ergas and Silvera listed the varieties of cotton textiles imported from Cyprus (ASL, CGA: *Atti civili*, 809, no. 215).
 36. ASF, LCF, 1945, letter to Gabriel Héva, bishop of Cyprus, in Rome (18 May 1739). On the French imports of cotton from Acre, see Philipp 2001.
 37. Braudel 1972–73, 1: 285–86; D. Goffman 1990; Frangakis-Syrett 1992; Eldem, Goffman, and Masters 1999: 79–134.
 38. Bashan 1982–86: 57; Eldem, Goffman, and Masters 1999: 110–14.
 39. Schwarzfuchs 1984: 710. In 1672 Hayyim Benveniste became the first Jew to arrive in Smyrna from Livorno. More immigrated in the following fifteen years, and six families obtained French protection in 1687, but the 1688 earthquake caused the community to decline (Bashan 1982–86: 64n2).

40. Stoianovitch 1960; D. Goffman 1990: 83–85; Frangakis-Syrett 1992: 108–14. See also Chap. 4.
41. On the English practice, see R. Davis 1967: 202–3; Master 1988: 111. On the role played by Constantinople in the French financial networks in the Ottoman Empire, see Eldem 1999: 120–73.
42. In 1749 Antonio Pisani was an “interpreter of the Oriental languages” at the British embassy in Constantinople (PRO, SP, 97/34, fol. 168).
43. On the primacy of Constantinople in the trade between Venice and the Ottoman Empire during the first half of the eighteenth century (especially after a new peace treaty between Venice and the Turks was signed in 1733), see Mantran 1970: 385.
44. ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Joseph Giurado and Judah Pinto in Constantinople (16 November 1742).
45. Schwarzfuchs 1984: 724. In Cairo, Ergas and Silvera corresponded with Salmon Aghib and Nicola Borelli (the latter probably a Venetian merchant).
46. One of Ergas and Silvera's letters to Tunis was addressed to both Darmon and Lombroso. On the Lombrosos, see Chap. 2, n. 108. Mordochai Darmon was one of the major Jewish merchants in Tunis in the second half of the seventeenth century (Boubaker 1987: 153). Other members of the Ergas family of Livorno were more heavily engaged in trade with North Africa. Manuel Ergas was associated with Jacob and Raphael Lombroso of Tunis (*ibid.*, 156). His son was the agent of a number of Livornese Jews based in Tunis in 1742, including Gabriel Valensin, Isaac Alkaique, Abraham Carillo, Abraham Henriques, and Eljiah and Benjamin Espinosa (ASF, MNP, 25265, Giovanni Battista Gamera, fol. 174r–v).
47. Several Sephardic merchants in Venice and Livorno invested in the Venice Mint (the Zecca) and other institutions that issued state bonds. Venetian Sephardim recorded their investments in their last wills. See ASV, NT, Pietro Bracchi, 176.48 (1652), 765.112 (1662); ASV, NT, Andrea Calzavara, 260.830 (1672); ASV, NT, Luca Calzavara, 247.59 (1688); ASV, NT, Pietro Venier, 1008.60 (1687); ASV, NT, Cristoforo Brambilla, 166.35 (1678), 166.44 (1682), 167.281 (1698), 167.303 (1680), 167.306 (1692), 167.310 (1689); ASV, NT, Carlo Gabrieli, 518, fols. 234v–240v (1701), 519, fols. 154r–159v (1706) and 168v–171r (1703), 520, fols. 36v–39r (1710), 183v–188r (1715), 280r–282v (1718), and 521, fols. 1r–3r (1727). Investments by Livorno Jews in Venetian financial institutions are mentioned in ASF, NMP, Agostino Frugoni, 24733, fol. 134r–v (1723), 24735, fol. 91r–v (1733), 24736, fol. 17r–v (1735); ASF, NMP, Niccolò Mazzinghi, 27111, fols. 11v–12r, no. 22 (1748) and 27r–v, no. 46 (1748), 27112, fol. 15r–v, no. 24 (1752) and fols. 85v–86v, no. 154 (1754), 27113, fols. 13r–v, no. 16 (1763) and 59r–v, no. 81 (1765).
48. These financial activities are documented in thirty letters sent by “Abram e Isac Ergas” to Ascanio Saminiati, Niccolò Guasconi, and Co., (Università Commerciale “Luigi Bocconi,” Milan, Archivio Saminiati-Pazzi, seconda sezione, no. 172).
49. An important center of the diamond trade in the Middle Ages, Venice had revived this industry in the mid-seventeenth century, when one of its artisans, Vincenzo Peruzzi, invented the brilliant cut. As late as 1773 the Venetian guild of diamond cutters counted twenty-six members (sixteen masters, six journeymen, and four apprentices),

- and the guild of precious stone cutters had seventy-five members (thirty-five masters, twenty journeymen, and twenty apprentices); Sagredo 1857: 244.
50. C. Roth 1930b: 333, 336–39.
 51. G. Luzzatto 1950, 1962.
 52. The size of the Jews' contribution to the Venetian economy is controversial. The historiographical debate has focused on the period before the eighteenth century. According to some authors, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries Jews played only a minor role in Venetian trade, except in exchanges with Valona and Corfu (Tenenti 1959; Blumenkranz 1961). Others (e.g., Arbel 1989, 1995) show that in the mid-sixteenth century Jews had an important position in Venetian trade, at least in terms of the commerce between Venice and Constantinople.
 53. In 1621 Jacob Ergas declared that he had arrived in Venice from Tripoli, Lebanon (ASV, NA, Domenico Adami, 79, fol. 12r–v). Soon afterward, he was entrusted with various businesses by his coreligionists and figured among the heads of household of the Sephardim recently arrived in Venice (ASV, NA, Giovanni Piccini, 10767, fols. 182v–183r; ASV, VS: *II serie*, 63, 10 March 1625). In 1629 Mazaltò Hergas (probably unrelated to Jacob), called Turchetta, of Monastir, appeared before the Inquisition of Venice because she had refused to be baptized after her husband, Samuel Levi alias Felice Magalotti, had converted to Catholicism in Ferrara (Ioly Zorattini 1980–99, 9: 20–22, 101).
 54. In 1626–27 Jacob Ergas supplied pearls to Christian and Jewish merchants in Florence (Francesco Bonsi, Castro, and Abonsur). ASF, *Monte di Pietà nel Bigallo*, 821, “Negozio di Perle di Venezia,” fols. 1–4 (I thank Massimo Sanacore for bringing this archival reference to my attention). On the diamond trade that Jacob carried on with Florence in those years, see also ASV, NA, Giovanni Piccini, 10774, fols. 132v–133r, 167r.
 55. Conflicts between the jewelers' guild and Ergas are documented in ASV, *Arti*, 422. In 1655 Jacob Ergas claimed to be about sixty years old; at the time, he traded in diamonds and was engaged in trade with the Levant (ASV, NA, Giovanni Piccini, 10772, fols. 78r–79r).
 56. BRM, ACIV, 2. The name *Ergas* does not appear among the names of heads of household in the Venetian ghetto in 1761 (the only existing comprehensive list made after the one compiled in 1632–33). ASV, *Provveditori alla Sanità*, 573, fols. 215r–224v.
 57. ASF, LCF, 1931, letters to Ergas and Silvera in Aleppo (16 December 1704) and to Isaac Ergas in Venice (14 May 1706).
 58. ASF, LCF, 1935, letters to Matteo and Giacomo Zupana in Venice (30 August 1709) and to Prospero and Raphael Salonichio in Venice (23 January 1711).
 59. A precise profile of the Christian merchants mentioned in Ergas and Silvera's correspondence is rendered impossible by the paucity of literature about eighteenth-century Venetian merchants and the poor index of notary archives for a city with about 140,000 inhabitants.
 60. ASF, LCF, 1941, letter to Giacomo Mazzolà and his son in Murano, Venice (13 May 1729); ASF, LCF, 1945, letter to Pietro Trevano in Venice (20 November 1739). Saul

- Bonfil of Livorno bought Venetian mirrors from other Jewish merchants in Venice (ASV, NA, Carlo Gabrieli, 7236, 10 January 1720 *more veneto*).
61. ASF, LCF, 1945, letter to the “Compagnia della nuova institutione” in Venice (30 December 1735). On this small Venetian joint-stock company, see Panciera 2000: 121–35.
 62. ASV, VS: *II serie*, 64.127.
 63. ASF, NMP, Giovanni Battista Gamerra, 25266, fols. 151v–157v; ASF, NMP, Agostino Frugoni, 24734, fol. 66r–v. Information about this Livorno family also comes from the last wills of Jacob Baruch Carvaglio (1736) and his son Abraham (1747 and 1751); ASF, NMT, Giovanni Battista Gamerra, 25280, fols. 41r–43v, 81r–83v, 92r–94r. As late as 1788, Isaac Baruch Carvaglio, son of the late Isaac Hayyim, was said to be a Jew from Venice who had been residing in Livorno for several years (“ebreo di Venezia da più anni abitante e domiciliato in questa città di Livorno”); ASF, NMT, Niccolò Guidotti, 31386, fols. 9v–10v, 12v–14v.
 64. Poliakov 1957; ASF, MP, 2506, 2531; ASF, *Consiglio di Reggenza*, 266. In order to protect her dowry from her husband's creditors, in 1733 Sarah Belilios, wife of Abraham Baruch Carvaglio, gave a lawyer (*causidico*) power of attorney to represent her in the Venetian courts. Her mother-in-law, Esther Cabib, did likewise in 1735 (ASF, NMP, Agostino Frugoni, 24735, fol. 91r–v; 24737, fol. 17r–v).
 65. ASF, NMP, Giovanni Battista Gamerra, 25266, fols. 151v–157v; ASF, NMP, Giovanni Battista Gargani, 26271, fols. 11r–14v, no. 7. The partnership of Jacob Baruch Carvaglio appears in Ergas and Silvera's correspondence under both his Jewish name and his Christian pseudonym, Michele son of Diego Nunes Carvaglio.
 66. ASF, NMP, Giovanni Battista Gamerra, 25270, fols. 176r–177r, no. 346; 25272, fols. 2v–4v, no. 3. Manuel's father later dispatched his other son, Aaron, to Aleppo to oversee the estate (PRO, SP, 110/72, pt. 3, fols. 579r–580v; PRO, SP, 110/73, Aleppo, 7 September 1749). See also Chap. 4.
 67. ASV, NT, Pietro Bracchi, 180.1115; ASV, NT, Cristoforo Brambilla, 167.303; ASV, NT, Andrea Calzavara, 258.420; ASV, NT, Giovanni Piccini, 765.112; ASV, NT, 176–185.549.
 68. Perhaps the first member of the Belilios family to arrive in Tuscany, Daniel, son of Jacob, was admitted to the Jewish community of Pisa in 1677 (ASP, *Consoli del mare*, 1022).
 69. ASF, MP, 2497, fol. 458.
 70. ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Rabbi Jacob Belilios in Aleppo (9 April 1742). The Belilios of Venice also intermarried with other prominent Sephardic families of Livorno, such as the Pardo Roques (Filippini 1989: 142n50). In Venice, Jacob and Joseph Belilios acted as representatives of Abraham del Rio of Livorno in 1735 (ASF, NMP, Agostino Frugoni, 24735, fols. 163r–164r).
 71. ASF, NMP, Giovanni Battista Gamerra, 25265, fols. 42r–43r.
 72. ASL, *Dogana*, 10, no. 128; ASF, NMT, Giovanni Giacomo Mazzanti, 23707, fols. 121v–125r; ASF, NMT, Filippo Gonnella, 27200, fols. 64v–65v. Elsewhere Saul said that he was born in Crete (“oriundo di Canea”); ASF, *Consiglio di Reggenza*, 645, no.

50. In the last years of the eighteenth century, two Italian Jewish merchant houses by the name of Bonfil were still active in Constantinople (Braude 1991a: 341).
73. ASF, NMP, Giovanni Battista Gamerra, 25265, fols. 143v–147v; ASF, MP, 2481, fol. 518.
74. ASF, NMT, Filippo Gonnella, 27200, fols. 64v–65v. In 1761 Saul drew up a new testament, but the changes concerned only the management of the estate.
75. G. Levi 1997: 223.
76. On the importance of the tobacco trade for the Sephardim of Livorno, see Frattarelli Fischer 2003b: 106–7. Tobacco from the French Chesapeake was also smuggled via Genoa after 1721 (Price 1973: 446).
77. Carrière 1981: 43.
78. Giacchero 1972; C. Costantini 1978: 323–34; Grendi 1987: 327; Kirk 2005: 141–42, 155–85.
79. Baggiani 1992: 688.
80. ASF, MP, 2275; 2481, fol. 589; 2478, fol. 1036. See also Baggiani 1992: 688–89, 700–706.
81. Giacinto Del Vigna, the governor of Livorno, was sympathetic to this arrangement (ASF, MP, 2275).
82. Brizzolari 1971: 130–65.
83. *Ibid.*, 217; Urbani and Zazzu 1999, 2: 579.
84. In 1673 Abraham and Isaac Ergas of Livorno traded with Sephardic Jews of Genoa (Urbani and Zazzu 1999, 1: 414–16).
85. ASF, LCF, 1957, letter to Giovanni Battista Cambiaso in Genoa (17 April 1743).
86. On Giuseppe Giustiniani, see ASL, CGA: *Atti civili*, 803, no. 676; Urbani and Zazzu 1999: 2, 847–48.
87. On the investments of the Cambiaso family, ennobled in 1731, see Felloni 1971: 91–94. Giambattista Cambiaso was a partner in the company that managed the commerce of the island of Tabarca, including its coral trade, from 1719 to 1729 (Bitossi 1990: 186). In 1733 David Silvera, principal of Ergas and Silvera, gave Giovanni Maria and Bartolomeo Cambiaso full power of attorney to redeem his credits from Assereto and Paggi in Genoa after their bankruptcy (ASF, NMP, Agostino Frugoni, 24735, fol. 93r–v). The Lomellini family, one of the oldest aristocratic families of Genoa, ruled Tabarca (see Chap. 9). Giacomo Lomellini was very active in the business of marine insurance from 1719 to 1737 (Felloni 1971: 44–45).
88. Grendi 1993: 186–88. Members of the Giudici family also appear repeatedly on lists of members and officers of the coral-makers' guild of Genoa from 1697 to 1727.
89. JFB, 1726 fMe, fols. 1v–2r, 122v, 139v.
90. ASF, LCF, 1938, letter to Giovanni Andrea Cambiaso in Venice (29 March 1724); ASF, LCF, 1945, letters to Giovanni Battista Cambiaso in Venice (21 November 1736, 29 May 1737). See the testaments of Santino (1762) and Giovanni Battista (1770) Cambiaso in ASF, NT, Giuseppe Bernardo Bellan, 149.158 and ASF, NT, Pietro Paolo Arduin, 20.387, respectively.
91. Copies of the last wills of Genoese merchants with large investments in Livorno include those of Giovanni Maria Cambiaso (son of Bartolomeo and father of Giovanni

- Battista), who died in Genoa in 1702 (ASF, TF, 15, no. 324), and of Francesco Lomellini (son of Agostino), who died in Genoa in 1711 (ASF, TF, 16, no. 160). In 1743 the Genoese merchant Marco Gianandrea Lastrico drafted his last will in Genoa but wished to be buried in Livorno (ASF, TF, 19, no. 77). In the late 1770s the marquis Giovanni Cambiaso was deemed the richest man in the Tuscan port (Gorani 1986: 103; Sonnino 1909: 94).
92. Only one letter written in 1715 is addressed to a non-Jewish merchant of Amsterdam, on whose account Ergas and Silvera drew a bill of exchange (ASF, LCF, 1936, letter to Giovanni Paolo Weyhenmeyer in Amsterdam, 28 January 1715).
93. ASF, LCF, 1945, letter to Jacob de Silvera in Amsterdam (22 June 1736); ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Jacob de Silvera in Amsterdam (9 April 1742).
94. ASL, CGA: *Cause delegate*, 2500. The marriage of Daniel Marquez de Medina and Esther Ergas of Livorno was recorded in Amsterdam in 1728 (Verdooner and Snel 1990–91, 2: 658, 792), but it had already been celebrated in Livorno in 1715.
95. ASF, NMP, Giovanni Giuseppe Mazzanti, 23704, fols. 47r–48r, no. 33; ASF, NMP, Filippo Gonnella, 27191, fols. 107v–108v, no. 157. In 1724–28 the sales register of the Amsterdam office of the Dutch East India Company listed Raphael Emanuel Ergas as a seller of pepper, coffee, benjuin, and wood totaling nearly six thousand guilders (Bloom 1937: appendix C). A generation earlier, Isaac Ergas, alias Fernão Mendes Henriques, had shipped diamonds to Amsterdam from the Dutch East India Company's factory in Surat in 1686–89 (Edgar Samuel, pers. comm., August 2005). A certain David Ergas died in the Dutch dominion of Curaçao in 1762 (Emmanuel 1957: 524).
96. ASF, LCF, 1945, letters to Ferdinand and Jacob Rodrigues Silva in Amsterdam (21 January, 4 March, 1 April, and 15 July 1737).
97. Abraham del Rio, Joseph's brother, left Livorno for Amsterdam in 1720 (ASF, MP, 2474, fol. 422). The Ergas and del Rio families continued to intermarry in Livorno, where Rachel Ergas married Abraham del Rio in 1810 (ASF, MNT, Giovanni Domenico Ferroni, 31640, no. 7).
98. Jacob and Elijah Nunes Bernal were likely related to Abraham Nunes Bernal, Ergas and Silvera's cashier in Livorno (ASF, LCF, 1954, fol. 1, *passim*). Abraham's son Elijah, a nephew of Jacob Silvera, settled in Amsterdam, where he died prematurely in 1741. ASF, LCF, 1945, letter to Ephraim and David Cassuto in Florence (24 November 1740); ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Aaron Uziel in Naples (27 February 1741).
99. In the 1720s Ergas and Silvera still shipped some of the rough diamonds that they received from Goa to Amsterdam. ASF, LCF, 1937, letters to Medici and Beroardi in Lisbon (1 July 1720), to Jacob Nunes Bernal in Amsterdam (14 October 1720), and to Joseph de los Rios in Amsterdam (14 October 1720); ASF, LCF, 1938, letter to Joseph de los Rios in Amsterdam (20 June 1721). Other members of the Ergas family also continued to send uncut diamonds from Livorno to Amsterdam (ASF, NMT, 2719, fols. 108v–109r, no. 157).
100. In 1722 Joseph Gomes Silvera set up a company with Moses Pereira da Costa and Isaac Cordova to trade in lottery tickets in Amsterdam; GAA; NA, 8590, fol. 234 (Cá-

- tia Antunes kindly alerted me to this document). Unlike other Sephardim of Livorno, Ergas and Silvera never invested in the Dutch public debt or in East India Company stocks.
101. The precise contribution of Sephardic merchant-bankers to the rise and consolidation of Dutch commercial capitalism and its trading patterns and financial institutions has long been debated because it is difficult to measure. Keen on praising their achievements, Bloom (1937) overestimated the extent of the economic role of Dutch Sephardim. In contrast, van Dillen (1935, 1940) downplayed the Sephardic contribution to the Dutch golden age. For a more balanced view, see Barbour 1950: 25. For an optimistic reassessment of the presence of Portuguese Jewish merchants in early seventeenth-century Amsterdam, see Vlesing 1995: 236.
 102. Israel 1978, 1983, 1984b, 1987b, 1989b, 2002a.
 103. ASF, LCF, 1939, letter to Joseph de los Rios in Amsterdam (21 April 1727). Minor transactions between Ergas and Silvera and Joseph and Raphael Franco in Livorno are recorded in ASF, LCF, 1942, fols. 11, 21 (Debts, 13 February 1732; Debts, 18 August 1732); ASF, LCF, 1943, fol. 4 (Credits, 10 April 1710).
 104. E. Samuel 1966: 133.
 105. E. Samuel 1988–90b: 167. Zahedieh (1999: 158) calculates that there were seven Jewish firms among the twenty-two largest London firms exporting to the West Indies in 1686. This percentage cannot, however, be taken as the standard for other periods and branches of trade.
 106. In a classic study, Clapham (1945, 1: 279–82) stresses the large percentage of Spanish and Portuguese Jews among the investors in the Bank of England. Recent calculations show that foreigners, naturalized persons, Huguenots, Quakers, and Jews accounted for 6 percent of the Bank's shareholders and 10 percent of the East India Company's shareholders in 1712 but have found that a few individuals among these groups were among the wealthiest and most active of shareholders (Carruthers 1996: 156–57). Many of the Sephardim who invested in the London financial market resided in Amsterdam (Furber 1940; Giuseppi 1955–59, 1962).
 107. On the legal processes by which wealthy Sephardic merchants acquired second-class citizenship (the so-called letters of endenization) or became full-fledged English subjects, see W. S. Samuel 1968–69; Ross 1970–73. For a list of Sephardic immigrants to London (except for those who were endenized), see Lipman 1971.
 108. C. Roth 1964: 194, 233; Yogevev 1978; Katz 1994: 176–77; Pollins 1982: 42–60.
 109. The presence of individuals named Silvera (or Silveira) in London can be traced back to the 1695 census (Arnold 1962: 111), but none appears to be related to those in Livorno. Abraham Silvera died in the English capital on 21 Adar 5455, or 8 March 1695 (L. D. Barnett 1962: 7). In 1736 Esther Attias Silveira married Joseph Masias (Abecassis 1990–91, 1: 453, 3: 395). In 1753 Moses da Sola Silvera was a jeweler in London (GAA, NA, 10454, fol. 1027). In 1789 Moses Silveira de Matos married Oro Benhamu (Abecassis 1990–91, 2: 15). In 1798 Raphael Silveira de Sax was listed as a freemason (Shaftesley 1973–75: 188).
 110. ASF, LCF, 1937, letters to Diego Mendes in London (26 February 1717, 4 March 1718). According to Filippini's calculations, which are based on the insurance premi-

- ums charged in Livorno, silk made up 52.73 percent of the goods exported by Jewish traders from Livorno to London in 1765, and coral accounted for 31.55 percent. In 1789 the percentage of silk was almost the same, but coral accounted for only 13.07 percent of the exports (Filippini 1987: 51–52; see also Chap. 4, n. 97). No aggregate data are available for the early eighteenth century.
111. Created in 1695, lottery tickets enjoyed great popularity and yielded returns of 6 percent until 1716, 5 percent from 1717 to 1727, and 4 percent thereafter (Neal 1990: 14, 51–52). Between 1711 and 1714 the English government printed 520,000 lottery tickets for £10 and 38,000 for £100 (R. Dale 2004: 24). Even bankers such as Gabriel de Silva of Bordeaux routinely bought English lottery tickets but also purchased annuities from the British public debt (Raposo 1989: 222–23).
 112. ASF, LCF, 1953, letters to Nathan Levi Sonsino in London (27 February 1741) and to Judah Supino and his son in London (15 May and 2 September 1741, 1 January 1742). ASF, LCF, 1957, letter to Benjamin Mendes da Costa in London (22 July 1743). In 1744 Ergas and Silvera brought a civil suit against an insurance company in London. They wished to recover cargo loaded in Syria on a neutral ship flying a French flag that, deviating from the original plan, had stopped in Malta and threatened not to deliver the goods to Livorno (ASL, CGA: *Atti civili*, 845, no. 794).
 113. Yogevev 1978: 41, 73, 109, 118–19, 144–45, 170, 174.
 114. Giuseppi 1955–59: 61. In the second half of the seventeenth century, the Mendes da Costa family had a virtual monopoly of English imports of brazilwood (Woolf 1970–73: 38).
 115. Francis Salvador alias Daniel Jessurun Rodrigues married Rachel Mendes da Costa, sister of Benjamin. He died in 1754. His son Joseph Salvador (1716–86) took over his father's business, married Rachel Lopes Suasso of Amsterdam, and made a large fortune in the Iberian trade while also investing in the Caribbean trade and the diamond trade, only to die a poor man in South Carolina. In the 1750s and 1760s he exerted considerable influence on British politics and finance (see n. 104 and Chap. 9, n. 161). One of his daughters married Francis Salvador, who fought in the American Revolution (Hyamson 1951: 117; Woolf 1962–67).
 116. Ergas and Silvera's correspondence mentions other Livornese Jews moving to and from London. See ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Nathan Levi Sonsino in London (1 January 1742); ASF, LCF, 1957, letter to Moses Montefiore in London (14 October 1743). See also ASF, NMT, Filippo Gonnella, 27200, fol. 701–v, no. 28, for the testament of Chiara Supino of London, who came to Livorno to marry the merchant Abraham Sara.
 117. R. Davis 1970: 203–4.
 118. ASF, LCF, 1957, letters to Lazare Prudent in Marseilles (18 November 1743) and to Honoré Bres in Marseilles (18 November 1743, 24 April 1744).
 119. CCM, AA1801, J.941.
 120. On Fouquier and Doudon, see Carrière 1973: 860. Ergas and Silvera asked Prudent to offer hospitality to their agent Moses Cassuto in Marseilles (ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Manuel de Jacob and his brothers and Angelo Levi Sonsino, 12 May 1741).
 121. Carrière 1973: 473, 556, 602, 613.

122. *Ibid.*, 95, 242, 294.
123. *Ibid.*, 106, 881, 900.
124. *Ibid.*, 929–30.
125. *Ibid.*, 268, 743, 932, 294.
126. *Ibid.*, 250, 276.
127. Ergas and Silvera's letter was addressed to "Monsieur Fabre, conseiller et secretaire du Roi, Maison Couronne de France." ASF, LCF, 1931 (25 November 1707). On Joseph Fabre, see Fournier 1920: 42–58; Carrière 1973: 78, 106, 254, 305, 804.
128. Ergas and Silvera's correspondents in Lisbon, listed according to the number of letters sent to them between 1713 and 1744, were Medici and Beroardi (82), Ravara (51), Lazzaro Maria Cambiaso (36), Medici and Niccolini (16), Schutte and Buess (15), Olivieri and van den Brugge (12), Andrea Martellucci (10), Stefano Olivieri (7), Laurent Reisson (5), Barducci, Giudici, and Perini (4), Gianmaria Cambiaso (2), Antonio Manzoni (1), and Giacomo Manzoni (1). Laurent Reisson was the most important French merchant in Lisbon in the early eighteenth century and often served as an intermediary for other Italians as well (Labourdette 1988: 29, 667, 670–71, 674). In the 1740s the Dutch firm of Schutte, Buess, and Renner was among the correspondents of prosperous English merchants involved in the trade with Portugal (Sutherland 1933: 24).
129. In Ergas and Silvera's account books, transactions with Lisbon are recorded under various pseudonyms. Only one letter names the partnership Ergas and Silvera as such: ASF, LCF, 1957, letter to Medici and Niccolini in Lisbon (18 November 1744). The Franco family also omitted its Jewish name from notary deeds that concerned their trade with Lisbon and Goa (Filippini 1989: 132n22). Most powers of attorney registered by Ergas and Silvera with Christian notaries in Livorno in favor of traders in Lisbon are recorded under their Christian pseudonyms.
130. Filippini 1998, 1: 55. In the late eighteenth century the Sephardic partnership of Daniel Bonfil and sons imported considerable amounts of colonial goods to Venice from Lisbon (G. Levi 1997: 240).
131. After 1642 the English signed favorable commercial treaties with Portugal that culminated in the Methuen treaty of 1703, which granted customs exemptions to English cloth and woolen goods imported to Portugal and to Portuguese wines shipped to England (Lodge 1933; Fisher 1971, 1981).
132. Fisher 1981: 23–25.
133. ASF, *Carte strozziane*, serie 1, 106, fols. 158–78, 182–90.
134. Guarnieri 1962: 613–14.
135. *Description de la ville de Lisbonne* 1730: 249–50, 227–28. In 1716 the French consul in Lisbon also remarked on the healthy condition of the confraternity of Loreto and its merchants (ANP, AE, B/III/385, "Mémoire sur les consuls nationaux établis en Portugal").
136. Verlinden 1957; Rau 1957, 1966.
137. Completed in 1577 (probably with the help of Filippo Terzi, a renowned architect active in Lisbon at the service of Philip II), the first church of Our Lady of Loreto burned down in 1651. The new church (completed in 1676) survived the devastating

- earthquake of 1755 and today is one of the few buildings of its age in downtown Lisbon. In 1523 the Italian merchants managed to have the church put under the direct patronage of the pope and affiliated with San Giovanni Laterano in Rome (Ataíde and Meco 1986).
138. The tax was generally fixed at 0.25 percent but was raised to 0.5 percent between 1651 and 1719 in order to finance the reconstruction of the church (Albini 1982). Albini was the first to write about the parish records of the church of Loreto in Lisbon. Although they consist primarily of documents concerning the church's architectural renovations and artistic works, these archives include fiscal surveys, copies of testaments, and court papers of prominent merchants. I worked in these parish archives in 1997 and again in 2001. In between my visits, a visiting scholar began to reclassify the collections but did not complete the work. As a consequence it is not always possible to track documents according to the older inventory—hence the indication in my notes of the old classification (o.c.) and new (n.c.).
139. The place of origin of nine of these individuals is unknown (NSL, Caixa VII, no. 42.1 [o.c.]). A list of merchant partnerships run by Tuscan subjects everywhere in the world in 1674 included only three in Lisbon. Three of them also appear in the rosters of the Loreto congregation (ASF, *Archivio Magalotti*, 225, fols. 331–333). If analyzed through the lens of Portuguese sources alone, the activities of Genoese and Tuscan merchants who resided in Lisbon could not be fully reconstructed because private business documents are extremely rare in Portugal, and the archives of the church of Loreto are poor in details about trade. In addition, the pervasive surveillance exerted by the Inquisition for more than three centuries eliminated most traces of the relations between New and Old Christians in documents other than those produced by the Inquisition itself. Ergas and Silvera's business correspondence and the notary deeds of other Sephardim of Livorno thus shed more light on the activities of Italian merchants resident in Lisbon than any other records.
140. NSL, Caixa XI, no. 14 (o.c.) / Caixa V, no. 13 (n.c.).
141. This fact is ignored in older, more nationalistic studies of the Italian community in Lisbon in the early modern period (e.g., Peragallo 1904).
142. In 1729, for example, the Tuscan merchants of Lisbon refused to pay the tax that the consul of Genoa wanted to levy in order to subsidize the celebration of the marriage between the Infanta of Spain and the crown prince of Portugal. They contended that the tax was intended to sponsor an event in which the entire Italian community was represented in its corporate identity and therefore had to be levied by the church, not by a consul. "Memorie e risoluzioni di tuta la nazione italiana dopo l'incendio della chiesa in 1651 respetive la compagnia della nazione sopra l'archi trionfali," in NSL, Caixa 1, no. 16 (o.c.).
143. ASF, MP, 6358, pt. 2 (25 July 1690).
144. Jacques Heers (1960: 143, 1961: 487) contends that the Genoese who moved to Lisbon adopted "une mentalité Atlantique," unlike those who settled in Seville and maintained closer ties to Genoa. Marco Spallanzani (1997: 35) also claims that the Florentines increasingly adopted Portuguese culture and left behind the Florentine.
145. For the late fifteenth century, see Rau 1982: 209. In the seventeenth century, João

- Thomaz Ghersi of Genoa was one of the few Italian merchants in Lisbon to request membership in the prestigious Order of Christ, to which he was admitted in 1685. On Ghersi, his son, and his brother, see ANTT, *Habilitações da Ordem de Christo*, letra J, maço 93, no. 96; ANTT, RGT, livro 29, fols. 99v–102r and livro 107, fols. 1v–3v; NSL, Caixa XII, no. 130 (n.c.). On the military orders of seventeenth-century Portugal, see Dutra 1971; de Olival 2001.
146. On the Italians and other foreigners in the mercantile community of Lisbon during the second half of the eighteenth century, see Pedreira 1995: 226–30.
 147. JFB, 1726 fMe, fol. 139v. As we may evince from his last will, drafted in Florence in 1745, Tommaso Gaetano Medici was not personally involved in trade (ASF, MNT, Filippo Boncristiani, 25838, fols. 36v–45r, no. 26), but he subsidized his brother's accomandite (and those of others) in Lisbon (see Chap. 5, n. 55).
 148. Ghilardi 1994; ASF, *Segreteria e ministero degli esteri*, 2240 (4 February 1737).
 149. JFB, 1726 fMe, fol. 98v.
 150. NSL, Caixa IV, no. 4.8 (o.c.) / Caixa IV, no. 13 (n.c.).
 151. The partnership was formed thanks to the capital invested by some Florentine nobles in 1722 and again in 1736. In 1737 it suffered great losses. Beroardi bought out his partner's shares and credits and continued his activities alone. He conducted trade with Spanish America (Calha de Lima, Vera Cruz, and Cartagena) and between Lisbon and Brazil along with Francisco Pinheiro (Lisanti 1973: cxxxi; Donovan 1990: 160, 162).
 152. Beroardi died in Lisbon on 29 November 1748. His testament established that the estate would pass to the church of Loreto in Lisbon in the event that the line of his male descendents was extinguished (ANTT, RGT, livro 244, fols. 1r–5v). When this occurred in 1855, an Italian translation of his testament was drawn up (NSL, Caixa XIII [n.c.]).
 153. Close ties to Genoa are indicated in the testaments of Bento Ravara (1685), the marquis Pedro Francisco Ravara (1717), Joseph Ravara (1721), and Anna Maria Guido, marquise of Ravara (1753), which were all drafted in Lisbon. See ANTT, RGT, livro 99, fols. 118v–119v; livro 150, fols. 187v–190v; livro 166, fols. 106v–109v; livro 258, fols. 74r–77r. In the 1780s a certain Filippo Vittorio Ravara was an agent in Madrid for Genoese investors (Felloni 1971: 88).
 154. In 1623 and 1627 royal decrees were promulgated that ordered that all New Christians be repatriated (Rego 1981: 67). On the Catholicization of Portuguese India more generally, see Fischel 1956–57; Boxer 1969: 65–83, 228–48; Cunha 1995. E. Samuel (1978–80: 14) finds that the Sephardim of Amsterdam feared hiring New Christian agents in Goa after the 1670s.
 155. De Souza 1975b: 442.
 156. Pearson 1972; de Souza 1975a: 32. The Saraswats were originally a thriving merchant group from the Kanara coast, south of Goa, which was conquered by the Portuguese in the second half of the sixteenth century (Subrahmanyam 1990: 260–65).
 157. Pissurlencar 1952: lii–lv, 1953–57, V: 528n. On everyday Catholic-Hindu relations in eighteenth-century Goa, see Lopes 2001. On the Saraswats, see Wagle 1970; Conlon

- 1977; Pearson 1981, who notes that Conlon's "Saraswat Brahmans" formed a small subgroup of the Gaud Saraswat Brahmin caste (111–1215).
158. Fawcett 1947, 1: 217.
 159. Boxer 1980: 43; Disney 1986; Pearson 1990; Pinto 1990. On Hindu and other native mercantile communities in the Indian Ocean, see Pearson 1981; Habib 1990; Subrahmanyam and Bayly 1990; Das Gupta 2001.
 160. Furber 1969; Kling and Pearson 1979. See also Scammell 1988.
 161. Subrahmanyam 1990: 252–59.
 162. Arasaratnam 1986.
 163. The role of various branches of the Kamat family, including Gopala and Fondu Camotim, in levying taxes on villages, land holdings, and maritime trade on behalf of the Portuguese in the region of Goa during the first half of the eighteenth century can be gauged by the petitions that they submitted to the Council of Finances of the Estado da Índia. See, e.g., HAG, PDCF, 1133, fols. 5r, 63r, 69v, 134v, 162v; 1138, fols. 4r–v, 15v, 37v–38r, 41r–v, 51r–v, 62v–63r, 81v–82v, 96v, 158r; 1139, fols. 28r, 30, 65r, 146r–v, 163r, 177v, 203r–v, 207r; 1140, fols. 65r–70v, 176r–v; 1147, fols. 134r–v; 1148, fols. 198v–199r, 265r–267v. The Kamats also owned and managed shops where they sold silk and other textiles in town (HAG, PDCF, 1139, fols. 198v–201v). On the Kamats' economic activities, see also Pearson 1972; de Souza 1989; Pinto 1994: 53–56. On their role as official translators of the Estado da Índia, see Pissurlencar 1952: xliii, lv, lvii, 1953–57, 5: 62, 528n, 536–37, 555–57.
 164. Priolkar 1961: 141.
 165. Ergas and Silvera's correspondents in Goa also included Hari and Panduranga Parubu, Regolato Belacrisme, Panduranga and Sedaxiva Naiques (Portuguese for Naik), and Babuxa Quenny. The Naiks were a Brahmin family from Baçaim who assisted the Portuguese as official translators (Pissurlencar 1952: l, lii).
 166. In their letters to the Camotins, Ergas and Silvera requested indigo (18 January 1717, 24 December 1717), coffee or pepper (17 January 1718, 2 January 1719), pepper alone (16 February 1739), shellac (29 January 1719, 7 February 1730, 1 February 1731), or fine textiles (20 January 1713) when good-quality diamonds or rubies were not available. See ASF, LCF, 1935, 1937, 1941, 1945. In 1743 they received small quantities of a drug from southern India called *folha do Balagate* (ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Schutte and Buess in Lisbon, 27 August 1742). In the late eighteenth century the Kamats still traded with Europeans for coral, with mixed success (Carreira 1991).
 167. ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Fondu Camotim and Babuxa Quenny in Goa (13 March 1743). Most of the Indian cottons were sold in Lisbon, and the diamonds were shipped to Livorno; ASF, LCF, 1957, letter to Schutte and Buess in Lisbon (22 April 1743).
 168. HAG, PDCF, 1135, fols. 80r–81v, 84v–85r; 1140, fols. 53r, 96r–v; 1143, fols. 19r–20r; 1148, fols. 271v–273r; 1149, fols. 260v–261v. Robbed of 130,000 xerafins in 1739, he also was forced to pay the equivalent amount as a fine (Pissurlencar 1957: 277–81, 302). The wealthy Jesuit order, by comparison, contributed a total of one hundred thousand xerafins. Pearson (1990: 154) speculates that Fondu Camotim (Phondu Kamat) must have been wealthier, not more patriotic, than the Jesuits. During the

- Lisbon earthquake of 1755, the Camotins lost a consignment of goods worth ninety-six thousand xerafins (de Souza 1985: 935–36).
169. This observation is based on an extensive if not systematic analysis of notary deeds (especially powers of attorney) of Jewish merchants based in Livorno as well as the secondary literature, in particular, the studies collected in Filippini 1998.
 170. Raposo 1989: 161, 223.
 171. *Ibid.*, 89–90, 97, 248–61.
 172. Menkis 1988: 151–245.

9. THE EXCHANGE OF MEDITERRANEAN CORAL AND INDIAN DIAMONDS

1. The major exporters of coral are now Indonesia, China, and the Philippines (Green and Shirley 1999).
2. Goitein 1967–93, 1: 47, 100, 153–54, 303, 2008: 170, 173, 188, 217, 228, 545; Constable 1994: 189. Because it was believed that they warded off the “evil eye,” coral beads and coral jewelry were given as gifts to Jewish newborns and brides in the twelfth century (Goitein 2008: 346, 783).
3. On the Venetian trade in coral, see Lane 1940: 582n5; Tucci 1957: 75, 79, 89, 189–95, 211, 221–22. On the Genoese and Tabarca, see Heers 1961: 201, 378, 426–29; Bitossi 1990: 167–88. About 1,500 Genoese resided in Tabarca from the early sixteenth to the early eighteenth century, about 350 to 500 of them were employed in coral fishing (Peyssonnel 1987: 163; Bitossi 1997: 217n6; Piccinno 2003: 52).
4. Viterbo 1903; Verlinden 1957: 621; Rau 1957, 1971: 101–2; Gentil da Silva 1966: 357; Melis 1990: 12; Tognetti 1999: 223–24.
5. Masson 1908.
6. De Coutre 1991: 345–56; Eltis 2000: 167; Guarnieri 1962: 613.
7. Polo 2001: 56.
8. Gans 1630: 40–41.
9. Tavernier 1676–77, 2: 381. See also Chappuzeau 1665: 79.
10. Raynal 1776, 1: 409.
11. Grendi 1993: 151.
12. Tescione 1968: 88–93. On coral fishing along the Dalmatian coast and coral manufacturing in Venice in the eighteenth century, see ASV, VS: *II serie*, 356.125, 357.62, 359.93, 360.21, 362.152, 367.123, 387.K2° 6, 389.69, 402.42, 403.100.
13. The discovery was publicized in the *Philosophical Transactions* of the Royal Society of London (Peyssonnel and Watson 1751–52) and incorporated in the *Encyclopédie* soon afterward (Diderot and D’Alembert 1751–80, 4: 194–96). In the second edition of their *Dictionnaire universel de commerce*, Savary des Bruslons and Savary (1759–65, 2: 234–40) only mentioned this finding in passing. The English translation of their work repeated that “coral is a plant of a peculiar structure and figure” (Postlethwayte 1774, 1: s.v. “coral”). An Italian commercial dictionary in circulation in the 1770s cited Peyssonnel’s discovery but continued to call coral a plant (*Dizionario* 1770–71, 2: 31–33).
14. ASF, LCF, 1935, letter to Giovanni Battista and Niccolò Castro in Genoa (29 November 1714). By the end of the seventeenth century, Tunisia exported more cereal, wool, leather, and wax than coral (Masson 1903: 504–5; Boubaker 1987: 104–28). The French nonetheless renewed their rights to fish for coral off the coast of Algiers and Tunis and in the Gulf of Stora in article 12 of the Capitulations of 1740 (Noradounghian 1897–1903, 1: 282).
15. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Torre del Greco held a near monopoly on the world’s coral production.
16. Founded in 1492, the Genoese coral workers’ guild forbade its merchants from selling coral to emissaries of Livorno merchants in 1626 (and repeatedly thereafter). In 1691 it prohibited the enrollment of foreign merchants after learning that they pretended to work independently but were really agents of merchants in Livorno (Pastiné 1933: 353, 360). Some coral was sent from Cervo, Liguria to Livorno in 1612 (Grendi 1993: 151).
17. On industrial districts, see in particular Becattini 2004.
18. Tavernier 1676–77, 2: 379; Tescione 1968: 113; Piccinno 2003: 53. On the perils of coral fishing, see Savary des Bruslons and Savary 1723–30, 1: 1505. On its unique features, see Lacaze-Duthiers 1864: 219. On coral fishing in the Mediterranean, see also Ghidiglia 1892; Podestà 1877–84; Lacroix 1982; Filesi 1985; Grendi 1993: 131–61.
19. ASF, *Miscellanea Finanze A*, 366, also quoted in Sonnino 1909: 57. On 22 November 1782 a Florence newspaper, the *Gazzetta Universale*, relayed news of the end of a successful coral fair in Livorno, which garnered sales of more than 100,000 zecchini (about 230,000 pieces of eight). See also Pera 1888: 389.
20. In 1702 a new regulation concerning coral fishing in Tuscan seas imposed the payment of a tax and the obligation to bring all coral to Livorno. At the time, fishermen from Naples and Lipari dominated this activity (ASL, *Dogana*, 5, fols. 147, 186, 191). On the erosion of coral reefs in Tuscany, see ASF, MP, 2517, fol. 158r–v and 2519, fols. 189r, 194r; ASL, GCM, 963, fol. 71; ASL, GCM, 1219. In 1727 Ergas and Silvera lamented the paucity of Tuscan coral (ASF, LCF, 1939, letter to Gopala and Fondu Camotim in Goa, 24 January 1727).
21. Boot 1609: 305; Gans 1630: 41–47; Targioni Tozzetti 1768–79, 2: 458; Lacaze-Duthiers 1864: 332. Ergas and Silvera’s orders and shipments detail a large variety of qualities and colors, including black coral. See ASF, LCF, 1945, letter to Medici and Niccolini in Lisbon (16 February 1739); ASF, LCF, 1957, letters to Giuseppe Giustiniani in Genoa (22 April and 13 May 1744). Raw coral was sorted into pieces that looked nearly perfect (*netto*), those that showed minor holes (*intranetto*), and those with the most defects (*camolato*). Once polished, coral beads were strung together in various assortments. Among the most common were *grossezza* (strings of large and uniform beads), *mezzania* (strings of medium-sized beads), *filotti* (strings of small-sized beads), and *migliari* (strings of low-quality beads).
22. ASL, *Dogana*, 44, fol. 752; Cantini 1800–32, 22: 10–11.
23. A broker specializing in coral was mentioned in Pisa in 1599 (Mazzei 1991: 32). In Livorno documentation of such brokers begins in 1682. Ten years later, commission charges on retail sales were fixed at 1 percent for ordinary coral and 3 percent for the

- tinest twigs of coral (ASL, *Dogana*, 42, s.v. “corallo,” “terraglio,” and “corallo, sensali di”). In 1718 the port authorities again sought to regulate the activities of brokers of raw coral (ASL, *Dogana*, 6, nos. 42, 50).
24. ASF, NMP, Giovanni Giuseppe Mazzanti, 23705, fols. 177v–179r, no. 149: Sea loans combined credit with marine insurance. The borrower offered the boat or the cargo as a guarantee, and the investor bore all risks. Because the risks at sea were high—especially in times of war—interest rates on sea loans could reach as high as 15 percent. Sea loans were also called *respondentia* or *bottomry* loans.
 25. ASF, *Auditore delle Riformagioni*, 44, nos. 385–386 and 45, nos. 345–347; Mazzei 1991: 34, 40–42; Frattarelli Fischer 1997c: 89, 1998b: 37; Berti 2003: 93–140. Cosimo I had sought to favor coral fishing in Tuscan waters and attract artisans from Sicily to work coral in Pisa (Galluzzi 1781, 2: 159, 222). In 1571 he appointed an official charged with buying coral in Livorno every Sunday (Diaz 1976: 145). R. Toaff (1990: 389) speculates that this official, Giuseppe Bono, may be identified as the Levantine Jew Joseph Bueno.
 26. Pastiné 1933: 335–38.
 27. Martini 1969: 55–57; Montesquieu 1950, 2: 816–17. More is known about coral workers in nineteenth-century Italy, when Livorno specialized in the production of coral beads for colonial markets. Torre del Greco later developed an artistic tradition of coral working (Ghidiglia 1892: 17–24; Buonafalce 2007).
 28. Guarnieri 1962: 616. See also Vivoli 1842, 3: 224–25, 456, 457n116.
 29. ASF, *Consiglio di reggenza*, 105, also quoted in Mangio 1978a: 900. In 1751 the governor of Livorno, Marquis Ginori, stressed the importance of coral for the local economy (ASF, *Consiglio di reggenza*, 65).
 30. Gorani 1986: 91; Coppini 1993: 125.
 31. On Sceriman, see Sanacore 1998: 130n16; ASF, MP, 2275 (letter of the governor of Livorno, Giacinto Del Vigna, to Carlo Rinuccini, 16 August 1723). On Rustan, see Frattarelli Fischer 2006c: 30. Some scholars (Macler 1904; Kévonian 1975: 236n138) claim that Armenians established coral manufacturing in Livorno as early as the late sixteenth century, but this contention is not supported by documentary evidence.
 32. Cassandro 1983a: 93–94; R. Toaff 1990: 389–90.
 33. Frattarelli Fischer 1998b: 88.
 34. Targioni Tozzetti 1768–79, 2: 458. Targioni Tozzetti’s description was incorporated in Lalande’s *Voyage d’un français en Italie* (1769), quoted in Dal Pane 1971, 1: 3n. On the Francos and coral production in Livorno, see ASF, MP, 2474, fol. 380; C. Roth 1931: 11. In the seventeenth century, this family invested heavily in silk manufacturing but also had holdings in sugar refining and soap making (ASF, *Auditore delle Riformagioni*, 44, nos. 275–288 and 45, nos. 130–131, 211–212; ASF, *Pratica segreta*, 192, fols. 50r–v, 70r–v, 105v–106r; R. Toaff 1990: 148, 388). On Jewish investments in Tuscan industries more generally, see Frattarelli Fischer 1997a, 2003b.
 35. ASF, MP, 2495, 2521; Frattarelli Fischer 1983: 894n38.
 36. ASF, *Segreteria di finanze e affari prima del 1788*, 809.
 37. ASL, GCM, 978, fols. 41v–44r.

38. Andrea Metra, *Il mentore perfetto dei negozianti* (Trieste, 1793–97), quoted in Braude 1991a: 342. In 1841 Jews still controlled the twelve coral-producing firms in town (Sercia Gianforma 1990: 49).
39. ASF, *Arte dei giudici e notai (Proconsolo)*, 608. Samuel Lusena initiated a lawsuit claiming that his father had invested not only labor but also liquid capital in the firm and thus was entitled to larger shares than those he had received. In 1773 the *Auditore vicario* of Pisa (the civil tribunal with jurisdiction over Jews in Pisa) ruled in favor of Carvaglio. A Florentine appeals court affirmed the sentence two years later (ASF, *Ruota Civile*, 4802, fols. 383r–392r). Copies of these legal papers can also be found in ASL, *Raccolta Pachò*, vol. 31, nos. 8–9. Additional information comes from the testaments of Moses Baruch Carvaglio of 1752, 1756, and 1760 (ASF, NMT, Filippo Filippini, 25175, fols. 85r–89v, 101r–108r, 123r–126v). The location of the workshop in Sant’Andrea Fuori Porta is mentioned in ASF, NMT, Giovanni Lorenzo Meazzoli, 26541, fols. 21v–26v. On the Lusena family’s involvement in the coral trade with Genoa, see also Urbani and Zazzu 1999, 2: 507.
40. ASF, NMP, Giovanni Matteo Novelli, 26728, fols. 126v–128v.
41. In 1748 Nathan Levi Sonsino lent Carvaglio forty-five hundred pieces of eight (ASF, *Arte dei giudici e notai [Proconsolo]*, 608). Powers of attorney granted to London agents are found in ASF, NMP, Giovanni Battista Gamera, 25276, fols. 17v–18r; ASF, NMP, Giovanni Matteo Novelli, 26731, fols. 93r–96v, 159r–v.
42. A survey of Tuscan trades completed in 1766 lists one coral plant in Pisa. It was run by two Jewish entrepreneurs and it occupied about fifty workers (Dal Pane 1971, 1: 91). The information may refer to the plant that Carvaglio and Lusena had operated until about that time.
43. A shipment of coral to Aleppo is mentioned among the first activities of Ergas and Silvera (ASF, LCF, 1931, letter to Ergas and Silvera in Aleppo, 18 December 1704).
44. Weber 1927: 292–93.
45. ASF, LCF, 1953, letters to Giovanni Battista Cambiaso in Genoa (20 February and 26 February 1743) and to Isaac Coen in Genoa (27 February 1743).
46. ASF, LCF, 1953, letters to Isaac Coen and to Giovanni Battista Cambiaso in Genoa (20 March 1743).
47. ASF, LCF, 1936, letter to Lazzaro Sacerdote in Genoa (1 April 1715); ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Giovanni Battista Cambiaso in Genoa (13 February 1743); ASF, LCF, 1957, letter to Honoré Bres in Marseilles (18 November 1743). They also purchased a sample of Arabica coffee (ASF, LCF, 1957, letter to Carlo Niccolò Zignago in Genoa, 17 April 1743).
48. ASL, CGA: *Atti civili*, 850, no. 150. In 1750 the partnership Moses Ergas and sons bought 490 pounds of coral but sued its supplier for alleged contract violations (ASL, CGA: *Atti civili*, 921, no. 29).
49. ASF, LCF, 1936, letter to Lazzaro Sacerdote in Genoa (1 April 1715). It is unclear whether Ergas and Silvera or someone else employed these women. On the role of women in Livorno coral manufacturing, see Buonafalce 2007.
50. ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Benjamin Mendes da Costa in London (18 February 1743).
51. The use of paper as a wrapping material is mentioned in a letter by the Livornese

- Jewish merchant Jacob Bassano to the director of the Compagnie Royale d'Afrique of 1775 (CCM, AA1801, L/III.372).
52. ASF, LCF, 1945, letter to Domenico Pisani and son in Constantinople (6 May 1737); ASF, LCF, 1945, letters to Ephraim and David Cassuto in Florence (26 November and 3 December 1738). Other Ergases continued to ship coral to Aleppo as late as the 1770s (ASF, NMP, Giovanni Matteo Novelli, 26733, fols. 121v-122r, no. 339). British shipments of coral from Livorno to the Levant were recorded in the 1740s (PRO, SP, 105/118, fol. 10.)
 53. Only in 1742 did the Dutch officially restrict the monopoly of their East India Company to spices, copper, tin, and opium. Even then, coral was included among the goods reserved for the company at the Dutch factory in Surat (Prakash 1998: 232-33).
 54. ASF, NMP, Giovanni Battista Gamerra, 25265, fols. 95v-96r.
 55. The exploitation of Brazilian diamond mines was publicized in print by Brito 1732: 23. Diamonds were not discovered in South Africa until 1867. For an overview, see Lenzen 1970.
 56. On the impact of the Mughal conquest on the Golconda diamond mines, see Richards 1975: 14-17, 209-10. On the royal monopoly of large stones and the difficulty of enforcing it, see Roques 1996: 184; Savary des Bruslons and Savary 1723-30, 2: 83; Hamilton 1727: 366.
 57. Orta 1987, 2: 198-201.
 58. Tavernier 1676-77, 2: 326-52. Tavernier's account was printed in several editions and was soon translated into English.
 59. On the pearl trade, see Vassallo e Silva 1993.
 60. After 1575, a caixa de liberdade measured about 4 feet by 2.5 feet by 2.5 feet. The value and number of these containers that each naval officer could bring varied with his rank (Boxer 1960: 37).
 61. For bizalhos, see Boyajian 1993: 50. For bulses, see Yogev 1978: 133.
 62. De Souza 1975b: 438.
 63. Boyajian 1993: 44.
 64. Fawcett 1947, 1: 207; Fryer 1992, 2: 87. See also Welch 2007: 233.
 65. *Portable Instructions* 1779: 2. See also Furber 1976: 260-62, 270-71. The captain to whom diamonds were entrusted received a 1.4 percent commission. In 1664 the East India Company's Court of Directors fixed the customs duties on imported diamonds at 2 or 4 percent, depending on whether merchants held stock in the company (Yogev 1978: 83). The same author maintains that import duties on diamonds were 5 percent ad valorem until 1733, when they were lowered to 2.5 percent (133). The latter statement appears to contradict the 1732 Act of Parliament cited in the body of the chapter and referenced in n. 71.
 66. Yogev 1978: 71; Mentz 2005: 126-36.
 67. E. Samuel 2000: 352.
 68. Yogev 1978: 91-97.
 69. *Ibid.*, 104-6.
 70. *Ibid.*, 108-9. Musk and ambergris were animal extracts that had been highly valued

- in Europe since the Middle Ages, especially for their use in perfumes. Bezoar was precious because it was believed to be an antidote to poison.
71. *Ibid.*, 68.
 72. *Ibid.*, 337-39.
 73. On the Portuguese New Christians in the diamond and coral trade of Antwerp in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, see Pohls 1948: 121-30, 197-218; Everaert 2002. Information about the migration of New Christian diamond dealers and cutters from Lisbon to Antwerp can be found in ANTT, *Inquisição de Lisboa*, processo 310.
 74. The presence of Portuguese diamond cutters is documented in Amsterdam after 1612 (van Dillen 1935: 25). Between 1655 and 1699, of 886 Portuguese Jewish men surveyed in Amsterdam, 3 were listed as coral polishers, 20 as diamond cutters and polishers, and 6 as jewelers (Swetschinski 2000: 103, 157). In the 1670s António Lopes Suasso, the wealthiest Portuguese Jew in Amsterdam, was a diamond dealer as well as a merchant and a banker (Swetschinski and Schönduve 1988: 32). On the Jewish diamond cutters and traders in Amsterdam, see also Vaz Dias 1930; Bloom 1937: 40-44; Crespo Fabião 1973; E. Samuel 1978-80; Israel 1989b: 139-40.
 75. Evidence that Jews were active in diamond cutting before they were permitted to reside in Venice in 1516 can be found in the 1436 statutes of the jewelers' guild (BMC, MSS IV, 139, 205) and in Jacoby 1977: 184, 199. From 1552 to 1719, records of the jewelers' guild of Venice document conflicts with Jews who operated illegally (ASV, *Arti*, 422-424; BRM, ACIV, 7). See also Chap. 8, n. 55.
 76. ASF, LCF, 1937, letters to Miguel Carvaglio in Venice (11 February and 15 July 1718); ASF, LCF, 1939, letter to Samuel Racah in Venice (17 June 1726); ASF, LCF, 1941, letters to Daniel Bonfil in Venice (10 March, 11 August, and 18 August 1730); ASF, LCF, 1953, letters to Pietro Trevano (20 January 1741) and to Daniel Bonfil, both in Venice (7 September 1742); ASF, LCF, 1957, letters to Iseppo Driuzzi in Venice (13 December 1743, 12 February 1745); ASF, LCF, 1960, letter to Daniel Sachi in Venice (26 November 1745). Diamonds were usually sent from Florence to Venice by postal courier in special boxes. For example, a payment of 1:9:8 pieces for this service is recorded in ASF, LCF, 1933, Debit, 5 September 1730.
 77. Yogev 1978: 142. Edgar Samuel (2000: 351) explains the division of labor between London and Amsterdam by the fact that polishing large stones is a capital-intensive activity and thus only profitable near a large market such as London, whereas polishing small stones is labor-intensive and thus requires a high concentration of workers available at low wages.
 78. On Armenians' involvement in the diamond trade, see Seth 1897: 257-62; Van Rooy 1966: 347; Aghassian and Kévonian 1988: 159; Sanacore 1998: 134-37; Aslanian 2006: 88n26, 2007b: 135, 152, 156.
 79. Roques 1996: 157-58.
 80. In the 1690s there were up to forty Armenian merchants in London, but fifty years later they had all but disappeared (Herzig 2004: 161-62; Aslanian 2004: 63).
 81. Chardin 1983, 2: 208; Tavernier 1676-77, 2: 336. See also the description left by a Jesuit traveler in 1741 of the hand gestures used to buy and sell diamonds at the Golconda mines (Delaporte 1990: 144-45).

82. ASF, LCF, 1937, letter to Gopala and Nilea Camotim in Goa (18 January 1717).
83. This rule was already mentioned in an anonymous 1604 manuscript called "The gouldesmithes Storehowse" (Lenman 2002: 99-100). The same rule is reiterated in Malynes 1622: 57; Roberts 1638: 24-27; Tavernier 1676-77, 2: 352-55; Fryer 1992, 2: 145; Jeffries 1751: 7-8.
84. Mawe 1823: 14, 13.
85. *Portable Instructions* 1779: 96.
86. On unopened parcels, see Yogev 1978: 138-39. On Sulema, see ASF, MP, 2476, fols. 123-152. On the rules of "just price" according to Roman and canon law, see Baldwin 1959.
87. This crude figure is calculated on the basis of (a) the data gathered by Yogev (1978: 337-39), which set at £7,514,700 the aggregate value of Indian diamonds imported to England between 1711 and 1796 (that is, about £88,000 per year on average), and (b) the average annual value of all East India Company imports from Asia, which was £597,620 between 1700 and 1760 (Chaudhuri 1978: 509-11). From 1782 to 1793 the official annual imports of Indian diamonds were valued at £45,500 (Furber 1948: 231).
88. Estimates of the value of diamonds imported to England from India outside the company's monopoly vary greatly. See Mentz 2005: 119-21.
89. Mentz 1996: 167-68.
90. ASF, MP, 1606 (letter to the grand duke from Surat, 20 September 1686).
91. Yogev 1978: 143-44, 340.
92. For the Livornese merchant's estimate of 1766, see ASL, GCM, 963, fol. 112r. On Blanchard's profit, see Blanchard 1806: 251.
93. The quotation is from Silva 1992: 88. From the 1720s to the 1740s, the Barducci of Lisbon were also active in the re-export of Brazilian sugar and tobacco and the import of grains (ANSL, Caixa IV, no. 4 [o.c.]).
94. The Christian pseudonym *Mora* is attested to in the 1709 testament of Manuel de Mora, son of Abraham (ASF, NMT, Lorenzo Leoni, 23736, fols. 24r-25r) as well as in Ergas and Silvera's account books (ASF, LCF, 1930, 1 May 1705). The family had had a business in Livorno since 1664, when Abraham de Mora, alias Ventura Lopes de Morales, was authorized by the grand duke of Tuscany to underwrite sea loans and attempted unsuccessfully to purchase the chancellery of the Jewish nation as a hereditary office (R. Toaff 1990: 683). Abraham and Jacob de Mora went bankrupt in Livorno in 1723 (ASF, MNP, 25261, fols. 39r-47v, no. 31).
95. ASF, LCF, 1935, letters to Gopala and Nilea Camotim in Goa (20 January 1713) and to Barducci, Giudici, and Perini in Lisbon (30 January 1713).
96. ASF, LCF, 1932, fols. 36, 52.
97. ASF, LCF, 1936, letters to Barducci and Giudici in Lisbon (5 December 1714) and to Gopala and Nilea Camotim in Goa (10 January 1715).
98. ASF, LCF, 1937, letter to Pietro Francesco Ravara in Lisbon (4 June 1717).
99. ASF, LCF, 1945, letter to Medici and Niccolini in Lisbon (16 February 1739). More often but not always, the price of coral in Livorno is indicated in the letters to Aleppo. See, e.g., ASF, LCF, 1939, letter to Ergas and Silvera in Aleppo (10 September 1725).

100. ASF, LCF, 1935, letter to Gopala and Nilea Camotim in Goa (20 January 1713).
101. "Vemos avião Vms recebido de detta nau a caixa n. 1 coral gregio e raspado . . . e que ainda não avião podido Vms vendere detto coral pella reçoins nos motivação que esperamos em Deus e suas boas deligencias aixão a esta ora saído de elles a tudo noso maior vantagem, esperando se acomodem os tempos para poder continuar a valernos de suos favores. Oservando para detta sua que nos anteciparam Vms e nos remeteram com esta moçção . . . un visalho diamantes de n. 11 do valor de xerafinos 472:31 e que e fasenda limpa e boa que temos muito gosto que seixam com disem . . . e lhes daremos credito de dettos xerafinos." ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Fondu Camotim and Babuxa Quenny in Goa (8 May 1741).
102. Ergas and Silvera had loaded two boxes of diamonds worth seven thousand xerafins on the *Nossa Senhora do Cabo* and asked their Lisbon correspondents to certify this information. Fortunately, the Portuguese viceroy finally reached Nantes, bringing the majority of the precious stones with him, and asked the diplomatic representatives in Amsterdam to reassure the Dutch Sephardim that the stones were safe. See ASF, LCF, 1938, letters to Abraham Lusena in Genoa (22 April 1722), to Medici and Berroardi in Lisbon (6 May and 27 November 1722), and to Giovanni Battista Ravara in Lisbon (27 May 1722).
103. ASF, LCF, 1957, letter to Benjamin Alvarenga in London (9 September 1743).
104. ASF, LCF, 1938, letter to Gopala and Fondu Camotim in Goa (30 June 1724).
105. In 1575 Gaspar and João Ribeira, two prominent Portuguese New Christian merchants residing in Venice, accepted a bill of exchange from Niccolò Giraldo and Giovanni de Bardi, partners in Lisbon, for payment of their brokerage of the sale of a Portuguese ship (Ruspio 1998-99: 34). On the Giraldo of Lisbon, see Rau 1965-66.
106. See "Notarial Records Relating to the Portuguese Jews in Amsterdam up to 1639," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 25.2 (1991): 180, 184; ANSL, Caixa IX, 37 (n.c.).
107. Ruspio 2005: 139. On Morelli as the Lisbon agent of other New Christian merchants in Venice, see Ruspio 2007: 148n129.
108. ASF, MNP, 25273, Giovanni Battista Gamerra, fol. 138r-v, no. 262 and fols. 145v-146r, no. 277.
109. ASF, MNP, Giovanni Battista Gamerra, 25276, fol. 31r-v, no. 84.
110. Filippini 1989: 132n23, 1998, 3: 259n21.
111. PRO, PROB, 11/962, fol. 174r. He also appointed an Italian merchant in Lisbon to retrieve merchandise of his that was arriving from Goa (ASF, NMP, Giovanni Matteo Morelli, 26733, fols. 37r-v, no. 98).
112. French merchants are occasionally mentioned in powers of attorney registered by Livorno Sephardim. See ASF, MNP, Giovanni Battista Gamerra, 25265, fol. 46r-v (1741) and ASF, MNP, Filippo Gonnella, 27192, fols. 106v-107r; 27193, fols. 1v-2r (1756).
113. ASF, NMP, Giovanni Giuseppe Mazzanti, 23691, fols. 17r-20r, no. 25; 23703, fol. 79r-v, no. 54; 23704, fols. 32r-33r, no. 23 and fols. 137v-140, no. 122; 25269, fol. 74r-v, no. 148; ASF, NMP, Giovanni Battista Gamerra, 25260, fol. 114r-v, no. 109.
114. ASF, MNP, Giovanni Battista Gamerra, 25260, fol. 46r-v; 25261, fol. 30r-v, no. 23;

- 25267, fols. 166v–167r; ASF, NMP, Agostino Frugoni, 24736, fols. 4r–5r; 24737, fols. 151r–152r; ASF, NMP, Giovanni Giuseppe Giuliani, 23410, fols. 121v–122r.
115. ASF, MNP, Giovanni Battista Gamera, 25260, fols. 180v–181r, no. 191; ASF, NMP, Agostino Frugoni, 24732, fols. 15v–16r, 87v–88r, 90v–91r, 142v–143r; 24733, fols. 44v–46r. Only on two occasions—in 1719 and 1720—did Sulema give power of attorney to Portuguese merchants in Lisbon to retrieve goods arriving from Goa, rather than hiring familiar Genoese and Florentine intermediaries (ASF, NMP, Agostino Frugoni, 24732, fols. 16r–v, 141v–142v; 24733, fols. 44v–46v).
 116. ASF, LCF, 1939, letter to Ulivieri and van den Brugge in Lisbon (8 November 1726).
 117. GAA, NA, 11291, fol. 34. The diamonds shipped from Wisula Camotim to Nunes in Amsterdam were insured by Jacob Ergas in London (GAA, NA, 2943, fol. 34). In 1707 Rachel Mocata, widow of David Franco Mendes, disposed of the diamonds she had received from the Camotins of Goa (GAA, NA, 6036, fol. 58).
 118. GAA, NA, 2943, fol. 13.
 119. ASF, LCF, 1936, letter to Giacomo Manzoni in Lisbon (18 March 1716).
 120. GAA, Arch. 5060, Colaço correspondence, vol. 6, fol. 545.
 121. ASF, LCF, 1938, letter to Lazzaro Maria Cambiaso in Lisbon (4 February 1722).
 122. ASF, MNP, Giovanni Battista Gamera, 25267, fols. 18v–19v; 25273, fols. 155v–156r, no. 294; ASF, MNP, Giovanni Giuseppe Mazzanti, 23705, fols. 16v–17r, no. 22.
 123. E. Samuel 1989: 108, 113n49.
 124. JFB, 1726 fMe, fols. 17v, 19r–v, 21r, 22v, 23r, 28v–30v, 43r, 44v–47v, 48v, 53r, 55r–v, 60r, 63r, 68v, 72v, 73v, 77v, 98v, 102r, 128v, 129v. Medici's suppliers in Rio de Janeiro were Antônio Pereira, João Rodrigues Silva, and Faustino de Lima. Medici also helped Abraham Franco sell his Chinese silks in Brazil. Fisher (1971: 55, 57) and Yogev (1978: 278n35) mention services performed by Medici and Beroardi for Benjamin Mendes da Costa in London in 1728–30.
 125. ASF, LCF, 1936, letters to Lazzaro Sacerdote in Genoa (15 February, 27 February, 1 April, 22 April, and 26 June 1715).
 126. ASF, LCF, 1941, letters to Lazzaro Sacerdote in Genoa (28 November and 5 December 1731, 18 January, 23 January, 6 February, 20 February, 27 February, 5 March, and 19 March 1732).
 127. See the entries for Lazzaro Sacerdoti in Urbani and Zazzu 1999. In May 1716 he appointed an attorney in Leghorn to handle a lawsuit filed against him by Abraham and Isaac de los Rios (*ibid.*, 714).
 128. Court 2004: 993; Müller 1998: 243–45; XCHR, MHC/P, 6437.
 129. Having analyzed about 250 Geniza letters, Greif (2006: 60n3, 63n11) finds that misconduct is mentioned in less than 5 percent of the documents—a figure that indicates the high level of compliance that characterized agency relations among Maghribi merchants, even if many were not related by blood. This percentage is consistent with Gil's findings, which are based on examination of more than eight hundred documents (Gil 2003: 314), although Gil insists on the significance of the disputes that arose between Maghribi Jews. Greif (1989: 868–69; 1994: 924; 2006: 66–67) also calls attention to defamation campaigns such as that launched against a Magh-

- ribi agent living in Jerusalem who had embezzled a sum of money in 1055, which led his fellows across the Mediterranean to call off any orders they had placed with him. Slander, however, could have undesirable repercussions, and not all accusations led to expulsion from the coalition. An important Jewish merchant in eleventh-century Cairo once wrote “a long and angry letter” complaining about the way one of his agents had handled a cargo of brazilwood, but the addressee rebutted all the accusations and called the letter “the talk of an irresponsible person” (Goitein 1967–93, 1: 164–65, 1973b: 93). Goitein (1967–93, 1: 168) points out that a letter could express both “strongly worded accusations” against a business friend and the wish that the correspondence continued. For another example of accommodation toward a less than satisfactory agent, see Goitein 1973b: 113.
130. ASF, LCF, 1938, letter to Gopala and Fondu Camotim in Goa (30 June 1724); ASF, LCF, 1939, letters to Gopala and Fondu Camotim in Goa (24 January 1727) and Lazzaro Cambiaso in Lisbon (27 January 1727).
 131. ASF, LCF, 1941, letters to Lazzaro Maria Cambiaso in Lisbon and to Gopala and Fondu Camotim in Goa (25 February 1729).
 132. Hamilton 1727: 366–67; Yogev 1978: 106; Fischel 1960: 81; BL, Sloan MS 1968, fols. 54r–55r. Sir John Chardin and his brother Daniel entered into partnership with the Rodrigues brothers in Madras in 1682. The association failed after about twenty years when the two brothers accumulated enough capital to trade on their own (Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, *John Chardin correspondence and documents*, 1671–1719, box 1, folders 1–5; E. Samuel 2000: 354–60). After 1765 the British also controlled the diamond mines near the Indian city of Benares, Bengal (Marshall 1976: 128, 221–22, 250–51, 255). On a Jewish partnership in London that was active in the diamond trade with Bengal in the 1780s and 1790s, see Fischel 1964: 433–98.
 133. E. Samuel 2004: 251.
 134. Boxer 1969: 148–49.
 135. Tavernier 1676–77, 2: 369.
 136. E. Samuel 1978–80.
 137. On the famines of 1729 and 1731 in the region around Madras, see Chaudhuri 1978: 252.
 138. ASF, LCF, 1941, letter to Medici and Beroardi in Lisbon (17 February 1730).
 139. ASF, LCF, 1941, letters to Giovanni Battista Cambiaso in Genoa (6 June, 13 June, 27 June, and 22 August 1731). In 1734 Ergas and Silvera lamented the small profit made on their coral in Goa (“o mau estado do negocio de essa venda”; ASF, LCF, 1945, letter to Fondu Camotim and Babuxa Quenny in Goa, 26 February 1734).
 140. In the period from 1732 to 1783 the export of Brazilian diamonds to Lisbon peaked in 1733–34 with the shipment of 225,000 carats. Normally, the yearly export was about 70,000 to 80,000 carats, except in 1766–67, when as much as 175,000 carats' worth was exported. The Brazilian mines were placed under direct state control from 1771 to 1783, and their yields declined (Gonçalves Pereira 1982: 231–34). On the low price of diamonds of the highest quality in Lisbon and London in 1733–34, see BNL, C6-

- dex 746, fol. 49r and Jeffries 1751: 65, respectively. Although Joseph Salvador and his son Francis played only a shadow role in the state's concession on Brazilian diamond sales, their interference in the cartels fomented anti-Semitic sentiments. See BNL, *Códex 746* ("História chronological dos contratos da minerassão dos diamantes . . . até o anno de 1788"); BNL, *Códex 7167* ("Notícia a respeito das Minas de Diamantes da Capitania de Minas Gerais, no Brasil, desde a sua descoberta, em 1728, até 1773"). Some of these judgments have passed into modern works such as Júnior 1945. More recent literature attributes the inability of the Portuguese Crown to exploit fully the potential of the new mines to structural conditions (the lack of Portuguese capital and the centrality of Amsterdam and London as markets for Brazilian diamonds) and political miscalculations by Pombal, rather than to the predatory presence of foreign investors. See Solla 1977; Gonçalves Pereira 1982; H. Bernstein 1986: 141–42n7; Maxwell 1995: 121–25.
141. ASF, *LCF*, 1953, letter to Benjamin Mendes da Costa in London (6 August 1742). In 1743 Ergas and Silvera were again apprehensive about the arrival in Lisbon of the convoys carrying diamonds from Brazil (ASF, *LCF*, 1953, letter to Benjamin Alvarenga and Co. in London, 11 February 1743).
 142. Jeffries 1751: 70–71, 75–76; Ricard 1799, 3: 661; Mawe 1823: 61. In 1732 Ergas and Silvera noted that Brazilian stones were small and difficult to sell (ASF, *LCF*, 1941, letter to Fondu Camotim and Babuxa Quenny in Goa, 1 February 1732).
 143. Compare Magalhães Godinho 1993: 17–23 with Chaudhuri 1993: 59–60.
 144. Yogev 1978: 116. See also Hejeebu 2005: 503–4.
 145. ASF, *LCF*, 1945, letter to Judah Supino in London (13 December 1739). Two years later, Ergas and Silvera accepted a bill of exchange drawn on the East India Company ("sobre a Companhia") for 472:34:72 pagodas (ASF, *LCF*, 1953, letter to Benjamin Mendes da Costa in London, 6 November 1741). At other times, they asked explicitly that diamonds alone, not bills of exchange, be shipped back from Madras (ASF, *LFC*, 1953, letter to Judah Supino and son in London, 31 July 1741; ASF, *LFC*, 1957, letter to Benjamin Mendes da Costa in London, 23 September 1743).
 146. "[O] procedido de dhos corais em diamantes grosos e limpos, o em telerias, e de ni-nhuma maneira não queremos em letras de cambio nem sobre marittimo." ASF, *LCF*, 1953, letter to Fondu Camotim and Babuxa Quenny in Goa (8 May 1741).
 147. Bethencourt 1998: 253–56. For more details, see Pissurlencar 1957. The Tuscan residents of Lisbon followed news about the war with the Marathas closely (ASF, *Segreteria e ministero degli esteri*, 2240, 26 April and 11 October 1740).
 148. In November 1741 Ergas and Silvera received diamonds worth 779:31:1 pagodas from Madras and a bill of exchange for 472:34:76 pagodas from Supino and Salvador in London (ASF, *LCF*, 1953, letter to Benjamin Mendes da Costa in London, 6 November 1741).
 149. ASF, *LCF*, 1953, letter to Fondu Camotim and Babuxa Quenny in Goa (8 May 1741). Ergas and Silvera received their last parcel of diamonds from Goa in November 1744, not long before they went bankrupt (ASF, *LCF*, 1957, letter to Medici and Nicolini in Lisbon, 18 November 1744).
 150. Fisher 1971: 24, 133; Yogev 1978: 41. In 1735, 1737, 1738, and 1742, Ergas and Silvera

- did not write to the Camotins. In 1739 they nonetheless received rubies from Goa (ASF, *LCF*, 1945, letter to Judah Supino in London, 23 February 1739).
151. ASF, *NMP*, Filippo Gonnella, 27192, fols. 32r–33r, no. 32 and 33r–34v, no. 33.
 152. ASF, *LCF*, 1960, letter to Benjamin Mendes da Costa in London (20 December 1745).
 153. Mentz 1996: 165; ASF, *LCF*, 1953, letter to Benjamin Mendes da Costa in London (13 November 1741); ASF, *LCF*, 1945, letter to Fondu Camotim and Babuxa Quenny in Goa (20 February 1736); ASF, *LCF*, 1953, letters to Medici and Niccolini in Lisbon (24 July 1741) and to Benjamin Mendes da Costa in London (13 November 1741).
 154. Piccinno 2003: 54–61.
 155. ASF, *LCF*, 1953, letters to Isaac Coen in Genoa (27 February 1743) and to Benjamin Mendes da Costa in London (25 March 1743); ASF, *LCF*, 1957, letter to Giuseppe Giustiniani in Genoa (13 May and 20 May 1744). Prices varied greatly with the type and quality of the coral. Grossezza and mezzanie cost between 7 and 18 pieces per pound in 1743. In early 1739 cheaper types of coral (internetos, toccos, and fillotos) ranged in price between 4.25 and 7.5 pieces per pound.
 156. ASF, *LCF*, 1957, letters to Benjamin Mendes da Costa in London (21 October 1743, 10 February, 10 July, 12 October, and 18 November 1744), to Giuseppe Giustiniani in Genoa (29 July 1744), and to Benjamin Alvarenga in London (10 August 1744); ASF, *LCF*, 1957, letters to Lazare Prudent in Marseilles (18 November 1743) and to Honoré Bres in Marseilles (18 November 1743).
 157. ASF, *LCF*, 1957, letters to Benjamin Mendes da Costa in London (29 May and 22 June 1744); Pera 1899: 277; ASF, *LCF*, 1957, letters to Francesco Perini in Florence (12 August 1744), to Benjamin Alvarenga in London (24 August and 5 October 1744), and Benjamin Mendes da Costa in London (31 August, 20 September, and 18 November 1744).
 158. ANTT, *Chancelaria D. João V*, livro 18, fols. 269r–270r; livro 22, fols. 123r–125r, 131v–133v.
 159. Greif (2006: 213–16) finds that in nineteenth-century Mexican California commercial contracts were enforced via reputation alone rather than by legal institutions. As outsiders from the United States began to trade in this region, intermarriage between men from north of the border and Mexican women proved necessary if outsiders were to join the local "community responsibility system."
 160. Pepelasis Minoglou 1998, 2002, 2005: 179–80.
 161. Woolf (1962–67: 108) and Yogev (1978: 72, 285–86n22) correct the common claim that Salvador was the first Jewish director of the East India Company (e.g., Hyamson 1951: 117). For Salvador's influence on the company's directors in the 1750s and 1760s, see Lenman and Lawson 1983: 810–18; Bowen 2006: 34.
 162. Hejeebu (2005) offers an optimistic account of compliance by the company's employees in eighteenth-century India. Little is known about the agents from whom London Sephardim acquired rough diamonds in Madras. They included the company's employees as well as other legitimate private merchants and smugglers.
 163. Goldberg (2005: 200–208, 229) finds that discussions of formal legal action occupy only 1 percent of all Geniza letters. When the intervention of rabbinic and Islamic

tribunals is mentioned, disputes concern ownership titles, division of properties, and other property rights but never address the degree of satisfaction with the conduct of a commission agent.

10. THE "BIG DIAMOND AFFAIR"

1. The other two owners were Agah Zevi and Agah Aran. Zevi's father, Israel Jadgar, was from Sanandaj, a town about one hundred miles northwest of Hamdan (ASL, CGA: *Cause delegate*, 2500, fols. 1197r, 1217r, 1212v). In most sources, Menasseh is referred to only by his first name, except in a lawsuit before a high Florentine court, in which he is called "Menasse Misdrachi," the surname being a common appellative for a Jew from the East (ASF, *Ruota Civile*, 4167, no. 12). In European sources his name is spelled variously as Menassé, Menascé, Menacé, Menase, Menasech, Menaseh, or Menasch. The term *Agha* derives from the Turkish appellative (or its Persian equivalent, *Khwaja*) for "master, lord, chief," which was commonly applied to prominent merchants. When addressing him in Hebrew, Ergas and Silvera referred to Menasseh by his Jewish last name and the honorific title "rav." (ASF, LCF, 1945, letter to Rav. Menasseh Levi in Malta, 28 November 1740). I am grateful to Jonathan Ray for his help with the translation of this letter.
2. Elijah Silvera was later described as "a jeweler in Aleppo" (NATH, HR: *Resolutie*, 673).
3. The terms of this contract are mentioned in NATH, HR: *Rekesten*, 142. See also Menaschem 1974: 183–88, s.v. "shetar."
4. On the commercial relations with the Belilios, see Chap. 8. A diamond of about twenty-four carats that was deemed worth "a transcendental sum" was among the items seized in Venice when the Belilios partnership went bankrupt in 1756. ASV, VS: *I serie*, 185, fols. 102r–103r (24 July 1756).
5. ASF, LCF, 1945, letter to Jacob and Joseph Belilios in Venice (27 March 1739).
6. An Italian translation of the contract was handed to the governor's court in Livorno in 1747 (ASL, CGA: *Atti civili*, 2249, no. 953). Rabbi Samuel Laniado, Rabbi Isaac Berahas, Jacob Ribera Enriquez, Hillel Piciotto, and Joseph Pinheiro were the witnesses in Aleppo.
7. In a letter written by the English bankers Tucker and Becker in Livorno on 21 August 1749, the stone is referred to as "the great diamond" ("The Emperor The Regency [sic] at Florence have issued an order that the sale of the great diamond in your hands be deferr'd to the last day of October"); ASL, CGA: *Cause delegate*, 2500, fol. 1257. "Big" rather than "great" is a more appropriate translation of the Italian in this case.
8. The literature about incomplete contracts in law and economics is large. See Ayres and Gertner 1989; O. Hart 1995; Tirole 1999; Battigalli and Maggi 2002.
9. Dasgupta 1998: 53.
10. ASF, LCF, 1945, letter to Rav. Menasseh Levi in Malta (28 November 1740); ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Jacob and Joseph Belilios in Venice (21 April 1741).
11. ASF, LCF, 1945, letters to Jacob and Joseph Belilios in Venice (13 March, 20 March, 3 April, and 17 April 1739). Frederick Augustus II apparently bought what became a

- famous forty-one-carat diamond (the so-called Dresden Green) at the Leipzig fair in 1741. The diamond is now kept at the royal palace in Dresden.
12. ASF, LCF, 1945, letters to Moses Cassuto in Florence (23 November, 28 November, and 2 December 1740); ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Ephraim and David Cassuto in Florence (27 January and 10 March 1741).
 13. Cassuto's family cut and polished diamonds in Livorno as early as 1663 and remained active in the jewelry trade in Florence (ASF, *Auditore delle Riformazioni*, 46, fols. 216–19). Only the part of the manuscript that contains Cassuto's account of his travels to the Holy Land (BLO, *MS Ital.* d.9) has been studied and translated from Italian into Hebrew (R. D. Barnett 1966; Salzman and Cassuto 1984; Cedarmas 2006: 265–313). It is disappointing that Cassuto's remarks about his tour of Europe on behalf of Ergas and Silvera are rich in descriptions of local customs and Jewish communities but poor in details concerning the big diamond. For the date of Cassuto's birth, see Cedarmas 2006: 270–71. Cedarmas (*ibid.*, 271n39, 280) insists on the spelling "Cafsuto" rather than "Cassuto" for Moses' last name; Salzman and Cassuto (1984) use both spellings.
 14. ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Ephraim and David Cassuto in Florence (27 January 1741).
 15. ASF, NMP, Agostino Frugoni, 24738, fols. 14v–15r. The power of attorney was also copied in a letter to Cassuto so that he could carry it with him at all times (ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Moses Cassuto in Livorno, 16 May 1741).
 16. BLO, *MS Ital.* d.9, fols. 108r–v.
 17. ASF, LCF, 1953, letters to Moses Cassuto in London (17 July and 8 September 1741).
 18. ASF, LCF, 1953, letters to Moses Cassuto in London (17 July and 24 September 1741) and in Amsterdam (13 November 1741).
 19. ASF, LCF, 1953, letters to Moses Cassuto in London (4 September 1741, 5 February and 26 February 1742).
 20. ASF, LCF, 1953, letters to Moses Cassuto in London and Amsterdam (26 February, 26 March, 4 September 1742). In The Hague, Belilios calculated that 60,000 English guineas were worth 693,000 Dutch guilders (NATH, HR: *Rekesten*, 142).
 21. Ergas and Silvera called Menasseh "testa dura," "cattivo huomo," "mal sogieto," "un sugieto tan infame," and "cane" (ASF, LCF, 1953, letters to Moses Cassuto in Amsterdam and London [28 August, 4 September, 24 September, 9 October 1741; 26 February, 26 March, 14 May, 6 August, and 20 August 1742]).
 22. ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Moses Cassuto in Amsterdam (27 November 1741).
 23. Cassuto and Belilios submitted a petition in ninety points documenting their views before the Supreme Court of Holland and Zeeland (NATH, HR: *Rekesten*, 142). On this court, see Asser 1987: 108. Cassuto previously had consulted the parrassim of Amsterdam.
 24. ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Ephraim and David Cassuto in Florence (27 February 1741).
 25. ASF, LCF, 1953, letters to Moses Cassuto in Amsterdam (5 February and 26 February 1742).
 26. ASF, LCF, letters to Moses Cassuto in Amsterdam (5 February, 12 February, 19 Feb-

- ruary, 26 February, 11 June, 18 June, and 21 May 1742) and Jacob Belilios in Aleppo (9 April 1742). Other Jewish merchants did not trust Ottoman courts to enforce their mercantile contracts. An example is found in ASV, NA, Angelo Maria and Giovanni Piccini, 10840 (21 January 1671). Ergas and Silvera later claimed that Cassuto initiated the litigation in The Hague on his own and thus had only himself to blame for the way it dragged on (ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Moses Cassuto in Amsterdam, 2 July 1742).
27. ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Moses Cassuto in Amsterdam (19 February 1742).
 28. "[M]ai aviamo inteso dire che un magistrato la cometa al altro per vedere amichevolmente convenire poi comparando in giudizio, è segno che fra le parte non è potuto sortire acomodamento, basta al fatto non vi è rimedio." ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Moses Cassuto in Amsterdam (19 March 1742). See also L. Bernstein 1996, 2001.
 29. Jeffries 1751: appendix, 16. The size ascribed to the big diamond varies slightly from one primary source to another. In the contract signed by Ergas and Silvera in Aleppo on 30 June 1740, it is said to be 250 grains of Aleppo (ASL, CGA: *Atti civili*, 2249, no. 953). Cassuto's travel diary maintains that it weighed 225 grains (BLO, *Ms. Ital.* d.9, fol. 108r). In Ergas and Silvera's correspondence, the diamond is once said to weigh 221 grains and twice 222 grains (ASF, LCF, 1945, letter to Ephraim and David Cassuto in Florence, 14 July 1738; ASF, LCF, 1953, letters to Ephraim and David Cassuto in Florence, 21 April 1741, and to Benjamin Mendes da Costa in London, 17 July 1741). In Cassuto's petition to the Supreme Court in The Hague the diamond was described as weighing 58 carats of Aleppo (NATH, HR: *Rekesten*, 142).
 30. Streeter 1882: 29-30; M. Hart 2002: 1-21. The biggest diamonds in the world in the eighteenth century were those of the Mughal emperor (nearly 280 carats after being cut), the duke of Orléans (140 carats), the grand duke of Tuscany (a fine yellow stone of 139.5 carats), and a 242-carat diamond that Tavernier allegedly saw in the hands of a private merchant in Golconda. The so-called Braganza diamond, a Brazilian stone of 1,680 carats, was probably a topaz.
 31. *Portable Instructions* 1779: 96.
 32. Mawe 1823: 46-47.
 33. "[N]on è di prima acqua ben sì qualcosa sommeno e non ha difetto alcuno." ASF, LCF, 1945, letter to Ephraim and David Cassuto in Florence (14 July 1738).
 34. ASF, NMP, Agostino Frugoni, 24736, fols. 81r-84v.
 35. "[U]n diamante come quello di perfezione e vista non si trova facilmente." ASF, LCF, 1957, letter to Moses Cassuto in London (24 September 1741). Later they described it as "un diamante labrado a facetas de primera agua, della forma de una almendra o sea ovado, con el circulo de plata y con 2 diamantes uno per parte al longo, a lado con una sintica blu, fillado con el de fuera fillo dentro de una caxita." ASF, LCF, 1957, letter to Benjamin Mendes da Costa, London (5 July 1745).
 36. Savary 1675: bk. 2, chap. 63, p. 170.
 37. A small mercantile elite still existed, but Persian Jewry was mostly poor and in disarray after the Afghan invasion of 1722-30 brought down the Safavid dynasty. See Moreen 1990.
 38. That twenty-four days was a short time for a voyage from Alexandretta to Livorno is

- mentioned in ASF, LCF, 1931, letter to Ergas and Silvera in Aleppo (16 December 1704). See also Chap. 8, n. 3. On the postal connections between Livorno and London, see Roseveare 1987: 100-105.
39. ASF, LCF, 1953, letters to Moses Cassuto in London (4 September 1741) and in Amsterdam (6 November 1741).
 40. Only in February 1743 were Ergas and Silvera informed that in Paris, a year and a half earlier, the big diamond had been estimated to be worth 250,000 livres tournois, which, they said, equaled about fifty thousand pieces of eight (ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Moses Cassuto in Amsterdam, 25 February 1743).
 41. ASF, LCF, 1953, letters to Moses Cassuto in Amsterdam (19 March and 4 June 1742).
 42. BLO, *MS Ital.* d.9, fol. 158v.
 43. ASF, LCF, 1953, letters to Moses Cassuto in Amsterdam (20 August, 2 November, 19 November, 3 December, 24 December, and 31 December 1742) and to Jacob and Joseph Belilios in Venice (7 September and 2 November 1742). Ergas and Silvera suspected that Belilios was planning to hand the diamond to Giovanni Pommer in Venice. See the letters to Moses Cassuto and the Belilioses in ASF, LCF, 1953 and 1957 (14 August 1741; 2 November, 3 December, 21 December, and 24 December 1742; 6 May 1743). The Pommer family ran a business in Venice with branches in Vienna and Württemberg (ASV, NT, Carlo Gabrieli, 516.235, 516.240, 516.242). Pommer also served other Sephardim in Livorno, including the Franco family (ASF, NMP, Niccolò Mazzinghi, 27111, fols. 114v-115r, no. 191). On his way back to Florence, Cassuto secretly passed by Venice, but fortunately neither Belilios nor Menasseh found out (ASF, LCF, 1957, letter to Moses Cassuto in Florence, 21 June 1743).
 44. ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Jacob and Joseph Belilios in Venice (21 December 1742); ASF, LCF, 1957, letters to Ephraim and David Cassuto in Florence (31 December 1742) and to Moses Cassuto in Amsterdam (21 January 1743).
 45. ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Moses Cassuto in Amsterdam (2 November 1742); ASF, LCF, 1957, letter to Jacob and Joseph Belilios in Venice (12 March 1745); ASF, LCF, 1960, letter to Jacob and Joseph Belilios in Venice (31 December 1745). Contemporary documents attest to the fact that 12 percent per annum was a common interest rate in Aleppo (PRO, SP, 110/72, pt. 3, fol. 579v; PRO, SP, 105/118, fol. 191).
 46. ASF, LCF, 1953, letters to Moses Cassuto in Amsterdam (21 January and 1 April 1743) and to Solomon Gomes in London (1 February 1743).
 47. ASF, LCF, 1953, letters to Jacob and Joseph Belilios in Venice (15 February 1743) and to Moses Cassuto in Amsterdam (25 February 1743); ASF, LCF, 1957, letter to Moses Cassuto in Amsterdam (22 April 1743).
 48. BLO, *MS Ital.* d.9, fol. 97r, 174v.
 49. ASF, LCF, 1957, letter to Moses Cassuto in Florence (21 June and 6 September 1743). On Giovanni Baldasseroni, see Addobbati 2007: 118n14, 123n27.
 50. Colorni 1945: 306-7; R. Toaff 1990: 220-21.
 51. The three arbiters were Isaac Lopes Pereira (elected by Menasseh), Isaac Moreno (elected by Ergas and Silvera), and Rabbi Jacob Lusena (c. 1690-1760), elected by the two arbiters as the neutral one. They were to be paid a total of four hundred

- pieces of eight for their services (ASF, NMP, Giovanni Matteo Novelli, 26723, fols. 159r–160r; ASL, CGA: *Atti civili*, 848, no. 981).
52. There were two types of arbiters: those selected by private parties (often merchants or family members who sought speedy resolution of their conflicts), whose verdicts parties had to abide by, and those appointed by local courts, whose sentences could be appealed. On the history of arbitration, see Martone 1984. Kuehn (1991: 19–74) insists on the coexistence of arbitration and judicial forms of adjudication in fifteenth-century Florence. On the importance of arbitration, see also Soman 1982; Garnot 1996.
 53. ASL, CGA: *Atti civili*, 854, no. 451. The Supreme Magistrate was created by Cosimo I as a direct expression of the prince's will, and it adjudicated without recourse to statutory norms or Roman law. Its jurisdiction was never defined precisely, but in practice it dealt primarily with family litigation, disputes about feudal rights, and issues pertaining to foreigners. On this court, see Anzilotti 1910: 83–106; Pansini 1973.
 54. In addition to Moses Attias, Menasseh also hired Isaac Lopes Pereira as his translator on some occasions (ASF, NMP, Niccolò Mazzinghi, 27109, fols. 73r–74r, 188v–189r; ASF, MNP, Giovanni Matteo Novelli, 26723, fols. 159r–160r).
 55. ASF, *Ruota Civile*, 4167, no. 12. Established in 1502 and reorganized by Cosimo I in 1532, the ruota was a tribunal formed by five foreign experts in both civil and canon law. It was the court of appeal for sentences handed down by the merchant court (Mercanzia), the judges of the Florentine neighborhoods, and the rectors of Tuscan towns. During the seventeenth century, in response to the excessive number of cases pending before the ruota, it became common to appoint judges to arbitrate these lawsuits (a procedure called *cause delegate*). After 1621, prescribed payments were due to judges of the ruota acting as *giudici delegati*. The effectiveness of this procedure in speeding up the course of justice varied from case to case (Pansini 1977, 1993).
 56. ASL, CGA: *Atti civili spezzati*, 2234, nos. 190, 953. The merchant court of Pisa also functioned as a court of appeal for civil disputes concerning sums larger than one hundred scudi. With special permission, it also heard appeals of sentences passed by the massari.
 57. Santarelli 1964: 147–52, 245–47, 284; Cantini 1800–32, 2: 178–79; Livornina of 1591 (art. 15); Livornina of 1593 (art. 14). In 1713 the revised statutes of the Mercanzia explicitly mentioned Jewish women in regard to bankruptcy procedures (Cantini 1800–32, 22: 131–36). In addition to dowries, salaries of waged employees and, under certain circumstances, rents had to be paid before any other debts. Jewish law prescribed that women act as their husbands' seetired creditors (Kaufman 1993: 202). The text of the 1582 law is printed in Cantini 1800–32, 10: 194–99. A distinction between involuntary insolvency (*faillite*) and fraudulent bankruptcy (*banqueroute*) also existed in French merchants' law at the time (Szramkiewicz 1989: 180–93). For a parallel but more intricate evolution of this distinction in eighteenth-century England, see Hoppit 1987: 8–41.
 58. Price 1992: 3.
 59. ASL, CGA: *Atti civili spezzati*, 2234, nos. 190, 953. Abraham and David Ergas and Isaac Silvera probably chose the convent of the Capuchins as their refuge because it

- was very close to the villa where they resided. In the seventeenth century, the Greek church of Santissima Annunziata provided refuge to several insolvent Jewish merchants (C. Galasso 2002a: 56). In 1663 an order of arrest was proclaimed against Maracara Avanchinz, a wealthy Armenian merchant who was then in Livorno and who later became a director of the French East India Company. He found refuge in a convent and escaped thence (Baghdiantz McCabe 1999: 306).
60. The agreement was reached with thirty-nine of the creditors (of fifty-nine in all) who in the aggregate owed 12,331:19:0 pieces. The Supreme Magistrate approved the “compromise” on 29 April 1747. To the creditors who accepted the agreement, Ergas and Silvera had to pay back the entire amount owed, beginning with a 25 percent installment to be delivered within eighteen months (that is, by October 1749). ASL, CGA: *Atti civili spezzati*, 2249, no. 953.
 61. These women's syndicates were common in bankruptcy trials in Livorno (C. Galasso 2002a: 54). For Ergas and Silvera's inventory, see Chap. 3, n. 102.
 62. Allegra 1993, 1996, 1999. Cristina Galasso (2002a: 42, 73–74, 157–58) also emphasizes the autonomy of Jewish women in Livorno, although she finds that dowries of Sephardic women averaged 1,850 pieces of eight (varying between 200 pieces and 6,700 pieces or more) and those of Ashkenazic and Italian women averaged only 700 pieces. Her sample only includes eighty-two observations for Sephardic women and nineteen for Ashkenazic-Italian women and seems to exclude the most well-to-do Sephardic families (see Chap. 5).
 63. Stow 1995a. On cases of dissolution of marriage adjudicated by Venetian and Tuscan ecclesiastical courts, see Ferraro 2001 and Lombardi 2001: 167–77, respectively.
 64. In spite of rabbinical reservations about women's testimony (Kaufman 1993: 197–201), there is evidence that Jewish women were allowed to take oaths in Renaissance Italy, and could do so in matters relating to business practices (Adelman 1991: 142).
 65. In the eighteenth century, Jewish women could hire a Christian legal practitioner as the guardian (*mundualdus*) who represented them in court (ASL, GCM, 961, no. 13). In 1702 an official document stated that married Jewish women in Livorno were allowed to litigate their dowries without the assistance of a legal guardian (ASF, MP, 2428, fol. 38r–v) but also stated that they commonly paid the *auditore* to act as their *mundualdus* (*ibid.*, fols. 45r–46r). On male legal guardians in medieval Florence, see Kuehn 1991: 212–37. For a comparison with the position of Jewish women in the tribunals of Rome, see Stow and Debenedetti Stow 1986: 68–69.
 66. Stow 1995a: 463–44; C. Galasso 2002a: 92; Adelman 1991: 151. On the “cruel mothers” of fourteenth-century Florence, see Klapisch-Zuber 1985: 117–31. Giulia Calvi (1994) has shown that a shift occurred during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when the Tuscan authorities began to entrust widows with the guardianship of their children, a prerogative that also led women to administer, although not inherit, family assets. In Renaissance Venice, too, women were occasionally granted legal guardianship of their children (J. Shaw 2006: 183).
 67. Berengo 1965: 41–43; Häberlein 1998: 18n64; Taylor 1963: 51.
 68. Addobbati 1996a, 1: 10–11.
 69. On the rise of the nuclear family in medieval and early modern Jewish societies in

- which lower- and middle-class families prevailed, such as those of the Rhineland and Rome, see Stow 1987, 1995b, 1: xviii, 2001: 29; Todeschini 1994b: 32–33.
70. Kirshner 1985; Ago 1995; Häberlein 1998: 19.
71. Blanca died on 6 May 1747, and a month later Deborah deposited a copy of her last will with the court of the governor of Livorno (ASL, CGA: *Atti civili spezzati*, 2249, no. 953).
72. According to the statutes of the Mercanzia (bk. 6, chap. 3) as quoted in the course of the trial, the wife of an insolvent merchant was prohibited from taking any legal action regarding their dowries during the first six months after his bankruptcy (ASL, CGA: *Atti civili spezzati*, 2245, no. 953).
73. “[T]odos rogamos a el que puede para suas prosperidades pues las eroicas obras que com Vms siempre asistem de ajudar a la parte mas flacas masima siendo pariente” (ASF, LCF, 1960, letter to Benjamin Mendes da Costa in London, 22 November 1745).
74. ASF, LCF, 1957, letters to Benjamin Alvarenga in London (24 May, 14 June, and 21 June 1745) and to Benjamin Mendes da Costa in London (31 December 1745). When a bill expired without having been paid, merchants asked notaries to draw up a so-called deed of protest. Protests against unpaid bills of exchange drawn on Ergas and Silvera are mentioned in ASF, MNP, 25267, Giovanni Battista Gamera, fols. 151v–152r, 180r–v. A cousin came to Ergas and Silvera’s rescue and offered partial payment for a bill of exchange amounting to 260 pieces payable on Alvarenga’s behalf (ASF, MNP, 25267, Giovanni Battista Gamera, 25268, fol. 10r).
75. ASL, CGA: *Cause delegate*, 2500, no. 953 (“Memoria”); ASF, NMP, Niccolò Mazzinghi, 27110, fols. 73r–74r (19 August 1746); ASF, NMP, Roberto Micheli, 27236, fol. 165r–v (13 December 1746).
76. The legal representative of the women’s syndicate appealed to a subtle distinction between a pawn (*pegno*) and a security guaranteee (*mallevatoria*): by law, the latter was not sufficient as collateral for bankruptcy credits, and this meant that Menasseh could not obtain the diamond in return for cash. Moreover, Blanca and the other women stressed that their husbands belonged to a higher social class than did their Florentine creditors and were therefore entitled to a greater security than the one that Menasseh could offer by depositing a sum in the public debt. On 18 August 1747, Menasseh obtained a second sentence in his favor from the governor of Livorno that again ordered the transfer of the diamond to him in return for an agreed-on deposit. This time, Ergas and Silvera appealed to the Supreme Magistrate along with their wives, and the sentence was revoked. They also presented a request to the Supreme Magistrate for the 29,156:17:8 pieces that Menasseh owed them—that is, one-half of the sum that he had agreed to repay to them plus the expenses that they had incurred while attempting to sell the diamond. The convergence of the interests of Ergas and Silvera and their wives is well demonstrated by their recourse to the high court of equity in Florence, and the multiplicity of competent jurisdictions demonstrates how easy it was for a dispute over property rights to drag on. See ASL, CGA: *Atti civili spezzati*, 2249, no. 953.
77. ASF, NMP, Filippo Gonnella, 27190, fol. 60r–v, no. 56.

78. ASL, CGA: *Cause delegate*, 2500, fols. 1192r–1196v, 1217r–1222v. A local rabbi was hired to translate the transcript of Israel Jadgar’s interrogation from Hebrew into Italian.
79. The Sephardim were recognized as legitimate creditors of the Persian Jew for the sum of 10,740 pieces (that is, one-half of what Belilios and Silvera had lent Menasseh in Aleppo) plus 1,460:10:3 pieces that they had given him during the tour of the seven provinces. Menasseh did not have to help defray the travel expenses incurred by Cassuto and Belilios, who were charged with having unjustly prolonged their stay in Amsterdam. Ergas and Silvera had to reimburse Menasseh for one-half the money he had spent during his trip to the Dutch capital. See ASL, CGA: *Atti civili spezzati*, 2249, no. 953. Such a stalemate was not uncommon. In Venice, the liquidation of a Jewish partnership that went bankrupt in 1649 lasted twenty-five years (Bonazzoli 1998: 49).
80. ASL, CGA: *Cause delegate*, 2500, no. 953.
81. “Sopra di che devo accennare che veramente gl’Ergas e Silvera son poveri, ma l’erede Nunes Bernal pretende che non siano impossibilitati a dare una mallevatoria perché possono prestarla le loro mogli con la metà delle doti” (ASL, GCM, 939, fols. 205v–207v).
82. “[E] ben dice il proverbio spagnolo, a onde no ai ganancia cierta es la perdita” (ASF, LCF, 1957, letter to Moses Cassuto in Florence, 12 July 1743).
83. Landa (1994: 101–13) assumes that “middleman groups” need to be “ethnically homogeneous” in order to work but does not define that standard in concrete historical terms. See also Bonacich 1973; Light and Gold 2000.
84. “[C]rediamo che non vi sia differenza dell’giustizia dell’Haya all’altri luoghi, poi quello che vuol dire giustizia è una sola, la differenza che vi possa essere sia un poco più di tempo ho meno” (ASF, LCF, 1957, letter to Moses Cassuto in Amsterdam, 29 April 1743).
85. L. Bernstein 1996. On credible commitments and credible threats, see Williamson 1985: 167–68.
86. ASF, LCF, 1957, letter to Efraim and David Cassuto in Florence (5 April 1745).
87. According to the account left by a British physician who was in the Ottoman city at the time, “the Jews in proportion to their number suffered much this season.” Between February and July 1743, 18,170 people died, 383 of whom were Jewish (Russell 1794, 2: 341r, 335r–387r). Russell makes no distinction between Eastern and Western Sephardim in his calculations.
88. Marcus 1989: 23; ASF, LCF, 1953, letter to Jacob and Joseph Belilios in Venice (4 August 1741); CCM, AA1801, J.908 (letter of 30 September 1743); Frangakis-Syrett 1992: 55–57.
89. ASF, LCF, 1953, letters to Moses Cassuto in Amsterdam (22 January and 5 February 1742).
90. ASF, *Segreteria di finanze e affari prima del 1788*, 809.
91. Their presence among the governanti was registered in 1763 (ACEL, *Minute* 103).
92. ASL, CGA: *Atti civili spezzati*, 2312, no. 804; ASL, GCM, 963, fol. 287v.
93. Filippini 1984a: 664–65; 1993: 15; 1998, 2: 256–69, 3: 49–71, 242.

94. Israel 1984a: 30; 1992: 394–98; 2002a: 566, 568–84.
 95. Israel 1992: 395; Y. Kaplan 2000: 148–49, 287; Levie Bernfeld 2002.
 96. Schroeter 2002.
 97. ASF, *Arte dei Giudici e Notai (Proconsolo)*, 608; Addobbati 2007: 146.
 98. Filippini 1993: 14–15, 1993: 1051–52.
 99. Because he had no children, Jacob Ergas created a trust of eight thousand pieces to subsidize the Talmud Torah and left an equally large fund for the poor of the community, in addition to bequeathing a £5,000 deposit in annuities of the Bank of England and considerable real estate to his niece and nephew, Rachel and Abraham Baruch Carvaglio (ASF, MNT, Jacopo Filippo Bargioni, 28920, fols. 6v–14r; PRO, PROB, 11/1220, fols. 369r–374r).
 100. Fukasawa 1987: 141–43.
 101. Barnai 1992: 150.
 102. Filippini 1982: 90, 1998, 1: 230.
 103. Collins 2006: 295. The Silveras are documented as being among the merchants of European origin who were active in Aleppo in the late nineteenth century. Mafalda Ade Winter (University of Tübingen), pers. comm., November 2007.
 104. Filippini 1982: 58.
 105. Mentions of several families with the name of Ergas in Livorno in the 1830s are found in ACEL, *Minute*, 114 (129) and 118 (21). I thank Liana Elda Funaro for these references. In 1841 five Ergas households were counted in Livorno (Luzzati 1990: appendix). I found only two traces of Ergases in Tuscany in the twentieth century. In 1934, during the Fascist regime, an outstanding art collection belonging to one Rodolfo Ergas was auctioned in Milan (see the catalogue of Galleria Dedalo 1934). Rodolfo Ergas and his wife Federiga Schaffer arrived in Florence from Vienna in 1920 and resided in the hills of Montughi until 1935 (Nicoletta Baldini kindly obtained their personal file for me from the Ufficio Anagrafe of the Municipality of Florence). The last person surnamed Ergas whose name is known to Italian history was the producer Moris Ergas. Born in Salonica in 1922, he left for Belgrade and then moved to Italy, survived the war, and in the 1950s and 1960s produced well-known movies such as Rossellini's *General della Rovere* (1959) and Pontecorvo's *Kapo* (1960). He died in Rome in 1995.
 106. ACEL, *Registro delle emigrazioni*, 200 (1824–30); 201 (1831–42), 202 (1843–54, containing only last names beginning with the letters H to Z), 203 (December 1854–1865). Parts of these registers are damaged. A certain Giuseppe Ergas is recorded as leaving for Marseilles on 7 December 1838 and for Venice on 5 June 1839. No one named Ergas is mentioned in the records of the so-called passports issued by the successive authorities that ruled Florence in the periods 1758–89, 1796–99, and 1806–8 (ASF, *Segreteria e ministero degli esteri*, 2741–2743).
 107. I pieced together bits of information during my conversations with Benjamin Ergas, Rachel Ergas, and Yasmine Ergas and thanks to the expertise of Julia Phillips Cohen, Mark Cohen, Paris Papamichos Chronakis, and Isaac Nehama. In March 1943, forty-three individuals named Ergas were deported to Treblinka from Monastir (M. Cohen 2003: 212). A file in the archives of the Special Operation Executive of the British

- Minister of Economic Warfare reveals that in 1943, a certain Maurice Ergas, born in Salonica around 1903, and living in Marseilles after World War I as a wool and fiber merchant, lived in Lisbon and was considered to “be used with caution for information only” before the British lost track of him (PRO, HS9/H83/7, ins. 274626).
 108. Nehama 1935–36, 6: 254.

CONCLUSION

1. Carrière 1973: 916.
2. See, e.g., Brooks 1986: 48–111; Kagan 1981; Muldrew 1999: 199–271; J. Shaw 2006.
3. E. Goffman 1969: 102–3.
4. Quoted in Çizakça 1996: 21.
5. For a collective fine imposed on all Sephardic merchants by the French consul in Aleppo because of a crime committed by one of them, see Chap. 4.
6. PRO, SP, 105/118, fol. 117.
7. Further considerations may be found in Trivellato 2009.
8. Slezkine 2004: 40.
9. Curtin 1984: 230–54.
10. Fusaro 2003, 2005; Harlaftis 1996: esp. 3–9, 39–52.
11. Between 73 and 95 percent of the Greek merchants based in Marseilles operated as a general partnership in the nineteenth century (Mandilara 1998: 176).
12. Ben-Porath 1980: 6; Coleman 1988: 98–99; L. Bernstein 1992; Shield 2002. For a review of the literature concerning ethnic trading networks in international trade, see Rauch 2001.

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