

Inclusion and Exclusion at the End of the Middle Ages: Christian-Jewish Relations in Late Medieval Italy

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Recent studies of Jewish communities in western Europe have qualified the earlier image of Christian-Jewish relations as guided by entrenched principles or consistent programmes of action.¹ The qualifications relate both to the cohesion and integrity of the Jewish communities themselves, and to the changing local concerns of the Christian societies within which they lived. With regard to the former, historians have revisited the heroic stance (or cultural insularity) of Jews of the Franco-German diaspora in and after 1096.² It now appears that, long before the large-scale conversions of Iberian Jewry, apostasy was much more common in medieval Europe than has been traditionally conceded.³ More significantly, contemporary historiography has been inclined to question the blanket hostility of Jewish communities towards apostates – with implications for the incidence of acculturation, or at least transferring the emphasis to those variables within Christian Europe that might determine (or permit) acculturation. This article is concerned

¹ Jonathan Elukin, *Living Together, Living Apart: Rethinking Jewish-Christian Relations in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007). For the “scarto fra norma e prassi”, particularly at middling and lower social levels, see Gian Maria Varanini, ‘Società cristiana e minoranza ebraica a Verona nella seconda metà del Quattrocento. Tra ideologia osservante e vita quotidiana’, in *Ebrei nella Terraferma veneta del Quattrocento*, ed. Gian Maria Varanini and Reinhold C. Mueller (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2005), pp. 141–62.

² Particularly David Malkiel, ‘Jews and Apostates in Medieval Europe – Boundaries real and imagined’, *Past & Present* 194 (2007): 3–34.

³ Kenneth Stow, ‘Conversion, Apostasy, and Apprehensiveness: Emicho of Flonheim and the Fear of Jews in the Twelfth Century’, *Speculum* lxxvi (2001): 911–33.

with these variants and with their consequences for Jewish/Christian relations. Late fifteenth-century Italy, with a Jewish population rising to perhaps 50,000 even before the expulsions from Spain,⁴ offers a useful case-study. What follows will focus primarily, though not exclusively, on the Jewish communities of the city-territories of northern and central Italy.

An enduring chronography has posited a deterioration of relations between Jews and the rulers of Christian Europe over the course of the medieval centuries. The meta-narrative rests on familiar and spectacular acts of expulsion: from England in 1290; from France in 1306; from Spain in 1492. In sixth- and seventh-century Spain, the anti-Jewish legislation of the Visigothic kings was probably atypical – at least in its permanence and comprehensiveness.⁵ But even more problematic than a mythical golden age is the progressive fracturing of relations with public authority that allegedly occurred towards the end of our period. From Carolingian times Jewish communities in northern Europe were juridically dependent on the good will of their rulers. As a result, Jews throughout the High Middle Ages enjoyed royal protection but also suffered striking acts of royal anger and capriciousness. In this respect the experience of northern Europe can be contrasted with Italy, and particularly with the cities of northern and central Italy.⁶ In Italy there was a more pronounced survival of Roman law

⁴ Sergio Della Pergola, 'La popolazione ebraica in Italia nel contesto ebraico globale', in *Storia d'Italia: Annali XI*, ed. Corrado Vivanti, 2 vols (Turin: Einaudi, 1996–97), 2: 903–16. Half were in Sicily. Numbers had risen from between 35,000 and 40,000 earlier in the century. The figure of 120,000 calculated by Salo W. Baron, 'Population', in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 16 vols (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1971–72), 13: cols 866–903, is clearly much too high.

⁵ Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 38–39; Kenneth Stow, *Alienated Minority: The Jews of Medieval Latin Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 47–54. But see now Elukin, *Living Together, Living Apart*, pp. 36–41. More generally, for the ambiguities that characterized the early medieval period, see Kenneth Stow, 'The Church and the Jews: St Paul to Pius IX', in *Popes, Church, and Jews in the Middle Ages: Confrontation and Response* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), item I, pp. 6–16.

⁶ The contrast traditionally drawn between northern and Mediterranean Europe has been questioned recently by Elukin, *Living Together, Living Apart*.

traditions, perhaps a greater pragmatism. In consequence, the fourteenth and much of the fifteenth centuries saw a close association, if not an alliance, between Jewish communities, often of relatively recent origins, and the public power.⁷

For the Jews of the fifteenth-century kingdom of Naples, the needs of fisc (and, perhaps, the political traditions of the new Aragonese rulers) resulted in the granting of privileges and exemptions that antagonised their Christian neighbours.⁸ Jews were also favoured by the new princely rulers of northern and central Italy, probably because of their likely loyalty and political reliability. Very considerable juridical and religious privileges, including even the right of Jewish communities to expel Jewish converts to Christianity from the city, were conceded to immigrant German Jews by the communes of northern and – particularly – north-eastern Italy from the last decades of the fourteenth century.⁹ And Florence, after the interlude of anti-Jewish legislation of the early fifteenth century, became the great centre of Jewish financial activity within Italy. Jews enjoyed the right to acquire landed property throughout the Florentine state during the period of Medicean hegemony – a right, here as elsewhere, that was usually denied to other outsiders.¹⁰

⁷ The literature on the favoured position of Jews in Late Medieval and Renaissance Italy has been summarized by Michele Luzzati, 'Matrimoni e apostasia di Clemenza di Vitale da Pisa', in *La casa dell'ebreo: Saggi sugli Ebrei a Pisa e in Toscana nel Medioevo e nel Rinascimento* (Pisa: Nistri-Lischi, 1985), pp. 61–63.

⁸ David Abulafia, 'Il Mezzogiorno peninsulare dai bizantini all'espulsione (1541)', in *Storia d'Italia: Annali XI*, ed. Vivanti, 1: 29–35.

⁹ Ariel Toaff, 'Gli insediamenti askenaziti nell'Italia settentrionale', in *Storia d'Italia: Annali XI*, ed. Vivanti, 1: 159–65. But for the oscillating policies of Venice itself, see Reinhold C. Mueller, 'Lo status degli ebrei nella Terraferma veneta del Quattrocento: tra politica, religione, cultura ed economia. Saggio introduttivo', in *Ebrei nella Terraferma veneta del Quattrocento*, ed. Varanini and Mueller, pp. 10–11.

¹⁰ Michele Luzzati, 'Banchi e insediamenti ebraici nell'Italia centro-settentrionale fra tardo Medioevo e inizi dell'Età moderna', in *Storia d'Italia: Annali XI*, ed. Vivanti, 1: 197–99. For Jews and the Medici, see *idem*, 'L'insediamento ebraico a Pisa', in *La casa dell'ebreo: Saggi sugli Ebrei a Pisa e in Toscana nel Medioevo e nel Rinascimento*, pp. 25–34.

The closer relationship between Jews and the princely and communal authorities coincides with what has often been called the 'era del prestito' (the age of the Jewish money-lender). The extension of princely power, the expansion and reorganization of territorial states, was facilitated in some measure by the establishment of a dense network of Jewish banks authorized by, and dependent on, the centre. In southern Italy, Jews had traditionally been involved in a wide range of activities: as artisans, small merchants serving relatively local markets, moneylenders, agriculturalists, and medical doctors. In central and northern Italy, the opening of a bank was often a cover under which Jews engaged in a miscellany of activities unrelated to the provision of consumption loans.¹¹ But by the later middle ages, throughout Italy, Jewish fortunes came to be closely tied to transactions that were condemned by the Church as usurious, and that were increasingly barred to Christians.¹² The growing identification of Jews as usurers, whilst providing Jews with a useful role in Christian Europe, led inexorably to the stereotype of Jewish perversity, and ultimately to the ghettos and to the (temporary) expulsions from many parts of Italy.

The quasi-monopoly of Jews as providers of consumption loans, and their growing visibility as instruments of state finance (sometimes at the expense of subject communities),¹³ does not translate into a simple paradigm of princely protection and popular hostility. In Italy,

¹¹ Luzzati, 'Banchi e insediamenti ebraici', pp. 226–28.

¹² Giacomo Todeschini traces the synonymy of "Jew" and "usurer" to the programme of the ecclesiastical reformers of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries: 'Usura ebraica e identità economica cristiana: la discussione medievale', in *Storia d'Italia: Annali XI*, ed. Vivanti, 1: 291–318.

¹³ The hostility of the ruling councils of subject communities to the Jewish bankers favoured by the metropolitan power of Venice is the recurring theme of the articles collected in *Ebrei nella Terraferma veneta del Quattrocento*, ed. Varanini and Mueller.

as elsewhere, princely support was too fickle. Favours granted to individuals did not necessarily extend to the wider Jewish community.¹⁴ Only in the Duchy of Mantua can we speak of a consistent political programme of shelter that lasted from the late fourteenth to the end of the sixteenth centuries.¹⁵ Nor were Jews universally unpopular with society at large. The Jewish communities of late fifteenth and early sixteenth-century Calabria, when threatened with expulsion by their Spanish rulers, enjoyed considerable popular support because of their contribution to the local economy, and because they constituted a bulwark against the control of the southern economy by foreign merchants.¹⁶ At the local level, good relations between Jews and Christians seem to have been largely determined by the measure of Jewish integration into the economic life of the community – perhaps by their success in escaping the growing association with moneylending (and more specifically with consumption loans).¹⁷ The late fifteenth-century notarial archives of western Sicily show Jewish merchants, citizens of Trapani and Agrigento, still engaged in an extensive range of commercial activities (often with Genoese merchants) – trading particularly in silk, gold thread, woollen cloth, slaves, wheat, and

¹⁴ Alberto Castaldini, 'Reti creditizie, reti culturali. Sabato da Lodi a Villafranca Veronese nella seconda metà del Quattrocento', in *Ebrei nella Terraferma veneta del Quattrocento*, ed. Varanini and Mueller, pp. 45–58.

¹⁵ Luzzati, 'Banchi e insediamenti ebraici', pp. 204–08. The policies of the Gonzaga seem to have been directed – in part – by the fear that their subjects might resort to services and loans from outside the narrow confines of their state.

¹⁶ Giuseppe Galasso, *Economia e società nella Calabria del Cinquecento* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1975), pp. 70–71. The support seems to have evaporated by the end of the sixteenth century as alternative sources of local credit became available (*ibid.*, p. 255).

¹⁷ It is an underlying theme of Luzzati's work that Jews and Christians were working side by side, until relations were fractioned by the virtual monopoly of Jews over consumption loans ('Banchi e insediamenti ebraici', pp. 213, 233). At the same time, it is not difficult to find examples of Christian artisans and retailers protesting against Jewish competitors – accusing the latter of unfair competition through keeping their shops open on Christian festivals.

cheese.¹⁸ Far to the north, in the small centres of the Marche, the close relations of Jewish communities with the Christian population have been attributed to the integration of the former into the local economy as small traders, artisans, and landholders.¹⁹ Elsewhere, Jews, whose presence initially had been authorized precisely for the provision of subsistence loans to *contadini*, diversified their economic activities to supplement the meagre profits to be drawn from their rural clientele. Social integration was sometimes, and unexpectedly, more marked in small semi-rural towns than in the great trading cities. But the trading, artisanal, and manufacturing diversifications of the small resident Jewish community of Borgo a Mozzano in the republic of Lucca during the 1480s can hardly have reconciled local peasant populations to the sad litany of garments, cloths, iron utensils, and anvils levied from them as pledges at times of scarcity and want.²⁰

Borgo a Mozzano, in the middle valley of the Serchio, was centrally situated within the fragmented Lucchese state as it had evolved by the mid-fifteenth century. Jews had passed through Lucca on the way to the Rhineland in the tenth century; by the early years of the eleventh century there is clearer evidence of Jewish settlement in Lucca itself.²¹ But these

¹⁸ For example, Archivio di Stato, Trapani, Archivio Notarile, Francesco Gombao, 8762 (1465–69), fols 75^v, 91^r, 93^v–94^r, 107^r, 111^r, 124^v, 251^v, 256^r, 263^r, 275^v–276^r; 8763 (1473–74), fols 66^v, 90^v–91^r, 136^r; 8764 (1476–77), fols 30^v–31^r, 39^r, 52^r, 83^r, 88^r, 90^r, 175^r, 191^r, 209^r, 210^r, 213^r, 219^{r-v}; 8765 (1479–80), fols 52^{r-v}, 69^r, 71^v, 72^{r-v}, 73^r, 76^r, 79^r, 80^r, 81^{r-v}. The activities of Jewish merchants, citizens of late fifteenth-century Trapani, are abundantly illustrated in the *protocolli* of other local notaries. See particularly: Luca Russo, 8798 (1478–1500).

¹⁹ Luzzati, 'Banchi e insediamenti ebraici', pp. 189–93.

²⁰ Michele Luzzati, 'Un banco di prestito ebraico a Borgo a Mozzano nel Quattrocento', in *Atti del sesto convegno di studi, Borgo a Mozzano, 20 settembre 1987* (Borgo a Mozzano, 1987), pp. 11–21, and 'Banchi e insediamenti ebraici', pp. 227–28.

²¹ Stow, *Alienated Minority*, pp. 67, 70, and 'By Land or by Sea: The Passage of the Kalonymides to the Rhineland in the Tenth Century', in *Popes, Church, and Jews in the Middle Ages*, item XI; Luzzati, 'Banchi e insediamenti ebraici', pp. 175–76.

early settlements seem unconnected with the Jewish families of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, that came to Lucca, from both north and south, to establish moneylending banks for consumption loans. The later arrivals follow a familiar pattern. Towards the end of the fourteenth century there was a hardening of attitudes towards Christian moneylenders throughout the major urban centres of northern and central Italy; a change that was expressed in a plethora of anti-usury legislation.²² The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 had (implicitly) exempted Jews from the laws against usury.²³ The Jews that begin to appear in Lucca at the end of the fourteenth century came to open banks. In 1429 Angelo di Gaio of Forlì was granted the monopoly of consumption loans, and agreements with Jewish moneylenders were periodically renewed in Lucca until the establishment of the Monti di Pietà after 1489.²⁴ As lenders on the security of pledges, it is hardly surprising that Jewish moneylenders appear frequently as receivers of stolen goods.²⁵ But I have found no evidence in the criminal

²² Emilio Cristiani, 'Note sulla legislazione antiusuraria pisana (secoli xii-xv)', *Bollettino Storico Pisano*, 3rd ser., xxii-xxiii (1953-54): 3-53; Michele Luzzati, 'Caratteri dell'insediamento ebraico medievale', in *Gli ebrei di Pisa (secoli ix-xx): Atti del Convegno internazionale, Pisa, 3-4 ottobre 1994* (Pisa, 1998), ed. Michele Luzzati, pp. 1-44; Flavia Careri, 'Il "Presto ai Quattro Pavoni": dal libro-giornale di Isacco da San Miniato (1473-75)', *Archivio Storico Italiano* clix (2001): 395-421. More generally, Luzzati, 'Banchi e insediamenti ebraici', pp. 176-87. For the role of Christian money-changers as providers of consumption loans in thirteenth-century Lucca, see Thomas W. Blomquist, 'The Dawn of Banking in an Italian Commune: Thirteenth Century Lucca', in *The Dawn of Modern Banking*, Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, UCLA (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 64-65.

²³ For the somewhat ambiguous legislation of the Fourth Lateran Council on both Jews and usury, see Kenneth Stow, 'Papal and Royal Attitudes towards Jewish Lending in the Thirteenth Century', in *Popes, Church, and Jews in the Middle Ages*, item III, pp. 162-63.

²⁴ Michele Luzzati, 'Aspetti dell'attività dei banchi di prestito ebraici a Lucca e in Italia nel Quattrocento', in *Lucca e l'Europa degli affari: secoli xv-xvii*, ed. Rita Mazzei and Tommaso Fanfani (Lucca: Pacini Fazzi, 1990), pp. 65-74.

²⁵ For example: A(rchivio di) S(tato in) L(ucca), Capitano del popolo, 33, no foliation, case against Cristoforo di Simone of Villa S. Angelo; 42, fol. 34^r; 44, fol. 27^r, 27^v.

records of any attempt by the Lucchese authorities to probe foreknowledge or culpability.²⁶ The (temporary) expulsion of Jewish moneylenders from Lucca in 1493–94 was, as elsewhere, at least in part a product of the influence and preachings of the Observant Franciscans. How far the target of the Minorites was the sin of usury rather than Jews *per se* has been the subject of one of the more heated debates on the history of Jews in Renaissance Italy.²⁷

Jewish bankers lent to the Lucchese state at the time of the Florentine wars.²⁸ The agreements (*capitoli di condotta*) entered into with the civil authorities after 1429 were concluded ‘for the subvention of the poor and for the public good.’²⁹ Jews in Lucca operated under the protection of the civic authorities, and, arguably, Lucca’s ruling councils were to become less than enthusiastic executors of the legislation against Jewish moneylenders at the end of the century.³⁰ Relations with society at large are rather more problematic. In a recent article, Michele Luzzati has explored a case of alleged sodomy brought (somewhat equivocally) against the Jewish moneylender Guglielmo di Leone da Fano by the converted Jew Tommaso del fu Pace.³¹ The accusations against Guglielmo raise a number of

²⁶ Compare the penalties imposed on Christian apothecaries accused of recklessly selling poisons to suspect persons.

²⁷ See particularly Renata Segre, ‘Bernardino da Feltre i Monti di Pietà e i banchi ebraici’, *Rivista Storica Italiana* 90 (1978): 818–33, reviewing the work of p. Vittorio Meneghin.

²⁸ ASL Consiglio Generale, Riformazioni Pubbliche, 14, pp. 110–11.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 16, p. 332.

³⁰ Michele Luzzati, ‘Fra Timoteo da Lucca (1456–1513): appunti di ricerca’, in *Miscellanea Augusto Campana (Medioevo e Umanesimo, 45)* (Padua: Antenore, 1981), pp. 378–79, 383–85, and ‘Lucca e gli Ebrei fra Quattro e Cinquecento’, in *Città italiane del ‘500 tra riforma e controriforma: Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi, Lucca, 13–15 ottobre 1983* (Lucca, 1988), pp. 207, 211.

³¹ Michele Luzzati, ‘“Satis est quod tecum dormivit”. Vero, verosimile e falso nelle incriminazioni di ebrei: un caso di presunta sodomia (Lucca, 1471–1472)’, in *Una manna buona per Mantova. Man tov le-Man Tovab. Studi in onore di Vittore Colorni per il suo 92° compleanno*, ed. Mauro Perani (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2004), pp. 261–80.

interesting issues: not least the apparently even-handed involvement of a Dominican friar, and the relations between the Jewish community and local Jewish converts to Christianity. More to our present purposes, the accusers (effectively blackmailers) of Guglielmo da Fano can be linked to the personal grievances of clients against a particular banker, and, more generally, to groups that were beginning to articulate a principled – or self-interested – hostility to Jewish moneylending. But the evidence is not without its ambiguities. Individual participants in the process against Guglielmo are found on other occasions acting as arbitrators in legal disputes between Jews and Christians, or socializing at games of chance with Guglielmo himself.³²

Citizens continued to invest with Jewish moneylenders even in the more fastidious environment of the later fifteenth century.³³ Not infrequently, the taint of usury was less a factor in Jewish-Christian relations than a useful tool in legal disputes between Christians. In a case heard before the court of the Podestà of Lucca in 1451, two brothers, Antonio and Tommaso Narducci, claimed 300 florins from the heirs of the late Tommaso Testa. At issue were mercantile debts between Christians: in this instance arising from a company for the retailing of woollen cloth formed in 1424 between Tommaso Testa and the guardians of Antonio and Tommaso di Tommaso Narducci. The heirs of Tommaso Testa did not deny the debt. But Tommaso Testa's widow defended herself against the Narducci brothers through a succession of technical legal arguments. The most imaginative was the appeal to an ordinance recently issued by the

³² Notarial acts frequently attest the presence of (apparently casual) Christian witnesses in Jewish houses.

³³ This, presumably, is the meaning of the 1360 large gold ducats lent “ex causa veri et gratuiti mutui” for three years by Giorgio di ser Giorgio de’ Nobili da Massa Lunense to “la compagnia del prelo dei giudei di Lucca” in 1455: ASL Diplomatico, S. Agostino, 17 September 1455. For deposits of nobles of Vicenza with the Jewish banks of that city, see Rachele Scuro, ‘La presenza ebraica a Vicenza e nel suo territorio nel Quattrocento’, in *Ebrei nella Terraferma veneta del Quattrocento*, ed. Varanini and Mueller, pp. 111–12.

bishop of Lucca which declared that any person who leased a house to any usurer was *de facto* excommunicated, and consequently unable to be heard before any court of law. Antonio and Tommaso Narducci owned a house in Lucca in the *contado* of San Matteo that had long been leased to Jewish moneylenders. The Jews were entirely peripheral to the dispute, and the potential inconveniences that might have flowed from this legal ploy were quickly scotched by a papal bull of 21 August 1452 that absolved from excommunication any Lucchese citizen who leased houses to the Jews.³⁴

Accusations against Guglielmo da Fano (and other Jews in fifteenth-century Lucca),³⁵ were made in the context of the growing body of legislation against homosexuality in fifteenth-century Italy.³⁶ Heterosexual relations between Jews and Christians had long been a sensitive issue – as emotive as usury itself. Given the small size of Jewish settlements in northern and central Italy, the first sexual encounters of Jewish youths were likely to be with Christian girls.³⁷ Such liaisons were a greater threat to Jewish identity and social life than to the hegemonic culture of the host society.

³⁴ M.E. Bratchel, 'Usury in the Fifteenth-Century Lucchesia: Images of the Petty Moneylender', *Journal of European Economic History* 32 (2003): 250–51. ASL Podestà di Lucca, 1249, fols 134^r–138^v, 140^r–149^v, 263^r–272^v. A(rchivio) A(rcivescovile) L(ucca), Tribunale Ecclesiastico, 113 (ser Ciomeo Pieri, 1451–52), fols 78/79, 26 May 1451. See also ASL Diplomatico, Spedale, 19 May 1451. For relations between the Narducci and the Jews, Luzzati, "Satis est quod tecum dormivit", pp. 266, 278. For the bull of Nicholas V, see ASL Diplomatico, Tarpea, 21 August 1452. The text is published in Giuseppe Coniglio, 'L'usura a Lucca ed una bolla di Niccolò V del 1452', *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia* vi (1952): 259–64. For the general context, see Mueller, 'Lo status degli ebrei', p. 17.

³⁵ Luzzati, "Satis est quod tecum dormivit", p. 277.

³⁶ M.E. Bratchel, *Lucca 1430–1494: The Reconstruction of an Italian City-Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 13, 14–15, 63, 148, 262, 281, 286.

³⁷ Ariel Toaff, *Love, Work, and Death: Jewish Life in Medieval Umbria* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1996), pp. 5–13. Marriage, of course, is a different issue. There is little evidence of inter-marriage, even between Jews of German and Italian origin: Alessandra Veronese, 'Migrazioni e presenza di ebrei "tedeschi" in Italia settentrionale nel tardo Medioevo (con particolare riferimento ai casi di Trieste e Treviso)', in *Ebrei nella Terraferma veneta del Quattrocento*, ed. Varanini and Mueller, pp. 63–66.

Representatives of Jewish communities meeting at Forlì in 1418 passed ordinances providing for the severe punishment of prohibited sexual unions between Jews and Christians: in part because of the resultant bastards, but largely because of the threat to Jewish identity and to the integrity of Jewish communities.³⁸ Christian legislators responded in kind. In 1467 a case in Lucca against a Bolognese Jew, Consiglio alias Baseo, son of Musetto, recalled that the punishment for sexual relations with Christians was death – even burning alive.³⁹ The eventual outcome was a small fine of £100.⁴⁰ This fine might be explained, in part, by the fact that the offence was committed with a prostitute – a Ferrarese girl named La Margherita – and in the public brothel. Indeed Consiglio defended himself by claiming that no law prohibited Jews from resorting to public prostitutes. Sexual liaisons, condemned by both the Jewish and Christian authorities, seem to have been so common⁴¹ that the more extravagant punishments imposed in some of the normative sources were unlikely to have been executed (except in cases of rape or sodomy).⁴² Here as elsewhere there was a tension between specific ordinances and the *capitoli di condotta* (meticulously observed by the political authorities), according to which Jews were to be punished or absolved in civil and criminal cases as if they were citizens.

There remain some indications of hardening attitudes and mounting tensions in Lucca by the closing decades of the fifteenth century. In 1490

³⁸ Ariel Toaff, 'La vita materiale', in *Storia d'Italia: Annali XI*, ed. Vivanti, 1: 242–43.

³⁹ ASL Capitano del popolo, 33, fols 10^r–14ⁱ; Sentenze e bandi, 177, fols 88^{r-v}, 93^{r-v}, quoted in Bratchel, *Lucca 1430–1494*, p. 288.

⁴⁰ I am chided by Luzzati, "Satis est quod tecum dormivit", pp. 274–75, n. 28 for having reported the case without noting the smallness of the fine eventually imposed.

⁴¹ Michele Luzzati, 'Lo scudo della giustizia dei "gentili": Nascite illegittime e prostituzione nel mondo ebraico toscano del quattrocento', *Quaderni Storici* 115 (2004): 195.

⁴² The case of Guglielmo di Dattalo di Montefalcone, cited by Mueller, 'Lo status degli ebrei', p. 18, does not, in fact, provide convincing evidence to the contrary. For the actual text, cited somewhat selectively by Mueller, see *The Society of Renaissance Florence: A Documentary Study* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), ed. G. Brucker, pp. 245–46.

the Jew Emanuele da Cesena was accused of the desire (apparently unfulfilled) to have sexual relations with a Genoese prostitute named Maria.⁴³ In this instance the word “prostitute” seems to have been used loosely to refer to an outsider of easy virtue living in Lucca in the hospital of S. Antonio. It is not easy to extract a clear narrative from the welter of conflicting allegations and testimonies of the criminal proceedings: whether Emanuele persistently pursued Maria through the streets of Lucca, or whether Maria rather thrust her attentions on the hapless Jew; whether Maria was enticed to Emanuele’s house by the offer of a meal, or by promises of reward for services rendered. For present purposes what is significant is not Maria’s disclaimer of any knowledge that she was consorting with a Jew, but rather the reaction of the neighbours – themselves artisans and foreigners. As the news spread that “quello gudio habia una femina in casa”, the neighbours banged on Emanuele’s door, threatening to break it down unless they were admitted, and then searched the house with a lamp (where they found Maria lying in Emanuele’s sleeping quarters). Arguably much had changed (at least temporarily) by the 1490s, but this is hardly the relaxed coexistence portrayed in some of the more recent revisionist literature.

More pervasive in the sources than sexual jealousies were the accusations levied against Jews for defaming the Christian religion. Blasphemy cases generally seem to proliferate in the late fifteenth-century Lucchese court records, which abound in calumnies against Our Lady, the defacement of sacred images, and the theft of sacred vessels. The great majority of these cases relate to Christians. Some of these cases involved Jews.⁴⁴ It would be surprising were it otherwise, and recent Jewish historiography has moved away from dismissing all such accusations as anti-Jewish fabrications. In the middle ages Jewish youths were clearly as volatile as their Christian

⁴³ ASL Capitano del popolo, 43, fols 4^r–6^v, 15^r–16^v.

⁴⁴ For example, ASL Sentenze e bandi, 165, fols 121^r–122^r; 202, fols 183^r–185^v.

counterparts; there is a growing corpus of work on Jewish criminality.⁴⁵ Nor were their targets always Christian artifacts. Relevant in the present context – albeit very far distant from Lucca – is the theft by Jewish thieves in 1493 of a silver ciborium from the synagogue in Perugia, which, bizarrely, these Jewish thieves then pawned at the local Monte di Pietà (the Christian institution that is associated *par excellence* with the wave of anti-Jewish sentiment sweeping through Italy at the end of the fifteenth century).⁴⁶ True polarities emerge clearly only against the trauma of Holy Week.⁴⁷ For centuries Jews had been forbidden to parade openly through the streets during Holy Week. In Lucca, in 1449, four Jews were fined for so doing, and for associated acts committed in contempt of Our Lady and in derision of Christians.⁴⁸ Writing of the Jews of Umbria, Ariel Toaff speaks of the Holy *Sassiola* – the throwing of stones at Jewish houses during Holy Week. But the entertainment was restricted by the authorities to Christians under the age of fifteen years, and Toaff sees this ritualized violence as a safety valve that in itself facilitated compromise and coexistence.⁴⁹ The focus shifts to why the social constraints were beginning to break down at the end of the fifteenth century. And the traditional answer brings us back

⁴⁵ Admittedly, in the Lucchese records one of the most spectacularly prolific of all criminal careers (though one confined to house-breaking and petty thieving) was that of the baptized – and, therefore, presumably rootless – son of the Bolognese Jew, Vitale di Sabato: ASL Capitano del popolo, 44, fols 2^r–9^r. Pietro Angelo was apparently in the employ of Lucca at the time of some of his offences, and he also seems to have retained some links with Jewish pawnbrokers. As a convert to Christianity, he was not without his protectors. Indeed he was pardoned his multitudinous crimes by the lords of Lucca on the intercession of Giovanni and Ercole Bentivoglio of Bologna: ASL Consiglio Generale, Riformagioni Pubbliche, 22, p. 492.

⁴⁶ Toaff, *Love, Work, and Death*, p. 94.

⁴⁷ For the singling out, elsewhere in Tuscany, of Holy Thursday and Good Friday as the two days when Jews had to respect Christian observances, see Gian Paolo G. Scharf, 'Fra economia urbana e circuiti monetari intercittadini: il ruolo degli ebrei a Borgo San Sepolcro a metà del Quattrocento', *Archivio Storico Italiano* clvi (1998): 462.

⁴⁸ ASL Sentenze e bandi, 165, fols 121^r–122^r.

⁴⁹ Toaff, *Love, Work, and Death*, pp. 179–86.

to the preachings of the Minorites – and ultimately to the Counter-Reformation.

Christian-Jewish relations are a controversial theme, and largely the preserve of Jewish historians. It behoves an outsider to tread cautiously. There is no doubt that in Lucca (and elsewhere in Italy) Jews appear frequently and successfully in the court records as litigants,⁵⁰ and do not seem to have been treated prejudicially as defendants (if we limit ourselves to the integrity of the judicial procedures themselves and ignore the underlying juridical culture).⁵¹ They were favoured and protected by the public authorities; the small core of resident Jews were granted citizenship.⁵² But the city was a sacral space, and, as its custodians, the Lucchese patriciate, could not remain deaf to influential voices that spoke increasingly of contamination. Relations with the secular clergy (as opposed to the Observant friars) were not uniformly hostile. As late as 1487 the bishop of Lucca was granting a licence to three Jews, including Perla, wife of Abramo da Bologna, to go to the baths of Corsena and Villa at the due and customary hours, together with Christians.⁵³ It is not difficult to find anecdotal evidence of intercourse (and not only sexual intercourse) with citizens. But there were moments of danger (times of high visibility as during Jewish funerals), and there were seasons of danger (largely determined by the rhythm of the Christian calendar). Lucca would seem to support the prevailing orthodoxy that it is not very helpful to think of Jews in the

⁵⁰ Like their Christian neighbours, in civil disputes they might well prefer arbitration to the delays and expense of litigation: ASL Diplomatico, Archivio di Stato, 14 June 1453.

⁵¹ See the articles in *Quaderni Storici* 99 (1998), an issue devoted to “Ebrei sotto processo”; particularly Diego Quaglioni, “Both as villain and victim”. *L’ebreo in giudizio. Considerazioni introduttive*, pp. 517–32.

⁵² Luzzati, ‘Aspetti dell’attività’, p. 68. There is an important distinction between the right to be treated (temporarily) as citizens, in terms of the award of a *condotta*, and the grant of citizenship “in perpetuum”.

⁵³ AAL Libri Antichi, 118, fol. 159^v.

diverse and more pluralistic world of pre-Early Modern Europe as the “other”; that Christian-Jewish relations were in fact very fluid, and can only be understood with reference to the specific and changing dynamics and agendas of the host society.