

AN INVENTORY
TO THE SEPHARDIC JEWS OF FRANCE COLLECTION

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NOTE TO RESEARCHERS

Provenance

The Sephardic Jews of France Collection was purchased in 1960 from Mr. S. Frydman (Zosa Szajkowski) of New York City, on behalf of the Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, Ohio, by Dr. Herbert Zafren, Librarian. (At the time of purchase, this collection was part of the "French Collections." These were subsequently separated and the resulting related collections are now the Consistoire Central, the Alsace-Lorraine, and Small French Collections).

Statistics

Linear feet of shelf space occupied: 5.4

Number of containers: 7 manuscript boxes, 2 flat storage boxes, 1 Hollinger box

Approximate number of items: 3300 and 14 bound volumes

Processed by: Jonathan Rodgers

Date completed: 1978

Access and Citation

The Sephardic Jews of France Collection is open to researchers deemed to be qualified by the librarian. The original manuscript collection is available in the Klau Library. A suggested form for at least the first citation is:

Acte d'Échange, between Abraham Roget and Abraham Sasporatas, 8 Prairial, 12 (20 May 1804), Sephardic Jews of France Collection, Klau Library, Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Property and Literary Rights

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Acknowledgements

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HISTORICAL SKETCH

The Jewish consistories (Consistoires des Israélites) in France were officially created by Napoleonic decrees promulgated in 1808. Preliminary to the organization of the consistory system, meetings of Jewish notables appointed by the state and representing the various departments of the Empire, (Assemblée des Députés Juifs), and of the Grand Sanhedrin were ordered convened in Paris in 1806-1807. As a result, synagogues and the regional consistories, as well as a central consistory (Consistoire Central des Israélites), were organized on the basis of population, one synagogue and consistory for every 2000 Jews, with the center, or chef-lieu, of each in the most populous city. Members of the consistories were elected by the notables of each district. Funds for the maintenance of the religion were to be raised by the consistories by assessment of the population (répartition). Later, the state assumed partial responsibility for religious expenses. Subordinate to the central consistory in Paris were the departmental consistories, the seats of whose synagogues were in Paris, Strasbourg, Wintzenheim, Mayence, Metz, Nancy, Trèves, Coblenz, Crefeld, Marseille, Turin, Casal, and Bordeaux. In this way, Napoleon succeeded in organizing and imposing a strong measure of central authority on the Jewish communities of France.

In 1814, the consistories were reorganized and their number reduced to seven: Paris, Strasbourg, Colmar, Metz, Nancy, Marseille and Bordeaux. (This figure does not take into account new consistories formed in territory annexed through Napoleonic conquest). And in 1846, the new consistory of St. Esprit, after 1857 the consistory of Bayonne, was

formed from part of that of Bordeaux.

The Consistoire Israélite de Bordeaux, or de la Gironde, was installed in 1809 and its members included Abraham Andrade, grand Rabbin; David Gradis, président; Salomon Lopes-Dubec, Père; and (le fils de) Rodrigues, ainé (Isaac de Abraham Rodrigues-Henrique).

The Consistoire Israélite de St. Esprit, or des Landes, was installed in 1846. Its members included then: Samuel Marx, grand Rabbin; Abraham Auguste Furtado, président; Salomon Emil Léon; Abraham de Josué Léon; and Abraham Rodrigues Ely.

The Jewish communities in the consistories of Bordeaux and St. Esprit-Bayonne, as represented in the collection, were predominantly of Iberian origin, formerly organized as la Nation Portugaise (as opposed to Avignonese Jews and Ashkenazim). In addition to their settlement in southwestern France beginning at the end of the 15th century, Sephardic Jews who came to reside in Paris established and maintained there the Temple Israélite Portugais (or la Synagogue Sepharade). These Spanish and Portuguese Jews had been compelled to convert to Catholicism, and were known as les nouveaux Chrétiens, and only long after their arrival in France, not until the 18th century, were they permitted to resume the open practice of Judaism. Many had become already, or eventually became, more or less assimilated into French Christian society.

Besides supporting and administering their synagogues, and frequently maintaining private or small local chapels (oratoires, or chambres de prière), the Jewish communities of Bordeaux and St. Esprit-Bayonne had set up (cooperative) benevolent societies (Sociétés de

Bienfaisance de Guemilouth Hassadim) which took care of a wide range of welfare needs of the communities, especially on behalf of the indigent. Medical care, supervision and dispensing of food, financial aid, care of orphans, burial and cemetery maintenance, were among the services provided. Membership dues supported this charitable work. In addition, religious and moral instruction and the teaching of Hebrew was offered by schools administered by the communities. The Central Rabbinic Seminary of France (École Centrale Rabbinique) in Metz (transferred to Paris in 1859) was organized as such in 1829.

All of these bodies, the consistories, the benevolent societies, the synagogues and the educational institutions, played important religious, social, and economic roles in the Sephardic communities.

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9. Maslin, S. "An Analysis and Translation of Selected Documents of Napoleonic Jewry" (unpublished Rabbinic thesis, HUC-JIR, Cincinnati, 1957)
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SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of materials predominantly from the 19th century, brought together from a variety of sources. Its subject is the Sephardic Jews of France. Principally, the communities of Bordeaux, St. Esprit-Bayonne, and Paris are represented. Other smaller communities, mostly within the consistorial districts of which these cities are the religious administrative centers, also generated some of the material. Since much of it is official correspondence and reports of various religious administrative bodies, often revealing relationships existing among them, it was felt that chronological order, rather than the equally possible series arrangement, would prove less cumbersome to the researcher. It should be added, however, that the heterogenous nature of the collection, no matter what its arrangement, will cause certain unavoidable inconveniences. It is hoped that the subject tracings will alleviate this problem.

The Sephardic Jews of France Collection is made up of countless kinds of documents, all but three of which are in French (two Spanish, one Hebrew). There are originals, copies, letter press copies, printed matter, wastebooks, letterbooks, a scrapbook, both loose and bound documents and newspapers. These include official correspondence (both among the religious administrations and communities, and outside, with state authorities), official documents such as decrees, rulings, and opinions (of both religious and state bodies), subscription lists and bonds for fund raising, various certificates, minutes, various reports, speeches, petitions and protests (mostly concerning high assessments and elections), financial reports and budgets, cash books,

receipts, bills of sale, legal contracts, tax rolls and classifications, census tables, election rolls, appointments and lists of notables and electors, reports of elections and lists of officials and members of societies and synagogue administrations, death and burial lists, wills and bequests, cemetery business, birth lists, requests to benevolent societies for aid, requests for circumcisions, bar mitzvahs, marriages, and funerals to be conducted, statements of recognition, in the form of prayers, of secular authorities' birthdays, deaths or funerals or memorial services, letters of recommendation and notices of position vacancies for rabbis, a literary manuscript, and more.

The major official religious bodies represented include le Consistoire Central des Israélites, Consistoire Israélite de Bordeaux, Consistoire Israélite de St. Esprit (Bayonne), Société de Bienfaisance de St. Esprit (=la Hébera) or Bayonne, le Temple Israélite Portugais à Paris, the Synagogue of Bordeaux, and St. Esprit-Bayonne and their administrations, the Talmud Thoras, Beth Hamidrash, rabbinic seminaries, and other religious écoles, and the synagogues of the Sephardic communities of Hamburg and Amsterdam. In addition, the administrations of the other consistories often figure in the correspondence and reports of the communities of Bordeaux and St. Esprit.

Among the communes mentioned besides Bordeaux, St. Esprit, Bayonne, and Paris, are la Rochelle, Pau, Clermont-Ferrand, Toulouse, Carcasson, Perpignan, Narbonne, Libourne, Tarascon, Cavaillon, Marseille, St. Jean-d'Angély, Peyrehorade, Mont-de-Marsan, Dax, Biarritz.

Secular authorities with whom the communities corresponded are the mayors of Bordeaux, St. Esprit, Bayonne, the departmental préfets,

Ministre de l'Instruction Publique et des Cultes (or Ministre des Cultes), Ministre de la Justice, Conseiller d'État (Administrateur Général des Cultes) chargé des affaires des cultes non-Catholiques, Cours de Justice des Départments, Ministre d'État, Justice et des Cultes. There is also mention of Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette, Louis XVIII, Napoléon, Charles X, Louis Philippe, and Napoléon III.

The names of officers and members of the above organizations occur very frequently and are scattered throughout the collection. Instead of providing an exhaustive index of these names, most of them are listed below. A name will also be entered in the subject tracings, signalling either its first occurrence in the records, or an important or prominent event or activity in which the person participated.

Consistoire Central : E. Attias, B. Cerfberr, M. Cerfberr, Abraham Cologne, Adolf Crémieux, S. Meyer Dalmbert, Emanuel Deutz, Elie Furtado, F. Halévy, Lazard Isidor, Léopold Javal, Jacob Lazard, M. Maas, S.(?) Robles, Rodrigues aîné, Aaron Schmoll, N. Sciama, David Sintzheim, S. Ulmann, Worms de Romilly.

Consistoire de Bordeaux : David Gradis, Salomon Lopes Dubec père, Abraham Lopes Dias, Isaac Robles jeune, Elisée Raba, Samuel Alexandre aîné, Abraham Andrade, Isaac Rodrigues aîné, Jacob Fonseca jeune, Cardoze fils aîné, David Lopes-Dubec, Abraham Feraire, Daniel Lopes-Dias, Abraham Léon, aîné,

Abraham Sasportas, Jacob Alfred Léon, D. Marx,
Emile Louis Pereyra, Josué Perpignan, R.-F. Lopes-
Dubec, Prosper Delvaille, (David ?) Alexandre,
J. Brandam, William Iffla, B. Gradis, Frederic
Alexandre, Alfred Raba, Félix Lopes-Dubec,
Virgile Brandam, Edouard Gomez-Vaéz, J. Urhy,
Simon Lévy, Adrien Léon.

Consistoire de St. Esprit/Bayonne : Abraham Auguste Furtado, Abraham de
Josué Léon, Samuel Marx, Abraham Rodrigues Ely,
Jacob Félix Léon, I. Silva, Moïse Salzedo, Salomon
Emile Léon, Jacob Isidore Gommès, Emile Léon,
Félix Léon, Chevalier Benjamin Dacosta, Virgile
Léon, Emile Lévy, Camille Delvaille.

Among the most useful of the documents are perhaps those many
that offer a wealth of demographic information on 19th century Sephardic
Jews in southwestern France. Such documents as synagogue seating lists,
tax votes (and protests), classifications of tax payers, election lists,
subscriptions, census tables, and cemetery and burial lists offer
information on economic status, addresses, ages, occupations, and other
vital statistics. Equally interesting are the reports, deliberations,
minutes, and correspondence of the consistories, benevolent societies,
and synagogue administrations for the detailed information they provide
on the workings and regulations, as well as the foundation and formation
periods of these organizations, not to mention their reactions, as re-
flections of the communities', to such events as Napoleon's reorganization

of French Jewry into the consistorial system, the restoration of the Bourbons, the revolutions of 1830 and 1848, the Damascus and Mortara affairs, and the Crimean and Franco-German wars. In addition, occasional glimpses into day to day affairs of the communities and individuals are offered.

The years represented in the collection are 1804-1948, with those of the 19th century offering by far the most material.

Besides the inventory, two summary inventories were prepared, one by the seller, and the other ("Le Fonds judeo-francais de Hebrew Union College") by La Commission Francaise des Archives Juives, who also microfilmed the collection in 1972. Both those inventories and the microfilm itself follow the original order imposed on the collection by the seller. The microfilm is available for comparison and research in the HUC Library.