



UMBERTO MOSHE DAVID CASSUTO ז"ל

The Destruction of the Rabbinic Academies in South Italy during the Thirteenth Century

English translation by Anat Cassuto, Dannel Cassuto, Philippe Cassuto

Edited by Mauro Perani*

Foreword

For many years I promised myself to translate a text, published by Umberto Cassuto in 1942, and dedicated to the study of the tragic end of the Jewish presence in southern Italy because of the terrible persecution and pogroms that swept the Jewish communities of Puglia, Basilicata and the other southern Italian regions of Campania and Calabria, bringing to an end the glorious Jewish culture which had flourished there. The study appeared in Hebrew with the title חרבן הישיבות באיטליה הדרומית במאה הי"ג in a miscellany published in Jerusalem in memory of A. Gulak and S. Klein.¹ In it, as Cassuto says at the beginning of the study, he gathered all that, in a less systematic way, he had written in several encyclopaedic entries or elsewhere, on the great southern Italian Jewish culture, the roots of which came directly from Jerusalem and the Palestinian cultural heritage of the Land of Israel.

Historical sources trace the Jewish presence in southern Italy even before the beginning of the Common Era, but a first big flow of Jewish population came after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE. Then, for example according to the Sefer Yosippon and, with some differences, according to the Sefer Yuḥasin, the emperor Titus would have settled 5,000 Jewish prisoners in Puglia, particularly in Taranto, Otranto, and Oria. It is estimated that the Jews deported by Titus were about 100,000, supporting the figures mentioned by the historical sources. The proximity of

* The editor of this study thanks Anat, Dannel and Philippe Cassuto for their English translation. Thanks also to Giancarlo Lacerenza, Raffaele Esposito and Stefano Palmieri for some valuable suggestions in their final reading of the present text.

¹ M.D. Cassuto, "Ḥurban ha-yešivot be-Italia ha-deromit ba-me'ah ha-y"g", in *Sefer zikaron le-Ašer Gulak we-li-Šmu'el Klein. Studies in Memory of Asher Gulak and Samuel Klein*, Università ha-İvrit, Yerušalayim 1942, 137-152.

Puglia to the East and the presence of several major ports such as Otranto, made these places a relatively easy refuge for Jews in flight from Palestine. As we know, with the end of the patriarchate in 429 CE, the Moreshet Eretz Israel passed to Puglia. There, after the persecutions, Judaism was revived, grew and started spreading its influence widely. Its golden era has been between the 10th and the 12th century, constituting a true lighthouse illuminating all Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora. This culture soon acquired even greater importance with the end of Ge'onim in Babylonia and consequently of those centers of study which for centuries had been a fertile breeding ground for the development of Judaism, after the completion of the Babylonian Talmud in 7th-8th centuries CE. Hebrew, which was no longer a living language of daily life since the Babylonian exile of 586 BCE, became again a living language in Venosa, with the epitaphs of the local Jewish catacombs from the 8th century onwards. It is impressive to know that still at the turn of the 6th century CE, Emperor Justinian did not accept the request of some Jews to be allowed to read the Bible and pray in Hebrew instead of Greek, and ordered them to continue to use the Greek text.

Cassuto was a precursor in the study of the southern Italian Judaism, which exported its cultural richness already in the 9th century CE in the Rhine Valley, where it gave birth to the Jewish presence there, while the echo of the Jewish culture of the Apulia and Basilicata came to Northern France, reaching the school of Troyes. Cassuto also studied several funerary inscriptions of the rich epigraphic corpus of southern Italy, and sometimes improved few readings of the Jewish linguist Graziadio Isaia Ascoli. The scholar who continued the work of Cassuto from the sixties of the 20th century was Cesare Colafemmina. He can be considered the great rediscoverer of the Judaism in southern Italy, devoting himself to the study and exploration of its sources, including a new branch of the Venosa Catacomb, until his premature death in 2012, zikrono li-vrakhah.

As I said, it has been a long time since I wanted to make this contribution by Cassuto accessible in an English version to scholars, but the opportunity came only some time ago, in Aix-En-Provence. Indeed, on the occasion of a Workshop on Hebrew manuscripts, I met there Philippe Cassuto, to whom I spoke of my desire, and I dared to ask him if he was interested in translating this beautiful study of his ancestor. The response was immediate and positive. Suddenly, together with his sons, they translated into English Cassuto's study. To the text, slightly edited, I have made some additions in square brackets in order to explain some abbreviated references in Cassuto's original. Cassuto wrote his text in Hebrew and did not translate it into other languages. However, he used parts of it in some encyclopedias entries he wrote on the Jews in Puglia and in southern Italy. Cassuto himself, in the footnote 2 of his Hebrew study of 1942, says: «I reassembled our knowledge of the Jews from Apulia in my articles in the Encyclopaedia Judaica, German edition, entries "Apulien" ... and "Bari" ... In the Hebrew edition of the same Encyclopedia, in the entries "Otranto" and "Oria" ...

See also my articles on Apulian rabbis, for example “RYD” Rabbi Isaiah di Trani, in the German edition ... “RIAZ” ... “Isaac ben Melchizedek” ... etc.».

These publications appeared in the years 1920s and 1930s of the 20th century and, as well as his Hebrew article of 1942 here translated in English, obviously they are no longer updated to recent scholarship. Indeed, thereafter our knowledge of the Apulian Jewry has been largely enriched by a number of studies mostly published by the late Cesare Colafemmina in this same review, the *Sefer yuhasin*, which he directed up for twenty-seven years, from 1985 to 2012, and still continues up to this day under the guidance of Giancarlo Lacerenza, a great worker and researcher to which Colafemmina has passed the baton and the heritage of the study of Jewry in southern Italy – who enriched it in a new valuable graphics, thanks to the support of the Center for Jewish Studies of the Department of Asia, Africa and the Mediterranean, at the University of Naples “L’Orientale”. Another, valuable contribution was added few years ago with the volume *Gli ebrei nel Salento* edited by Fabrizio Lelli (see bibliography), containing important new contributions on the subject. It should be added that in the Jewish Encyclopedia, still today a reference work in 12 volumes containing over 15,000 articles on the history, culture, and state of Jews and Judaism, originally published in New York between 1901 and 1906, there are several entries devoted to the Apulian Judaism. Among them: “Oria” and “Otranto” by Richard Gottheil and Ismar Elbogen; “Bari” by Joseph Jacobs and Richard Gottheil; “Apulia” by Richard Gottheil and H. G. Enelow; “Donnolo, Shabbethai B. Abraham B. Joel”, by Richard Gottheil; “Ahimaaz Ben Paltiel” by Richard Gottheil. Nobody mentions Umberto Cassuto, because the Italian scholar, born in Florence on September 16, 1883 and died in Jerusalem, December 18, 1951, at the time when the Jewish Encyclopedia appeared in 1901, was only 18 years old and was still finishing his studies.

I hope that this small effort will be rewarded by the satisfaction of making readable for a much wider audience this fine contribution of the great Florentine scholar, who moved to Israel in the second part of his life, and produced so many and important studies that no researcher can afford to ignore.

Mauro Perani

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The names of the cities of Apulia, which is the South-East district of Italy, are strongly linked to the history of the Jewish culture, in particular to the history of the Talmudic studies. The cities of Bari and Otranto, Trani and Siponto, Venosa and Oria are on the lips of all those interested in the history of our literature and its transmission. The philosophers and writers of Apulia

play a vital role in the medieval Jewish history. And they would probably play an even more vital role, if we knew more than what was discovered thus far.²

Still in the twelfth century, the Jewish academies of Apulia had such a good reputation that the Scriptures were read in conformity with them, as the common saying goes: «Because from Bari came the Law and from Otranto³ the Word of God». They still had in the thirteenth century such prestigious leaders as RID (Rabbi Isaiah of Trani) and RIAZ (Rabbi Isaiah ben Elijah of Trani); notwithstanding, the academies completely disappear after the thirteenth century. Why? What happened? Is it possible to discover what caused their destruction? It seems possible to me. In my article on Apulia in the Israeli-German encyclopedia,⁴ I addressed the subject in a few words; now I want to transfer in detail to the Hebrew readership the matter that I have collected on this subject,⁵ as well as the conclusions that, according to me, we are authorised to draw from it. This present research article regarding the destruction of these famous centres of Jewish thought and Talmud, is a tribute of love and a proof of dearness to the great lights of Talmudic knowledge

² I reassembled our knowledge of the Jews from Apulia in my articles in the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, German edition, entries “Apulien” (I, 22-27) and “Bari” (*ibid.*, 1075-1077); in the Hebrew edition, entries “Otranto” (I, 836-837) and “Oria” (II, 3-4). See also my articles on Apulian rabbis, for example “RYD” (German edition, IX, 20-22), “RIAZ” (*ibid.*, 19-20), “Isaac ben Melchizedek” (VIII, 528-529), etc. The reader will find detailed bibliographies in these articles. I recall here a selection of recent publications on this topic: Assaf, *Ha-Salah* 35 (1917) 12-17, 275-286; Isaiah di Trani (Aharon), *Me’at d’vaš*, ed. by D. Sasson, Oxford University Press 1928, 7-12; M. Margalio, *Introduction to Halakhot Ketuvot*, being published now under his direction, 1-10 [Editor’s note: M. Margalio (ed.), *Halakot Kešuvot*, Jerusalem 1942]. V. Aptowitz mentioned recently few others Apulian rabbis in his introduction to his edition of *Ra’avyah* [Editor’s note: *Mavo le-Sefer ha-Ra’avyah*, Meqise Nirdanim, Yerušalayim 1938], 257-261, 352-362, 377-378, 395. Rav Hassida began publishing in *Ha-Segulla* (65 ff) the biography of RID: “Hossen Yeshu’ot” where he demonstrated that the name of the father of RID, Mali, is only the short form of Malkiel.

³ *Sefer ha-yašar*, ed. Rosenthal, Berlin 1898, 90 (it is spelt here *Otrente*).

⁴ I, 25.

⁵ I started to get interested in the fate of the Jews from Apulia at the end of the thirteenth century in an Italian article “Un ignoto capitolo di storia giudaica”, which I published in a *Festschrift* in honour of Hermann Cohen, *Judaica*, Berlin 1912, 389-404 [Editor’s note: U. Cassuto, “Un ignoto capitolo di storia ebraica. Sui crypto giudei dell’Italia meridionale nei secoli XII e segg.”, in I. Elbogen, B. Kellermann, E. Mittwoch (eds.), *Judaica: Festschrift zu Hermann Cohens Siebzigstem Geburtstage*, Berlin 1912, 389-404]. Afterwards, I still found new materials, which confirmed my initial conclusions and helped me to find additional details and set the exact dates.

whose lights have gone out and disappeared among us last year, my dear colleagues and friends, Professor Gulak and Professor Klein, may their memory be a blessing.

In one of the sermons by Christian monk Giordano da Rivalto, delivered in front of a large audience on the 9th of November 1304, the preacher recounts, amongst other topics, an event which occurred, according to his words, 10 or 15 years earlier in Apulia (it must be noted here that the name 'Apulia' referred at the time not only to the region of the same name today, but to almost all of southern Italy). The time of the event is around the year 1289 or 1290. This is the account as given by the preacher:⁶

One of the advisers of King Charles [from the Anjou house], the monk Bartolomeo, testified in front of the King that the Jews of Apulia have put to death a Christian child to mock the Christian tradition of Jesus' torment and death. And the King, who was only searching for a pretext to eradicate Judaism from his land, ordered to arrest all the Jews of the country and to force them to become Christian; if they refused, they would have been put to death. After a long reflection, the Jews choose to repudiate their religion and they converted in large numbers, more than 8,000, and only a few managed to escape. As a result, there were no Jews left in Apulia and in all of the King's land. One of the converts was among the preacher's friends: a highly educated man who became a monk and was appointed lecturer in the capital Naples.

The rabbi Güdemann, who made remarks regarding this preacher in his book *Torah and Life*,⁷ was persuaded that the Christian preacher had imagined this entire story by himself. Here are his arguments: a) we do not have any knowledge about this subject from another source; b) out of the two King Charles who reigned in Naples in that era, the first one died before the date to which the preacher refers, «and he liked the Jews», and the second one was «a protector» of the Jews as well; c) during the thirteenth and fourteenth

⁶ Giordano da Rivalto, *Prediche recitate in Firenze dal 1303 al 1306, ed ora per la prima volta pubblicate*, Magheri, Firenze 1831, II, 231 [Editor's note: the book was reprinted as Id., *Prediche inedite del b. Giordano da Rivalto dell'ordine de' predicatori, recitate in Firenze dal 1302 al 1305*, Romagnoli, Bologna 1867].

⁷ [Editor's note: M. Güdemann, *Geschichte des Erziehungswesens und der Kultur der Abendländischen Juden*, 3 bänder, Hölder, Wien 1880-1888] *Geschichte des Erziehungswesens*, II, 260-261. In its Hebrew version: *Ha-orah we-ha-ḥayyim*, 234-235, the translator skipped the first insertion. Not only that, but he also made a mistake thinking Apulia was the name of a city, and as such did not fully understand some of Güdemann's sentences. On the second insertion, see in this book pp. 152-153 (in its Hebrew version: p. 130).

century, there have always been Jews in Trani and in the other cities of Apulia.

However, it is clear that we cannot accept blindly the words of Giordano da Rivalto. We cannot forget that his main purpose is to demonstrate that the Jews are used to insulting and cursing at the Christian religion and to swearing at the Christians, and they always achieve their goal. It is therefore possible that here and there he added his grain of salt or that he exaggerated to a certain extent. It is clear that the murder of the Christian child is nothing but an imaginary tale and that his words on the complete destruction of the Jewish population in the entire kingdom is nothing but an exaggeration; nonetheless when he refers to a subject such as the Messiah, he is in good faith and does not lie. Nevertheless, if he imagined the entire story by himself, there is no basis to his demonstration. In the same sermon, he shows another view on the persecutions of the Jews that erupted in Germany «four years ago or less». The details that he mentions clearly refer to the massacre of Rindfleisch, even if not all the details are precise. Since we see that he is not lying when he talks about distant facts, we should believe the essential part of his words about what happened in nearby areas. Furthermore, his account contains details that give credibility to his words, for example, the name of the King's counsellor, Bartolomeo, as well as the mention of one of the converts, who was among his close friends.

As regards Güdemann's arguments, they are of course inconclusive. The fact that there were Jews in Trani and in the other cities of Apulia during the thirteenth and fourteenth century (we will start with the last argument) does not contradict the essence of the story of Giordano da Rivalto. Firstly, we do not have any evidence that there was no halt in the life of Apulian communities, and it is possible that they subsided until the end of the thirteenth century (date of the event according to the preacher) and that after a few years they restarted.⁸ Additionally, even if we suppose that the preacher's claim

⁸ To show the permanent presence of Jews in Trani and throughout Apulia, Güdemann quotes Beltrani in his book *Su gli antichi ordinamenti marittimi della città di Trani*, Barletta 1873, 76-77, and in his article "Il conte Alberigo da Barbiano", in *Il Buonarroti*, 1876, 175-176. However, Beltrani wrote here that despite the misfortunes they suffered in the early 14th century, «Jews have always continued to live in Trani», although the documents he produces do not precede the time of the Count Alberigo da Barbiano, who ruled on Trani in the late 14th and early 15th century. From what he wrote in his article in *Il Buonarroti*, the reader has the impression that in 1377 the inhabitants of Trani are irritated because of the terrible yoke that the leader of the city imposes on Jews, for which no new Jews came to live in the city and those already there left. However, from the original document that Beltrani himself published in his book *Cesare Lambertini*,

that there were no more Jews in all the King's lands is nothing but an exaggeration, as aforementioned, this does not prove that the entire story was imaginary.

The second argument, the attitude of the kings of the House of Anjou towards Jews, is founded on an old superficial base: the division of the kings and princes into two categories, namely those who say good things about Jews and those who persecute them, all of it without paying any attention to the deep and complex reasons of their actions and orders. Furthermore, the attitude of the kings of the House of Anjou was not compatible with Güdemann's description. It is indeed possible to recall a few orders given by Charles the First in favour of the Jews in the country of Anjou, in its regions, in Rome (he was also senator of Rome), and even in Apulia itself.⁹ It is also possible to remind the well-known fact that a few Jewish scholars were part of his "loyals" and translated books of science on his order;¹⁰ on the other hand, it is undoubtable that several times Charles the First was influenced by tendencies opposing Jews and Judaism. As the accusations of the convert Nicolas Donin caused the burning of the books of the Talmud in France (1240-1248),¹¹ and also in England, Spain, and Portugal,¹² so it was also the case in southern Italy. Here as well, accusations made by a converted Jew were exploited. A native from Trani, who was previously a teacher and a judge in the Jewish community of Naples, converted himself to the name Manuforte ("strong hand"), achieved a great reputation and was also admitted amongst the "loyals" of Charles the First. He testified in front of the King that the Talmud and the Jewish prayer books contain terrible blasphemies against Jesus from Nazareth and his mother. On the faith of this testimony, it was written in the name of the King, on the 8th of May 1270, to all the governors of the regions of the country that at the request of Manuforte (which was apparently responsible for the applications of this order), while following the advice of the local monks and priests, searches had to be carried out among the Jews, and if copies of the Talmud or of the prayer books were found they

Trani 1884, I, 128, it is clearly demonstrated that there is no question of Jews faithful to their religion, but that the document speaks of converts.

⁹ I do not come back here on the details I have written in the Festschrift for Herman Cohen, pp. 393-394 (see above, footnote 5).

¹⁰ See *Encyclopedia Judaica*, entry "Faradsh (Mose) ben Schalom aus Agrigento", VI, 929-930, and its bibliography.

¹¹ S. Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the 13th century*, Philadelphia 1933, 29-33, 238-241, 274-281, 339-340, and bibliography.

¹² *Id.*, 33, 242-243, and bibliography.

had to be seized and sent by loyal messengers to the King's court.¹³ It is worth mentioning that the text of the accusation (the terrible blasphemies against Jesus from Nazareth and his mother) is exactly parallel to the version in common use in France;¹⁴ it seems therefore that this action in southern Italy was not uncorrelated with what was happening in France. This is also shown by the similarity of the names of the Hebrew books: along with the Talmud, the Qerovot are mentioned, in other words the ritual and the prayer book;¹⁵ exactly in the same manner the Qerovot appear next to the Talmud in French documents.¹⁶

As in France the burning of the books of the Talmud caused the decline of the academies of that country and the dimming of their light, the book-hunt in southern Italy, without any doubt, made a terrible impact on the academies of Apulia. We do not know in which circumstances the order of the King was applied. In any case, there is no doubt that the activity of Apulian academies dropped heavily because of this order and their destruction was predictable in this era. In the same manner as in France the "books of commandments" were written, summaries of the Talmudic teachings destined to serve as a replacement for the lost Talmudic books, RIAZ wrote in Apulia his book of quotes of decisions.

The situation, which was created during the era of Charles the First, will not improve under the reign of his son, Charles II the Lamb. All the tendencies of this time went in the way of hardening the living conditions of the Jews more and more; in the same manner as the tendencies of the time influenced the politics of Charles the First towards the Jews, they also influenced his son and his son's government. I said his son's government because Charles II stayed clear of the direction of his kingdom for a long time. When his father died (2nd of January 1285), Charles II was a war prisoner of the King

¹³ This document was published by Del Giudice in *Codice diplomatico del regno di Carlo I e II d'Angiò*, Napoli 1863-1902, III, 200. On Manuforte, I gathered more information from *Il Vessillo Israelitico* 59 (1911) 338-339.

¹⁴ Grayzel, *The Church*, 341, appendix B, document 1 (1250): «horrores et blasphemie nominis Dominis Iesu Christi et eius sanctissime genetricis Virginis Marie». Similarly p. 342, document 2 (1275) and document 3 (1250), p. 343, document 4 (1250).

¹⁵ In Del Giudice, *Codice diplomatico*, the names of the books are spelt as follows: *Talmuct* (= Talmud), *Carrboct* (= Qerovot), *Sedur* (= Sidur). In Minieri Riccio, *Alcuni fatti riguardanti Carlo I d'Angiò*, Napoli 1874, 116-117, instead of Carrboct it is spelt Cairbott.

¹⁶ I. Loeb, *Revue des Études Juives* 1 (1880) 259 and 2 (1881) 249-251. On the notion of *qerovot* in the sense of ritual, see Loeb, *ibid.*, 249-250, and Elbogen, *Der Jud. Gottesdienst*, 213 [Editor's note: I. Elbogen, *Der jüdische Gottesdienst in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, Leipzig 1913].

of Aragon and was only freed in November 1288. His son Charles Martel replaced him. Even after his release, Charles being occupied by his wars, the direction of the country remained in the hands of his son until 1294.

Generally speaking, the spirit of this time leaned towards the assimilation and unification of all the parties of the population and their blending into one unity. Religious reasons on the one hand and political and economic reasons on the other worked together in this direction. And the position of the government of the house of Anjou is consistent with this tendency. Already on the 8th of December 1288, in other words a few days after the release of Charles II, a decree of expulsion of the Jews in the French regions of Maine and Anjou was issued, which only exempted those who accepted to become Christian.¹⁷ The rules that were set in the name of Charles II against the Jews of Provence in 1294 were even harsher,¹⁸ and in 1308 it was decreed against them that they could no longer hold public responsibilities and those that were already in that position had to quit and leave them to the Christians.¹⁹ In southern Italy we have to remember the fact that the Muslim community in the city of Lucera, in Apulia, was ordered in 1300 by Charles II to convert to the Christian religion and those who refused were exterminated by sword.²⁰ Therefore, the general position of Charles II and his servants is completely consistent with what Giordano da Rivalto told about the Jews of Apulia.²¹ Güdemann also said that we do not have any knowledge of this event except

¹⁷ Lazard, *Revue des Études Juives* 17 (1888) 213, 225-226. See also Brunschvicg, *Revue des Études Juives* 29 (1894) 238. Del Giudice, *Codice diplomatico*, II, 345, n. 1 cites a document dated 25th of August 1290, which imposes terrible punishment to the Jews of the country from Maine and Anjou who converted and then returned to their Judaism. No doubt it is related to the same Jews who, two years before, converted to escape deportation.

¹⁸ Gross, *MGWJ* 27 (1878) 157-158; Brunschvicg, *Revue des Études Juives* 39 (1894) 238-239 (the date here is 1297).

¹⁹ Kahn, *Revue des Études Juives* 39 (1899) 97-98, 274-275.

²⁰ Egidi, "La colonia saracena di Lucera e la sua distruzione", in *Archivio diplomatico dei Saraceni di Lucera*, Napoli 1917.

²¹ The order given in the year 1292 to the provincial authorities not to hand Jews over to the Inquisition, except in cases within the jurisdiction of the Inquisition according to the rules of the Church (Del Giudice, *Codice diplomatico*, II, 345, note 1 and III, 203, note), is easily explained by the intention to avoid the inquisition expand its scope of action more than necessary. If some of the refugees expelled from France in the year 1306 were welcomed in the provinces (Kahn, *Revue des Études Juives*, 39, 1899, 97), this may be explained by the particular economic reasons.

from the words of Giordano da Rivalto.²² There as well, he was wrong. It seems clear to me that the knowledge of this event spread to our chroniclers.

Salomon Usque in his book *Consolaçam as Tribulaçoens de Israel*²³ tells us what happened in «Napolis, in Italy, in the year 5000 of the Creation». This is the title he chose for his book. «Napolis», which was the Italian form of the name Naples, is the capital of southern Italy; little by little the Kingdom began to be called by its name, and thus it was usual to name it at the time of Usque. Here are his words in brief:²⁴

In the cities of Napolis and Trana [= Trani] and in the other cities of the Kingdom, a misfortune happened to the Jews worse than death. In a difficult and prolonged time of war, the Jews gave to their King a financial help in a generous spirit. During his entire reign, the King acted well with them and at the time of his death, he ordered his son, heir to the throne, to try to give back to the Jews their goodness. The new King asked his counsel for advice and they told him that the best he could do for the Jews is to convert them, in order to save them from the sentence to hell. The King told the leaders of the Jews that his intention was to repay them in this manner, and even though they refused and told him that the biggest favour he could show them was never to talk about it again, the King remained adamant. Therefore, the Jews asked for time to deliberate, and when they returned they told him that they agreed to convert if it was permitted to them to marry the gentefolk of the Kingdom. They thought that the King would refuse and would not accept this condition. Despite what they were hoping for, the King accepted the condition and so they had to reject the offer. The King was enraged at them and ordered to force all the Jews to convert until the torch that was lit during the proclamation would burn out; the ones who refused would have been killed. The Jews surrendered and renounced their religion, except for a few who refused to convert and were killed in martyrdom. The converts married the nobles of the Kingdom according to the promise of the King and the big synagogue of Napolis became a Christian church dedicated to Santa Catilina [that is Santa Caterina in Italian].

This account from Usque was used as a source by Joseph ha-Kohen,²⁵ who translated it almost entirely while skipping only a few details here and

²² Only in the German edition, p. 261.

²³ Topic 3, Number 11, *Mendes dos Remedios edition*, Coimbra 1906-1907, 11-12.

²⁴ In *Sefer Ha-Yovel in honor of Herman Cohen*, 396-397, I quoted it extensively.

²⁵ *'Emeq ha-baḳah*, first edition, pp. 50-51; second edition, pp. 64-65. [Editor's note: first edition: Joseph ha-Kohen, *'Emeq ha-baḳah: sefer ha-qorot we-ha-telaot ašer 'avru 'al beṭ Yisrael*, Krakau 1895].

there.²⁶ We have to point out that Joseph ha-Kohen does not mention the city of Trani but only the Kingdom of Naples in its entirety, and does not tell in which city the church of Santa Caterina was. To which stage of the event corresponds the date 5000 (1240 CE) recorded by Usque, the writer does not tell us precisely. Joseph ha-Kohen associates it with the war mentioned at the beginning of the text, whence we can deduce that the conversion of the Jews took place after this date, maybe a few decades later.

A text very close to Usque's can be found in the book *The Tribe of Judah* by Salomon ibn Verga, number 19, which is:²⁷

In the year of the aforementioned expulsion,²⁸ two large communities were destroyed, Napolis and Trana, that had to convert in majority. The reason of this destruction, I did not find it, but I heard the elders say that a priest fought with the Jews of Trana and imposed his views on everyone. A Jew threw away Jesus' wood and the priest said that morning that he dreamt of how the Jews threw away the wood. Immediately, some Christians went to investigate and search and it was found in the bin of a Jewish house. Therefore, the people became filled with anger and wanted to raise their hands to all the Jews. Upon hearing this, the judges tried to save them because they suspected that all this was work of the priest. However, the judges saw they did not have the force to stop the people, which were numerous; they advised the Jews to convert themselves in order to be saved because they did not know any other regulations, and so the majority converted. A few Jews fled to Napolis and the goyim chased after them. When the people of Napolis²⁹ heard the story, those who gave credence to it rose up against the Jews in the city of Napolis, so that they had to flee otherwise they would be all killed. They saw themselves to be in great danger, except a few who had

²⁶ Instead of the «torch» evoked by Usque, it is written in 'Emeq ha-baḳah «turban» (so it is in the two editions, and so I found in the manuscript H.40.A in the library BYH, and in Adler manuscript 1449). Julien, in his notes to his French translation of *Sefer ha-'Emeq ha-baḳah* (*La vallée des pleurs*, Paris 1881, 229), believes that there is «a copy mistake and that Joseph Ha-Kohen had swapped the word *tocha* ('torch') in his source with the word *tocho*, 'turban' (see Loeb, *Revue des Études Juives* 15, 1888, 218). Nevertheless, in the manuscript 'Emeq ha-baḳah found in the library of the Rabbinical College in Rome, I actually found 'torch'. Apparently Joseph ha-Kohen kept this mistake for some time and then corrected it in later editions of his book.

²⁷ I quote it from a copy of the original edition that is in the University Library in Jerusalem. In the *Sefer Ha-Yovel in honor of Herman Cohen*, I translated from the edition of Wiener (p. 43).

²⁸ Regarding this date, see below.

²⁹ Apparently there is some confusion here in this version of the text.

been able to hide in the princes' palace. Some were forced to convert and the rest of those who had hid were still scared when they saw the goyim arrive, and they left for faraway lands. There were in Trana, in Bara, and in Napolis important and highly educated people, in particular writers and poets, and similar ones could not be found among the people of the province, who could surpass the Jewish families. Some days later, the King was informed that the priest had falsified the evidence and the King ordered to hang him, but because of the reputation of the priests the people opposed the sentence and the King ordered to exile him to faraway islands.

By looking at Usque's story and Ibn Verga's (the one by Joseph ha-Kohen is not to be taken into account because it is a repetition of the first one), it appears to us that the principal lines are identical in both: the Jews of Napoli and of Trani are forced to choose between conversion and death, and the majority choose conversion. This is exactly what Giordano da Rivalto tells. The differences between the two Jewish writers is only in the details: Usque, at the beginning, specifically mentions «Napolis» and «Trana», and later in his story he talks of the entire Kingdom, whereas in Ibn Verga the destruction was mainly in Trani and from there it spread to other places in Apulia (at the end he also mentions «Bara», that is Bari) and what happened in Napoli is only the result of the events in Apulia. Usque says that those who did not want to convert were put to death, whereas Ibn Verga says that some of those who found refuge in the gentlefolk's houses later managed to escape to faraway countries: these two subjects are found together in Giordano da Rivalto. Additionally, in the *Tribe*, a synagogue is mentioned that became a Catholic church, which is not mentioned in Usque. The essential difference is the cause of the event: the King's intention to improve the lives of the Jews in Usque, the charge of blasphemies against the Christian religion in Ibn Verga. Nevertheless, also in the latter the advice to convert comes from those who want to save the Jews.

From this comparison, we can deduce that although there were two different sources available to the two writers, these two sources share the same origin. As this is shown in particular by the mention of the two cities of «Napolis» and «Trana», that appear in both writers, even though in Usque there is no place for a specific mention of Trani. For both cities, their names are given in their Portuguese or Spanish form and not in their Italian form. Usque's source was apparently very late and some mythic details blossomed from popular belief; despite this, some details that seemed credible were preserved, such as the precise details about the church of Santa Caterina which, as we will see later, are perfectly justified. If we do not suppose that when he talks in the first person he copies his source word for word, Ibn Verga had two sources: a written one, which did not give the cause of the event, and an

oral one, which mentioned the culpability of the priest. The former, the written source, is apparently identical to Usque's source.³⁰ And this common source certainly described the case in a way similar to the story of Giordano da Rivalto. The date as well is similar. Nevertheless, the date is not clear in Usque, and it is a matter for conjecture that his intention was to set the time of the conversion a few decades after 1240; but in *The Tribe of Judah* the date is given in explicit words: «In the year of the aforementioned expulsion», that is in the same year when the expulsion treated in the previous chapter began. And the previous chapter gives an account of the expulsion of Jews from England, which took place, as it is well-known, in 1290.³¹ This is perfectly consistent with what Giordano da Rivalto told in 1304, that the conversion took place fourteen or fifteen years before. Therefore, it is clear that the texts are about the same subject and that Giordano da Rivalto's account of the event is not the only one, since some tradition was preserved in the circle of Jewish writers about this matter.

Nonetheless, there could still be some doubt about the historical authenticity of this tradition, unless we find confirmation in the documents from the time of the event. But this confirmation is yet to be found. I searched in vain the order of the King imposing the conversion on the Jews,³² and I will explain below the cause of this. Yet numerous documents exist from which we know for certain that a massive conversion actually took place in the communities of southern Italy at the end of the thirteenth century.

³⁰ F. Baer in his book *Untersuchungen über Quellen und Komposition des Schebet Jehuda*, Berlin 1923, 21 and 37, agrees with what I have concluded from the comparison between the two stories, and decided, according to the general comparison between the two books, that the chronicle used as a shared source by Usque and Ibn Verga passed along various routes and arrived to the two authors in different versions. I am very pleased that my esteemed colleague agreed with my conclusions. But I did not affirm that a second source was known and referred to by the two authors; I only said this about Ibn Verga, who explicitly writes: «I did not find out the cause of the destruction, but I heard from the elders that a priest sowed dissension etc.».

³¹ Yet it is written in *The Tribe of Judah* «year five thousand and twenty of the Creation» (1260). But, as Loeb already remarked in *Revue des Études Juives* 17 (1888) 218, it is assumed that Ibn Verga, or to be more precise its source, mistook *Nun* for *Kaf* (that is to say, fifty for twenty).

³² I asked Dr. A. Gentile, an official in the State Archives of Naples, to look for this document in the archives. He responded favourably to my request, but his efforts were unsuccessful.

Some doubt has been cast upon a possible mention of this subject in the writings of RIAZ, and I will not base myself on it.³³ Anyway, amongst the official documents from the State Archive in Naples there are some that will confirm it beyond doubt. Isolated converts existed in all places and times, so we should not give special value to documents from isolated converts or small groups of converts. Even the 1288 decree, ordering the converted Jews to become members of the local administrative organizations,³⁴ does not demonstrate anything on our subject, even more, it can be seen as a proof that the number of converts was not sufficiently high to allow the creation of specific organizations, as will be created later on. From 1290, however, documents about the converts take a specific character. In 1290, the converted Jews in Naples requested that one of the synagogues of the city would be transformed into a Christian church for their use. It is clear that there is a large and important group of converts.

A still unpublished document from the 9th of March 1290 about this subject is in our possession, and I publish it as an appendix to this article.³⁵ It is a letter, written in the name of the King to the governor of the region of Naples (Terra di Lavoro), to tell him: 1) numerous Jews from the community of Naples who became Christians recently (*nuper*) turned to the government, claiming that one of the synagogues of the city belongs to their ancestors and that it was built without permit after the government had prohibited the construction of new synagogues, and they requested that it would be given to them in order to make it a Christian church and pray in it according to the rules of their new religion; 2) the government agreed to their requests and therefore ordered the governor of the region that if he ascertained that this

³³ Sasson, *Me'at d'vaš*, Oxford 1928, 11: «In another place (§ 381) [RIAZ] speaks of destruction in his time». Mr. Sasson quotes the words of RIAZ as they appear in his catalog, p. 239. It is questionable whether these words actually refer to an event that occurred at the time of the author or they only come from the Talmudic source *Avodah Zarah* 52a-b. Anyway, Mr. Sasson was right to give them historical validity, since even if they come from a Talmudic source, it is plausible that the author introduced this teaching into his collection precisely because events similar to the ones mentioned in the Talmud happened again during his time. Therefore this teaching became significant for his generation.

³⁴ N. Ferorelli, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia meridionale. Dall'età romana al secolo XVIII*, Torino 1915, 56, footnote [Editor's note: anastatic reprint, Arnaldo Forni 2007].

³⁵ Appendix 1 has been copied at my request by Dr. Gentile, who was mentioned in a footnote above. In Ferorelli, *Gli ebrei*, 55, and in the books therein mentioned, a brief mention was already made of the essential content of the document, yet not in detail. It is precisely the details that are important, as we will see later.

synagogue really belonged to the ancestors of the claimants, or that it was really built after the ban, it had to be given to the claimants, in order for it to be used as a prayer house for them, for the other Jews who have already converted, and for those who will. Is this the church of Santa Caterina that is reminded in *The Tribe of Judah*? It seems to me that it is indeed. In the description of the churches of Napoli by Pietro di Stefano, printed in 1560, I found the mention of a church called Santa Caterina della Iudecca (in other words, “St Catherine in the Street of the Jews”), as well as this note: «people say that it is called this way because it was founded by a few Jews who converted to Christianity».³⁶ Therefore, amongst the Christian population of Naples, even if under vague forms,³⁷ the tradition of Jewish origin of this church is preserved. And this tradition exists to this day.³⁸

Another important thing. The archive of Naples preserved a series of documents from 1294, each one belonging to a precise city, which exempted the converts from those cities, who were Jewish until recently (*dudum*), from the payment of general taxes. These documents have not yet been published, and one of them appears in the appendix to this article as an example.³⁹ The number of Jews who received these exemptions in 1294 in the entire Kingdom is around 1,300;⁴⁰ if these, as it looks like, were the heads of household,

³⁶ Pietro di Stefano, *Descrittione de i luoghi sacri della città di Napoli con li fondatori di essi*, Napoli 1560, 175b-176a.

³⁷ The appellation «della Iudecca» does not refer to the founders, but to the location of the church, which is near the Street of the Jews.

³⁸ Today, the church is called Santa Caterina Spina Corona (see Ferorelli, *Gli ebrei*, 193). See pictures in Munkácsi, *Der Jude von Neapel*, Zürich 1939, illustrations 89-92. The author states (p. 111) that precisely in Naples they told him that this church was once a place of worship for the Jews. The preserved form of this monument is quite different from the original one, due to restoration works that were made in 1623 and around 1850. Munkácsi thinks (pp. 111 and 113) that the synagogue was converted into a Christian church after the expulsion of the Jews from the Kingdom of Naples in 1541, but this is impossible since in 1354 there was already a Christian church in this place (I find this data in notes that I brought from Italy, but the source is not noted in the margin, and since the books on the subject have gone missing, it is not possible for me to find the source again). Also, if this church had belonged to Jews until 1541, it is certain that it would have been well-known in 1560, when the aforementioned book by Pietro di Stefano was printed, and the author would not have used the phrase «people say».

³⁹ Appendix 2. These documents of the year 1294 were also copied by Dr. Gentile. General content, without going into details, is referred to by Ferorelli, *Gli ebrei*, 43 and 55. On the converts in Amalfi, see *HB* 20 (1880) 45.

⁴⁰ Ferorelli, *Gli ebrei*, 55.

the total number of converted Jews is not far from the number given by Giordano da Rivalto: 8,000. Just as in 1294 the reality of a mass conversion is evident, we can observe in the same year that some Jews had already escaped in other countries and asked the King for the authorization to come, which they received under certain conditions.⁴¹ Therefore, what the writers tell about the escape of certain Jews also finds its confirmation.

And that is not all. From the end of the thirteenth century, the number of documents showing the reality of a specific status—such as «neophyte» or «new Christian»—grows, in particular in the cities of Apulia. It was the status of Christian families that were previously Jewish and remained separated from the rest of the Christians for a long time, until 1514-1515, when they were all banished from the country.⁴² For two hundred and twenty years, until the time of the expulsion, the status of «neophyte» continued to exist: they were Christians in appearance, but Jewish in their private life. It is a sign that they had not accepted the Christian religion of their own free will but that they were forced. About the situation of these neophytes and their history, I talked elsewhere⁴³ and I will not go back on what I have already said. I will simply remind two elements that are very important for our study. The first is that already in 1292 the inquisitors Ioanni (Giovanni) di San Martino and Guglielmo di Tocco were angered by the Jews of Lucera who defended the «heretics», in other words those who helped the converts that observed

⁴¹ *Id.*, 54.

⁴² On the expulsion of the neophytes, some years after the first expulsion of the Jews (1510-1511), see *Id.*, 220-221. However, in a Venetian document from 1550 (*Jewish Quarterly Review* 13, 1900-1901, 530), new Christians in Apulia are still mentioned, but they apparently are the few who were exceptionally allowed to remain: two hundred Jewish families. But these same Jews were expelled in 1540-1541, and it is therefore certain that shortly afterwards the last neophytes were expelled as well, since the judgments of the Inquisition against those who observe Judaism in the second half of the 16th century and in the 17th century (Ferorelli, *Gli ebrei*, 242-243) only refer to converts from Spain and Portugal. Were still there Italian neophytes, the Inquisition would have increased its activity.

⁴³ «Apulien», in *Encyclopædia Judaica*, III, 25-26. See also V. Vitale, *Un particolare ignorato di storia pugliese: neofiti e mercanti*, Napoli 1926. The Jewishness of neophytes was known to all, and they were even considered as having a special status that identified them as merchants. There is mention of this also in the beautiful Italian literature. A sonnet by Luigi Pulci to Lorenzo de' Medici (died 1492) talks about the inhabitants of Naples and, among other things, it reads: «e tutti i gran mercianti son marrani» («and all the big merchants are converts”).

Judaism.⁴⁴ The second is that in the 1453 papal bull of Nicolas V about the new Christians that observe Judaism in southern Italy, it is said explicitly—and without any doubt it is based on a clear knowledge of the facts—that their fathers were Jews who, for the most part, converted one hundred fifty years ago, more under constraint than of their own free will.⁴⁵

In regard to the Jews of Trani who are precisely mentioned by Usque and Ibn Verga, we have important information from several sources. Their cemetery was donated by the government around 1302 to the order of the Dominican monks,⁴⁶ as an archive document tells us, which is a sign of the destruction of the community. The synagogues of Trani also became Christian churches. The writer from Trani Cesare Lambertini, in the first part of his book *De iure patronatus*, written between 1514 and 1523, attests that four of the churches which were at the time located in Trani were previously Jewish synagogues. They were the churches of San Leonardo Abate, Santi Quirico e Giovita, San Pietro Martire and Santa Maria di Scola Nova.⁴⁷ Two of the churches remain to this day: the second (today the church of Sant'Anna), and the last one (today Santa Maria dei Martiri). The church of Sant'Anna is particularly interesting, since the original Hebrew inscription remembering the end of the synagogue's construction in 1247 is still preserved in the interior.⁴⁸ We do not know exactly when these synagogues turned into Christian

⁴⁴ Ferorelli, *Gli ebrei*, 54. Egidi, *Codice diplomatico*, 27-28, num. 25 (Ferorelli wrongly has «Tacco» instead of «Tocco»).

⁴⁵ The papal bull (1454) is in a paper published by P. Lonardo in the journal *Studi Storici* 15 (1908) 581-591. In the bull, it is said (*ibid.*, 584): «quorum antecessores fuerunt iudei quique pro maiori parte iam sunt anni elapse centum quiquaginta quod magis coacte quam voluntarie effecti fuerunt xristiani».

⁴⁶ Beltrani, *Su gli antichi ordinamenti marittimi*, 76. The document is at p. VI, nr. V.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* The phrase «di Scola Nova» (= «of the new Scola») is apparently based on the Jewish tradition of calling the synagogues *schola*, *scuola*, *Schul* (see Blondheim, *Les parlers judéo-romans et la Vetus Latina*, Paris 1925, 106-110).

⁴⁸ The inscription was published for the first time by Ascoli, "Iscrizioni inedite o mal note", in *Atti del IV Congresso Internazionale degli Orientalisti*, Firenze 1880, I, 316-318, n. 40. I corrected Ascoli's reading by using the copy that is in the University Library in Florence (*Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 13, 1932, 178-180) and I showed through the correct reading that the architect was Jewish. See pictures and representations of the two synagogues in Frauberger, *Mitteilungen of the Gesellschaft zur Erforschung jüdischer Kunstdenmäler* 1 (1900) 11, with engraving, and in Munkácsi, *Der Jude von Neapel*, 65-72, with the drawings 20-34.

churches;⁴⁹ but we are certainly not wrong if we estimate that it happened around the time when the cemetery of the Jews of Trani was donated to the monks. It is also useful to note that in a document from the 6th of April 1307 appears in Trani the «Community of the neophytes» (*Universitas neophytorum*), a kind of continuation of the «Jewish Community» (*Universitas iudeorum*).⁵⁰ Nevertheless, little by little a new Jewish community was re-founded, as we will see further, but it is impossible to doubt the existence of a neophyte community in 1307.

From all we have seen so far, it clearly appears that a massive conversion took place among the Jews of southern Italy in the last years of the thirteenth century. But in what year exactly? For which reason? What had been the process? We will try to answer these questions.

Regarding the date, at first I was inclined to think that the event took place in 1290. There were allusions to that year in literary sources, and also the document about the synagogue in Naples seemed to support the assumption. However, in 1928, a funerary stele with an inscription in Hebrew was discovered in Trani, which was transmitted to me for decipherment and publication.⁵¹ Here it is:

This inscription is on the grave of Rabbi Adoniyah B”R⁵² Barukh N”A⁵³ who passed away in the year [50]51 TNSB”H.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Lambertini said the thing took place three centuries before him, just in the time of King Charles III; this is an obvious mistake since Charles III reigned from 1382 to 1386. Apparently, the author wanted to write Charles II. Already in the year 1382, one of the churches, «Santa Maria Nova which is in the Street of the Jews» (no doubt the same mentioned by Lambertini under the name of «Santa Maria di Scola Nova») passed under the authority of a new priest (Beltrani in the journal *Buonarroti* 1876, 170, footnote 2, and in his book cited above, I, part 1, 178-179, number XLII; see also Ferorelli, *Gli ebrei*, 58). Munkácsi in his book quoted above (76-77) is satisfied, on the basis of the latter, that in the year 1382 the two synagogues passed under the authority of the Christian religion. But he is certainly wrong, because the same document speaks of a church that had been Christian for a long time and only states that it passed under the authority of a new priest.

⁵⁰ See this document in Caggese, *Roberto D’Angiò e i suoi tempi*, Firenze 1922, 91.

⁵¹ I published it in the *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 13 (1932) 172-178.

⁵² [Translators’ note: the Hebrew acronym B”R stands for *Ben Rav*, «Son of Mister or Rabbi»].

⁵³ [Translators’ note: the Hebrew acronym N”A stands for *Nišmato ‘Eden*, meaning «(May) his soul (rest in the Garden of) Eden»].

⁵⁴ [Translators’ note: the Hebrew acronym TNSB”H stands for *Tehi nařso řerurah bi-řeror ha-hayyim*, «May his soul be bound up in the bond of life», after *Samuel I* 25:29].

Therefore, still in the year 5051 (1290/1291), many months, probably more than a year, after the document belonging to the synagogue of Naples, Jews loyal to their religion existed in Trani. They could bury their dead in their cemeteries, erect their tombstones, and inscribe inscriptions like this, which does not show any sign of forced conversion. Additionally, as we saw previously, there were still Jews in Lucera in 1292. And still in 1293 two Spanish monks went from place to place in the regions of the Kingdom to preach against the Jews (*contra iudaeos*).⁵⁵ The documents exempting from taxes only start to appear in 1294. How is it possible to draw conclusions from all these data? The opportunity presented itself to me thanks to two documents which I found where I least expected them to be. The first is a note written amongst other notes on the first page of the manuscript 190 from the British Museum, which contains the commentary of Rashi on the Pentateuch.⁵⁶ Here is what the note contains:

I was told that there was a decree in the Kingdom of Naples in the year 5 thousand and 53 and they gave me this sign *and the punishment of the daughter of my people is greater*.⁵⁷

This note shows that in the Kingdom of Naples there was a decree, and it was essentially about forced conversion; its date is the year 5053, which began the 13th of September 1292 and ended the 2nd of September 1293.

The second document is not Jewish but Christian. It can be found at the end of the Vatican Latin manuscript 10511, containing a Latin Bible.⁵⁸ I translate it here from Latin to Hebrew, and I include the original text at the end of the article.⁵⁹

We have to remember that at the time of our lord, the Pope Nicholas IV, when the magnificent King Charles II reigned over the Kingdom of Sicily,⁶⁰ when the inquisitors Brother Guglielmo di Tocco, Brother Bartolomeo

⁵⁵ Ferorelli, *Gli ebrei*, 54.

⁵⁶ Margoliouth, *Catalogue*, I, 144.

⁵⁷ [*Translators' note*: "The punishment of the daughter of my people is greater (than the punishment of Sodom)", *Lamentations* 4:6].

⁵⁸ M. Vattasso, *Le due Bibbie di Bovino, ora codd. Vat. Lat. 10510-10511 e loro note storiche*, Roma 1900, 39.

⁵⁹ Appendix 3.

⁶⁰ The Kingdom of Charles II continued to be called this way, although the island of Sicily had passed in the year 1262, at the time of his father, under the rule of the kings of Aragon.

dell'Aquila, and Brother Ioanni di San Martino, of the order of Saint Dominic, were appointed in Apulia at the pleasure of our lord the Pope, a large number of Jews in the different cities and places of Apulia received the saint religion of the Roman Church in the year of the Lord's incarnation 1292, fifth indiction, in peace.

This is a clear confirmation of our previous conclusions, and a confirmation of the date which was passed on to us in the list in Hebrew: the last quarter of the year 1292 CE is parallel to the first quarter of the year 5053 of the Creation. This Latin document tells us from where the initiative came: from the inquisitors belonging to the Dominican appointed there by the will of the Pope. One of them is Brother Bartolomeo dell'Aquila and we recall how, according to Giordano da Rivalto, the word spread from one of the counsellors of the king whose name was Brother Bartolomeo. The other two are those who were angered in 1292 by the Jews of Lucera who had helped converted Jews, as we saw previously.

Now it is possible for us to draw conclusions from all the evidence and data. Apparently, the events developed gradually, not over a brief time frame. The government did not issue specific orders to force Jews to convert (it is evident that I could not find such an order since it never existed), but it was up to the inquisitors to act for this purpose in the country. In the beginning, their action only led to poor results, as reflected in the 1288 document and other documents from the same period, which testify to few conversions. More important results were obtained in 1290 with the conversion of several Jews in Naples and the transition of the local synagogue to Christian church. Nevertheless, there were still numerous Jews loyal to their religion in Naples, since the document belonging to the same synagogue also alludes to those who might convert in the future. The government thus looked further into the question and did not authorize the synagogue to be transferred to the converts, unless it was proven that it really belonged since the beginning to their ancestors or that it was built without permit. But little by little the inquisitors were given free hand and their actions were more and more successful, until reaching their peak at the end of the year 1292, which is the beginning of the year 5053 of the Creation.

This period remained in the memory of the Jews as the peak of the decrees, and in the memory of the Christian priests as their peak achievement. Probably many Jews in that time fled to other countries to escape forced conversion, and here and there it might have happened that a few gave their lives as martyrs. In any case, a few Jews still remained loyal to their religion and for that reason we still see in 1293 two priests occupied with attempts of conversion. But in the same year the story finally ends. The following year

there was already an arrangement for the new situation: those who had converted, a few thousands (around 1,300 families), obtained their reward by being exempted from general taxes; a few among those who had fled asked for permission to return, and obtained it under certain conditions. Those who returned, along with those who had remained (also the 1294 tax exemptions refer to the Jews who had not yet converted), renewed once again, even though to a lesser extent, the community life.⁶¹ Since then, the communities of Jews and the communities of neophytes continued their existence next to each other. Of course, this massive conversion was the reason for the destruction of the academies. Already the 1270 ordinance about the Talmudic schools had delivered a hard blow to their existence; the decree of the year 5053 annihilated them completely. The wretched communities, which were refounded when the anger subsided, could obviously not erect the buildings of the academies from their ruins. The savants of the academies, as far as we can suppose it, were either among those killed or among the exiled. Among those who had been killed as martyrs we must apparently include the Saint rabbi Elijah, maybe the father of the last rabbi Isaiah of Trani.⁶² Among the exiled, there were without doubt survivors from this family of rabbis of Trani; in Turkey the family of MABIT (Rav Moshe ben Yosef mi-Trani) was in relation, as is well known, to RIAZ.

And the books? The books as well were either burned or exiled. Of those that were burnt, no memory remains for us. Of those that were exiled it is possible for us to identify at least two famous and illuminated exemplars of the Mishnah: the manuscript of Parma and the Kaufmann manuscript. I examined the first one (manuscript De Rossi 138) in 1930 and, in the margin of its pages, I found several glosses in the old dialect of Apulia. It is a sign that it belonged in the first place to the field of the Apulian academies. The second manuscript, which was published in a Portuguese edition of Baer, resembles the first one by its scripture, its spelling, its vocalization, and its expressions; from this emerges that the two manuscripts share the same origin. Both were discovered in Northern Italy, precisely in Mantua, as shown by the mention of the names of the owners, which are Jewish names linked to the community

⁶¹ About the Jews of Trani in the year 1307, see Vitale, *Trani dagli Angioini agli Spagnuoli*, Bari 1912, 53, and Caggese in his book cited above, p. 91. About the construction of synagogues in several places in the early fourteenth century, see Ferorelli, *Gli ebrei*, 63 and O. Dito, *La storia calabrese e la dimora degli ebrei in Calabria dal secolo V alla seconda metà del secolo XVI*, Rocca San Casciano 1916, 167-168.

⁶² See Gross, in *Zeitschrift für Hebräische Bibliographie* 13 (1909) 89, note; and Sasson, *Me'at d'vaš*, 8, 11.

of Mantua.⁶³ Their vocalization reflects the ancient Italian grammatical tradition, which was preserved for generations in Italy, according to which I myself was educated in my childhood.

APPENDIX 1

State Archives of Naples, Registri Angioini, vol. 50, f. 363^a.
Naples, 9th of March 1290.

Pro novis christianis.

Scriptum est eidem Secreto etc. Petierunt humiliter Bartholomeus de Sicula, Ligorius de Griffio, Ricc(ard)us Carrafa, Coradus Prothonobilissimus, Fredericus Caputus, Thomasius Scriniarius, Ricc(ard)us Scriniarius, Philippus Minutulus et fratres, Landulfus Carazulus, Iohannes Ayossa⁶⁴ et frater eius, habitatores Neapolis, devotis nostri, ut cum ipsi, derelicto errore iudayco quo hactenus laborarunt, pervenerint nuper ad fidei vere cultum, concedi eis et assignari pro oratorio unam de sinagogis Neapolis, quam asserunt fuisse progenitorum suorum, et constructam fore de novo, post videlicet prohibitionem inde factam in concilio generali, benignius mandaremus. Nos autem ipsos, quos dignos favore facit nova nova (sic) conversio, benigni favoris munere prosequentes, devotioni vestre precipimus quatenus, si vobis constiterit quod sinagoga quam petunt fuerit progenitorum eorundem petentium, vel quod noviter sit constructa, post videlicet prohibitionem eandem, predictam sinagogam cum omnibus iuribus et pertinentiis suis eisdem petentibus tenendam in oratorium per eos et alios conversos iam ad cultum Christi nominis et in posterum convertendos auctoritate presentium assignetis. Datum Neapoli, die viii^o martii, iii^e inditionis.

⁶³ On the first page of the manuscript De Rossi 138: *Aminadav ben Solomon of Fano*, who was among the leaders of the community of Mantua (on this, see Kaufman, *Revue des Études Juives* 35, 1897, 87-89; his name is mentioned on several Hebrew manuscripts, such as the manuscript 533 in the British Museum), and others of the family Finzi of Mantua. On the first page of the Kaufmann manuscript: *Abraham del Vecchio*, who was rabbi of Mantua in 5375-5412 (1615-1652) (see *Kitvey Rav Yehudah Aryeh mi-Modena*, ed. by Ludwig Blau, Budapest 1906, Hebrew section, 99, footnote 1) and Abraham ben Solomon of the city of Fano, from the family of the aforementioned Aminadav.

⁶⁴ This eight family names are known to be related to noble families of Naples. It is obvious that Jewish converts received the names of those who were their Godfathers. There may be born the legend recalled by Usque that converts are married with noble families.

APPENDIX 2

State Archives of Naples, Registri Angioini, vol. 63, f. 91^b.
Naples, 1st of May 1294.

Pro neofidis de Neapoli.

Scriptum est iustitiariis Terre Laboris, capitaneis, baiulis, iudicibus, et collectoribus aliisque officialibus et universis hominibus Neapolis presentibus et futuris etc. Dedit dignanter ille qui neminem vult perire subscriptis, dudum ebreis, renatis fonte baptismatis, iudayci erroris invio quo laborarunt hactenus derelicto, viam veritatis agnoscere, ac, iudayca perfidia detestabiliter abnegata, converti et pervenire ad fidei vere cultum. Cumque ipsorum laudanda conversio dignos eos reddiderit gratia et favore, nos ut huiusmodi eorum conversionis intuitu solita nostra benignitas facilius circa ipsos inveniatur ad gratiam, et perinde iudeis reliquis, si viam ipsorum elegerint, favoris et gratie fiducia prebeat, neofidos ipsos, dum vixerint et coluerint fidem Christi, a generalibus subventionibus, donis, et collectis omnibus aliis, quas universitati civitatis Neapolis sive per curiam sive per universitatem ipsam pro tempore taxari et imponi contigerit, eximimus et immunes facimus.... Nomina vero neophidorum ipsorum sunt hec, videlicet.... Data Neapoli, per Bartholomeum de Capua etc., die primo madii, vii^e indictionis.

APPENDIX 3

Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ms.Lat. 10511, f. 185^b.

Memorandum est quod sub tempore domini Nicolai pape quarti, et regente regno Sicilie gloriosissimo rege Karolo secundo, inquisitoribus fratre Guillelmo de Tocco, fratre Bartolomeo de civitate Aquile et fratre Iohanne de Sancto Martino de ordine beati Dominici, ad hoc per predictum dominum papam constitutis in Apulia, quam plurima turba Iudeorum per diversas civitates et loca Apulie conversa est ad sacrosanctam religionem Romane Ecclesie, anno dominice Incarnationis millesimo cclxxxij^o, quinte indictionis, feliciter.

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Further notices on documents 1-2 can be found in:

- Doc. 1: *I registri della cancelleria angioina ricostruiti da Riccardo Filangieri con la collaborazione degli archivisti napoletani*, vol. XXXII a cura di A. Maresca Compagna, Napoli 1982, reg. XI, doc. 24 p. 62.
- Doc. 2: *I registri della cancelleria angioina ricostruiti da Riccardo Filangieri con la collaborazione degli archivisti napoletani*, vol. XLVII a cura di R. Pilone, Napoli 2003, reg. LVIII, doc. 196 pp. 55-57.