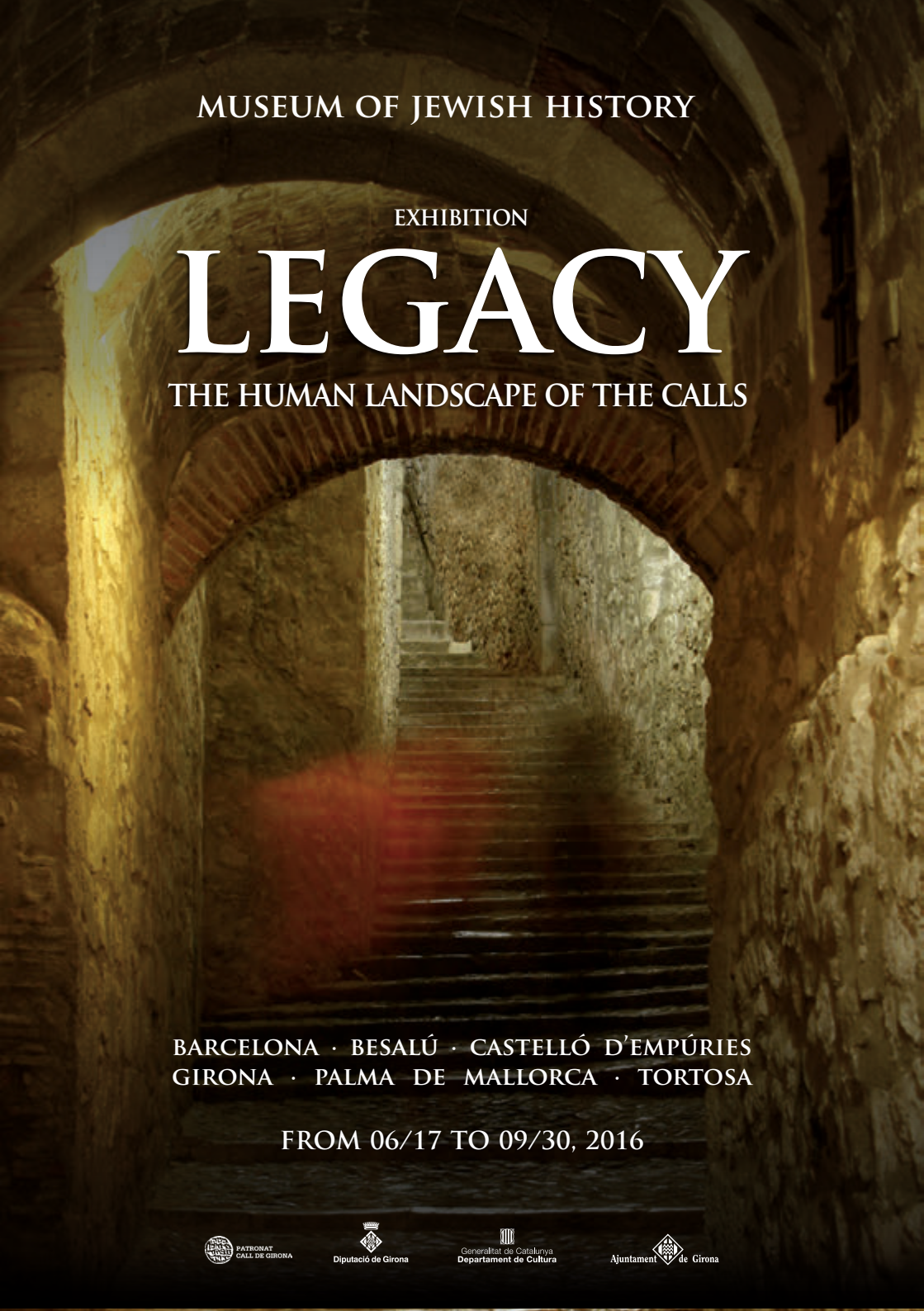

MUSEUM OF JEWISH HISTORY
EXHIBITION
LEGACY
THE HUMAN LANDSCAPE OF THE CALLS
BARCELONA · BESALÚ · CASTELLÓ D'EMPÚRIES
GIRONA · PALMA DE MALLORCA · TORTOSA
FROM 06/17 TO 09/30, 2016
PATRONAT CALL DE GIRONA
Diputació de Girona
Generalitat de Catalunya
Departament de Cultura
Ajuntament de Girona


REGNE DE FRANÇA
REGNE DE NAVARRA
REGNE DE CASTELLA
REGNE DE GRANADA
REGNE D'ARAGÓ
REGNE DE VALÈNCIA
REGNE DE MALLORCA
CATALUNYA
ROSSELLÓ
CASTELLÓ D'EMPÚRIES
BESALÚ
GIRONA
BARCELONA
TORTOSA
PALMA
Perpinyà
Vilafranca de Conflent
Cotlliure
Perelada
Figueres
Puigcerdà
La Seu d'Urgell
Camprodón
Ripoll
Berga
Torroella de Montgrí
Peratallada
Pals
Vic
Solsona
Cardona
Moià
Montclús
Bielsa
Ruesta
Jaca
Sos
Biel
El Frago
Uncastillo
Bolea
Luna
Osca
Roda
Estadilla
Egea
Barbastre
Tarazona
Tauste
Borja
Alagón
Pedrola
Saragossa
Pomar
Albalate
Algerri
Camarasa
Balaguer
Agramunt
Cervera
Lleida
Tàrrega
Sabadell
Granollers
Martorell
Montblanc
Vilafranca del Penedès
Fraga
Aitona
la Granadella
Prades
Valls
l'Arboç
Tarragona
Falset
Corbera d'Ebre
Alcanyís
Ricla
Pina
Paracuellos de la Ribera
Calatayud
Ariza
Daroca
Morella
Albarrassí
Castellar
Sant Mateu
Terol
Figueroles
Onda
Castelló de la Plana
Vila-real
Borriana
Sogorb
Sagunt
Llíria
València
Alzira
Xàtiva
Vallés
Gandia
Albaida
Llutxent
Dénia
Bocairent
Concentaina
Alcoi
Alacant
Elx
Oriola
Maó
Inca

LEGACY:
THE HUMAN LANDSCAPE OF THE CALLS

The Museum of Jewish History has organized an exhibition on the families, surnames and people related to the Jewish past of some Catalan cities. These family names constitute an immaterial legacy that goes beyond the physical and monumental legacy that these cities also have.

The institutions that worked to recover Jewish historic heritage have generally focused on the material heritage, the physical vestiges that the visitor can be shown, the archaeological or architectural remains. That has at times left the inhabitants of medieval Jewish quarters in the background. When all is said and done, it was they who were responsible for all the material legacy that has survived to the present day.

The goal of "Legacy: the Human Landscape of the *Calls*" is to present the names of the main Jewish families who were one day part of the country. It is based on research conducted on the written documentation about the families linked to some of the most representative medieval calls (Jewish quarters) of Catalonia and the Balearic Islands.

Conversion or exile led them on very different paths. We can still trace some of those personal and family itineraries. Other traces remain in the oral memory of some of the families scattered throughout the world after 1492 and also manifest themselves through their surnames, which have been transmitted for generations within Sephardic communities. By taking back their names, we recover their memory.

GIRONA

THE ÇA PORTA FAMILY (ALSO SAPORTA OR SASPORTAS)

Bonastruc ça Porta is doubtlessly one of the most important men in medieval Jewish history. These days almost all historians agree that he and Mossé ben Nahman (Nahmanides in Latin) are one and the same person. While the former name would have been the one by which he was known in his everyday life, the latter was the one used in his religious and intellectual surroundings. Mossé ben Nahman (*ca*. 1194–*ca*. 1270) was a rabbi, physician, Talmudist, kabbalist, exegete and poet, who had achieved great recognition among his contemporaries for his studies of the Talmud and the Kabbala. It is important to point out the very good relations he had with King Jaime I, who had ordered the organisation of one of the most famous controversies, in the summer of 1263, to take place in the royal palace in Barcelona. Nahmanides was at the head of the Jewish representation, whereas the Christian party was headed by the converted friar Pau Crestià. The Hebrew documentation still preserved shows how ingeniously Nahmanides had defended Judaism, so that even the king praised his qualities as an orator. A few years later, with the desire to fulfil the precept of travelling to the land of Israel, he left Girona to visit Jerusalem. He died in Akko in 1270, but what became of his lineage?

In medieval times, the surname Ça Porta and its equivalent Saporta is found in Vilafranca del Penedès, Barcelona, València and Besalú, which makes it difficult to identify master Mossé descendants. At the beginning of the 15th century we find the surname Sasportas in present-day Algeria, between the cities of Oran and Tlemcen. To this family, Jacob Sasportas was born around 1610, who, as a rabbi, became very renowned for his studies of the Talmud. Jacob claimed to be the tenth hereditary generation of Bonastruc ça Porta, but it has to be said that this was only accepted to be true because of the great authority Hebrew society conferred him as rabbi and philosopher, but not because there existed any proof of this claim.

A conflict with the authorities of Tlemcen led the Sasportas family to change their course for the rest of their history. The family immigrated

to Bordeaux, where most of them settled down, whereas Jacob set out on a journey through Europe to visit the main European communities. He became a *hakham* of the Sephardic community of London in 1664, but his great ambition was the rabbinate of Amsterdam, which he did not achieve however until 1693, when he was already very aged. Despite the long journeys of Jacob, most of his family established themselves permanently in the city of Bordeaux.

It is there that Abraham Sasportas was born between 1753 and 1756. He was the first member of the family to immigrate to America, before September 1778. Abraham was member of the synagogue of Charleston (South Carolina), and even though he died in Bordeaux, his descendants stayed in the United States, where Booker T. Brooks has documented up to twelve people with the surname Sasportas throughout the 19th and 20th century, basically in Ohio and South Carolina, but also in Connecticut and New York.

Perhaps we can never know for sure whether they really are descendants of the prominent Mossé ben Nahman, but the intellectual legacy left by the man from Girona however will continue to marvel generation after generation.

OTHER OUTSTANDING PERSONALITIES

- Jucef Ravaya (or Ravalla), *batlle* (in charge of the royal property) of Girona, royal treasurer of Pedro the Great (before 1267–1282)
- Lleó Aninay, last rector of the *aljama* of Girona (end of the 15th century)

THE JEWISH FAMILIES OF MEDIEVAL GIRONA

The Jewish families of medieval Girona lived in a limited space within the walls of the old heart of the city, near the Cathedral. The neighborhood was known as the *Call jueu* (Jewish quarter), where, within a small distance of each other, one could find the synagogue, the ritual baths (*mikveh*), the kosher butcher shop and other necessary venues for living a fully Jewish life. For generations, the Ravayas, the Caravidas, the Aninays, the Desportals, the Desmestre/Saportas or the Falcós lived in houses that reflected the families' socioeconomic level. It is no surprise, then, that some of the houses were monumental, with towers and gardens. Others, more modest, lodged the families of craftsmen, with small workshops opening onto the street.

The family home of the Falcós, a very extensive Jewish family of Girona, with different branches, was situated very close to the synagogue, on what is now 23 Força Street. The Falcós, who held positions of responsibility within the *aljama*, are mentioned as far back as 1321. In the riots of 1391, a leader of the community named Jucef Falcó became the *converso* Pere de Banyoles. His wife Astruga converted and took the name of Blanca; widowed in 1392, she married the *converso* Ferrer de Montcada. Nonetheless, at a time of massive conversions to Christianity, some Falcós maintained their last name after baptism: Falcó Bellshom, a councilor of the *aljama* in 1408, for seven years *clavari* (treasurer) of the *aljama*, got baptized around 1417 and became Bernat Falcó. He and his wife, who was also a *conversa*, were the parents of David Falcó, who remained Jewish, while four sons and two daughters converted to Christianity.

Ravaya

The surname Ravaya originated in Castile (Abravalla) and was found in Girona, Castelló d'Empúries and elsewhere in Catalonia. Astruc Ravaya and his son, Jucef, from Girona, were very powerful between 1265 and 1282. Jucef Ravaya, administrator (*batlle*) of Girona and Besalú, faithfully served King Peter the Great and directed his finances, to the point where he held the exclusive position of royal treasurer. This commitment meant he had to leave his position as *batlle* to his father. It was Astruc who, as *procurador reial*, charged with managing royal assets, granted a letter authorizing settlement in Palamós in 1277. Until his death in 1280, Astruc occupied the position of *batlle* in Girona as lieutenant to his son Jucef, who died relatively young in Sicily in December, 1282. While they were alive, father and son often enmeshed their private business dealings with the finances of the Jewish community of Girona and made use of the community's assets when it suited them. On the other hand, their intercession with the King allowed the *aljama* of Girona and all the *aljamas* that were part of the royal dominions to obtain very substantial privileges and concessions, some organizational improvements and an enhanced capacity to follow a lifestyle in accordance with the dictates of their religion. After 1284, Jews would be prohibited from holding public office. The family presence continued in the city for some time thereafter, since Mossé Ravaya, Salamó Ravaya and their son Abraham, were members of the *aljama* council between 1352 and 1369. Another Astruc and an Issac Ravaya appeared on the council at the end of the 14th century.

Caravida

The Caravida family was established in Girona at least as early as the 13th century, although there was already a Caravida who was appointed *batlle* (administrator) as far back as 1192 or 1196. Its most distinguished member was undoubtedly Astruc Caravida VI, who, in his will, provided for the establishment of a charitable institution, the Jewish alms-giving society, or *hekdesh*, which was already operational by the mid-14th century. Astruc Caravida had three daughters, but is not known to have had any sons. In 1332 he married his daughter Esther to the scholar David Bonjorn de Barri, a rich Jew from Collioure. The couple had a quite a resounding divorce five years later. Nonetheless, it is possible that Ester Caravida was the mother of the famous astronomer Jacob ben David Bonjorn de Barri, author of the astronomical tables published in Perpignan in 1361.

Aninay

Bonet Aninay was one of the first known secretaries of the Girona *aljama*. He held the post three times between 1267 and 1281. Another member of the family was Adret Aninay, who was involved in the internal confrontations within the community at the end of the 14th century. In 1391, he was one of those who took refuge in the Gironella tower after the assault on the *call*. Another member of the family, Astruc Aninay, had 33 books in his home, according to the inventory commissioned by the bishop in 1415. His widow, Vengues, appeared mentioned in 1450. Two brothers, Adret Aninay (died circa 1459) and Bondia Aninay, appear as members of the *aljama* council in 1444. During the second half of the century, another Astruc Aninay and his brother, Lleó Aninay, held important positions in the *aljama*. It was precisely Lleó who was one of the last leaders of the community. He fought the hardest to get permission for the Jews to freely sell their personal property in order to be able to embark on their exile in 1492.

Del Portal o Desportal

Master Mossé Abraham del Portal (died 1398), who had been living in Camprodon in 1370, was living in Girona at the end of the 14th century. He might be the father of a Jewish doctor, Natan Mossé Desportal (died 1410), who practiced in Sant Feliu de Guíxols and left behind a substantial library, in the charge of his wife Goig. Master Mossé del Portal, along with his son, Abraham Mossé del Portal, appear on the list of candidates for the council of the Girona community. The son was mentioned as one of the five richest Jews of the Girona community in a 1408 document. In 1400 he first served as *regidor* (leader), and he remained a *regidor* until his death in 1448. In 1459, the doctor Bonjuha Abraham del Portal acted as nuncio or messenger from the Girona *aljama* to the King and offered the monarch a donation. That same year, Astruc Abraham del Portal, possibly his brother, would also be a *regidor* of the *aljama*. Astruc Abraham del Portal appears among the creditors who are going to attempt to collect their loans from Christians in the spring of 1492, before leaving Girona.

Reconstructions by Jordi Sagrera



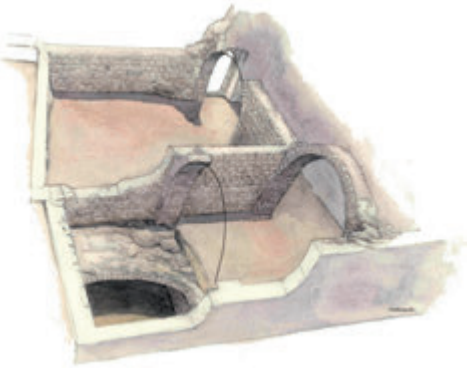
House of the Ravaya family



House of the Caravida family



House of the Aninay family



House of the Desportal family

BARCELONA

THE SALTELL-GRACIÀ FAMILIES

Barcelona was the native city of one of the best documented families from the whole of the Diaspora of the peninsular Jews, the Saltell-Gracià. They were actually two very well-known, intertwined families who lived in medieval Barcelona, but who had also branches living in Girona and other villages of the realm. They already appear in documents of the 11th century, but their elevation into the ranks of the elite of Barcelona occurred between the 13th and the 14th century, due to their activity as moneylenders and their entering the growing administrative machinery of the monarchy. Their economic potential also led to political power, and in this period they started to frequently hold governing offices in the local *aljama*.

During the pogroms in 1391, which wiped out the Jewish quarter of Barcelona, there was one Salomo Gracià who, together with his son Saltell, managed to survive the assault. After a few subsequent encounters with the Inquisition, they began the family Diaspora. First they moved to Istanbul, where their descendants followed the family tradition of governing the destiny of the Jewish community they belonged to. In the 16th century however, they emigrated to Crete, and there the Saltell family (then called Shaltiel-Hen) is documented to have been once again the leaders of the local community, in the field of both religion and business. A splendid remnant of their presence on the island has been preserved: the *Saltellus Haggadah* (or *Brother Haggadah*), a beautiful illuminated book made in Catalonia towards the end of the 14th century, which belonged to a Shaltiel from Crete and is now kept at the British Museum in London.

When the Ottomans conquered Crete at the end of the 17th century, the Shaltiel family emigrated once again, this time to Italy. Then the family branched out into three different lines. One line adopted the vernacular name of the family, Gracià (or Grazziani), and after some time branched out again: some moved towards the East, while others remained in Italy, where many of them ended up assimilating. Another line moved to the north of Africa, where their name changed to Chaltiel. And the third line, the most fecund, moved to Northern Europe at the beginning of the 18th century. They came to England, where some of them still remain until now, whereas successive waves of emigration took others to Amsterdam, Hamburg and the American continent.

Unfortunately, many of these families have suffered the horror of the Holocaust. The number of documented deaths is overwhelming: a total of 262 family members, 162 of those in the Netherlands, 63 in Greece, 54 in France, 6 in Italy, and 5 in Germany. These numbers bear testimony to the shame of Humanity.

Some members of this extensive family, whether they are called Saltiel, Shaltiel, Shealtiel or Chaltiel, are currently carrying out a great work of researching and connecting the different branches dispersed all over the world. In 2003 there were already 680 family nucleuses registered, distributed over more than 26 countries. This represents a lineage, or rather a tribe, of 3,000 people. Most of them are in the USA and in France, but there are also important nucleuses in Israel, the Netherlands and Great Britain, and there is generally a representation of the family on every continent. But despite this dispersal, there exists a huge collective conscience, and they are surprisingly well organised. They have their own website, they publish a gazette containing family news, and they hold periodical multitudinous meetings. The world is not wide enough, and the passing centuries are not long enough, to separate a family who wants to be united. The Saltell Family gives us a poignant example of this.

OTHER OUTSTANDING PERSONALITIES

- Isaac ben Roven, "el Barceloní" (Lit. "the one from Barcelona"), Talmudist and poet (1043–?)
- Jusef ben Meïr Ibn Zabarra, physician and poet, (*ca.* 1140–?)
- Astruc and Jafudà Bonsenyor, royal physicians, scribe and translator (12^{th} –13^{th} century)
- Salomó ben Abraham ben Adret, Talmudist and financier (1235–1300)
- Hasdai Cresques, sage (*ca.* 1340–after 1398)
- Nissim ben Roven, "el Gironí" (Lit. "the one from Girona"), physician and rabbi (*ca.* 1310–*ca.* 1375)

CASTELLÓ D'EMPÚRIES

PERFET BONSENYOR

The Bonsenyor family was one of the most influential families of the Jewish community of Castelló d'Empúries. This is evidenced by the repeated appearance of different family members on the lists of secretaries of the *aljama* from the second half of the 14th century on. Isaac, Mahir and Perfet had, between the three of them, been designated 31 times secretaries of the community. These represented the highest authority of the *aljama*, and enjoyed considerable distinction.

Despite their considerable weight in the community of Castelló d'Empúries, there are not many mentions of the Bonsenyor family beyond the reports of the *aljama* council and some other exceptional occasion, such as the purchase and sale of some seats in the synagogue. But the convocation to the Dispute of Tortosa (1413–1414) was going to leave a mark in the life of the Bonsenyor family. Perfet, a rabbi and Talmudist was called by Benedict XIII of Avignon -Pope Luna-, to participate in the Dispute of Tortosa as leader of the Jewish delegation from Castelló d'Empúries. At this time, the situation of the community in Castelló d'Empúries was delicate because of some conflicts between the nobleman Bernst Senesterra and the city of Barcelona with regards to the property of the county. Therefore, the convocation to the Dispute represented a great danger for the integrity of the *aljama*, thus increasing the weight of the responsibility of those called to represent the community at the Dispute.

Perfet Bonsenyor had been chosen by the Pope himself for being a highly respected man within his community. Benedict XIII of Avignon thought that, if he succeeded in converting those personalities of most moral authority within their communities, the other members would follow their example. The Dispute began thus on 7 February 1413, and the indoctrinatory nature of the so-called debate soon became evident. The Pope had arranged everything so as to achieve an overwhelming victory over the defence of the Jewish positon. Thus the debate was not based on an exchange of arguments, but was designed to instruct the Jews about Christianism, so that they should declare their own faith erroneous and chose conversion. Four months later, on 23 June of the

same year, the Jewish delegation from Castelló d'Empúries decided to leave the Dispute without papal permission. The reasons were obvious: there was no debate but a genuine trap, since the condition established by the Pope for being able to leave the city was for the Jews to admit their error, or, what amounts to the same, to reject Judaism and convert to the Christian faith. In November of the same year, Benedict XIII ordered Perfet and his delegation to present themselves before him, this time in Peñiscola. They were accused of insulting the Christian faith. Even though there is no documental evidence that the rabbi took part again in the Dispute, it is very probable that this was the case, since there is no evidence either of Pope Luna ordering the representatives of Castelló d'Empúries another time to attend.

Perfet Bonsenyor died a few years later, towards the end of 1417, having always held on to his faith, but probably quite shaken by the important blow which had been dealt to Judaism in these years. Unfortunately he still lived to experience the effect of the anti-Jewish laws of 1415, which pushed some three thousand Jews in the kingdom of Aragon to conversion, including many Jews from Castelló d'Empúries, and among these, his family.

OTHER OUTSTANDING PERSONALITIES

- Rovén Samuel, political leader of the *aljama* (14th –15th century)
- Jaffia Ravalla (Revalla), landowner, moneylender, and secretary of the *aljama* on different occasions between 1305 and 1330

TORTOSA

MENAHEM BEN JACOB IBN SARUQ

Tortosa, the ancient Tortosa of the trilingual tombstone of young Meliosa, the faraway Tortosa of the bold traveller Ibrahim ibn Jakub, the wealthy Tortosa of the financiers of Jaime the Conqueror and Pedro the Great, the sad Tortosa of the false theological Dispute, the longed-for Tortosa of the forced exiles who, according to tradition, kept the keys to their former homes in the *call* (Jewish quarter) for many generations after their departure, this Tortosa was the place of birth, in the 10th century - thus still under Muslim rule- of the famous grammarian and poet Menahem ben Jacob ibn Saruq, author of the first work on Hebrew linguistics, the famous *Mahberet*.

Menahem was born in Tortosa, but he moved to Córdoba when he was still young, and there he received the protection and patronage of Ibn ben Shaprut and his son Hasday ibn Shaprut, a very important diplomat at the caliph court of the Umayyads. It is said that it was this protector who encouraged Menahem to write his *Mahberet*, but there had been serious disagreements between patron and secretary while it was being compiled. Some put this down to the fact that Menahem was accused of Karaism, a Jewish movement considered sectarian, which rejects the oral rabbinic traditions of the Talmud, and only recognises as legally valid what is written in the Holy Scriptures. In any case, this was the reason why Menahem had to take refuge in his native city, Tortosa, and from there he wrote a touching letter of complaint to Hasday, which is considered a gem of the epistolary style.

Even though Menahem is mainly known for his work as a grammarian, he also occasionally wrote poetry. He composed the legendary letter in verse form which the office of Hasday ibn Shaprut sent to the king of the Khazars, a people established between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, who had converted to Judaism. Also worth pointing out is the aforementioned letter sent by Menahem from his refuge in Tortosa to Hasday, after having lost his favour. It is a poetic letter full of laments with unequivocal biblical references, very similar in both form and meaning to the clamours of Job.

The main cultural contribution of Menahem, however, is to be found in the field of grammar and lexicography. His *Mahberet* is the first dictionary of biblical vocabulary in Hebrew. For the first time, words were grouped according to their root, and organised alphabetically, while at the same time pointing out the different nuances and meanings of each word and documenting them with quotes from biblical texts. The work represented a solid base for later philological reflections. Furthermore, since it was written in Hebrew it was understood by Jews in other countries, and therefore had much repercussion, especially in France.

Shortly after its publication, however, it was harshly attacked by another specialist in this field, Dunas ben Labrat, a learned man educated in the East, who had been called to Córdoba by the self-same Hasday ibn Shaprut. Labrat wrote some *Teshubot* (replies) which were a systematic critic of nearly 200 terms defined by Menahem. He even claimed that the *Mahberet* could be considered a heretic dictionary, and it was probably him who launched the accusation of Menahem being a Karaite. Menahem did not respond to the attacks of Labat, but some of his pupils did. One of these was Isaac ibn Chiqatella, who later became the teacher of Jonah ibn Janah, the greatest medieval Jewish philologer and grammarian. This way, and in spite of everything, Menahem ibn Saruq, this "autodidactic and provincial" grammarian, raised in the Jewish quarter of Toledo, left a very fertile legacy in the Hebrew culture of his time. It is worth retrieving from oblivion.

OTHER OUTSTANDING PERSONALITIES

- Ibrahim ibn Jakub de Torotsa, traveller (10th century)
- Shem Tob ben Isaac, physician (1196–after 1258)
- Salomó ben Reuben Bonafed, rabbi and poet (14th–15th century)

BESALÚ

THE DES CASTLAR FAMILY

The Des Castlar family is considered to be the principal and most illustrious Jewish family of the county town of Besalú. This family, a genuine lineage of physicians, had arrived at Besalú before 2 March 1315 coming from Perpignan, but we have evidence of physicians from this family practising in Narbonne and Perpignan already half a century before that date. The first one to settle in Besalú was Abraham des Castlar, the most famous physician of the family due to his treatises on fevers, pestilence and bloodletting, and also because of his services at court during the reigns of Alfonso the Benign and Pedro the Ceremonious. He looked after Prince Pedro during a serious illness that the prince suffered, and therefore he received the privilege of being exempt from paying any kind of tax. His fame was so great that, even though he was living in Besalú, noble men and Jews from such faraway places as Barcelona came to claim his services. Most of the other family members conducted a complementary business of cloth trading, like many other Jews of this time did. This is documented by the debentures issued on several occasions by Abraham and his grandson David. The son of the latter, thus great-grandson of Master Abraham, Jaacel, married on 1 February 1359 Astruga, the daughter of Bonjuha Benvenist, thus merging with one of the great families of the town, the Benvenists. They were one of the most prosperous, as shows the dowry which Bonjuha Benvenist had fixed on his daughter: 4,000 *sous*.

Jaacel des Castlar was also a physician, though he was not as renowned as his great-grandfather. He spent almost all his life in Besalú, but at the beginning of the 15th century he moved to Castelló d'Empúres, where he lived at least between 1401 and 1405, the latter being the year when he bought a seat in the synagogue there. His only male child had already died by then, and he had only four daughters left. The trace of the lineage is thus lost from then on, as the surname Des Castlar disappeared. Jaacel himself converted to Christianism between 1416 and 1417, taking on the name of Gabriel de Perarnau. Despite his conversion he continued to live with his Jewish family, practising as a physician in Besalú, where he died in 1423.

Due to the disappearance of the surname it is extremely difficult to follow the traces of the descendants of the Des Castlar family. Nevertheless, bearing in mind their close ties with other families of the communities of Castelló d'Empúries, Perpignan, Puigcerdá and Besalú itself, it is very probable that, if they didn't convert to Christianism, they followed the steps of most of the Jews from the Girona region to the South of France, and perhaps later to Italy, Thessaloniki or the Ottoman Empire.

OTHER OUTSTANDING FAMILIES

- Bonastruc, merchants and moneylenders (1332–1414)
- Benvenist, moneylenders, court agents, merchants and landowners (1324–1396)

PALMA DE MALLORCA

THE CRESQUES FAMILY

The Majorcan Jews were famous for their extraordinary knowledge of mathematics, cartography and how to make nautical instruments and navigation charts. Their fame was such that monarchs all over Europe were anxious to possess maps and charts made on the island, and the kings of Aragon were no exception.

During the reign of Pedro the Ceremonious and those of his sons Juan and Martin, the cartographers Cresques Abraham and Jafudá Cresques, father and son, were in the service and under the protection of the Crown. It is assumed that they were the descendants of Catalan Jews who had moved to Majorca after the island had been conquered by Jaime I. The family already enjoyed a good social position in Majorca before the birth of Abraham: Ferrer Cresques had been a very well-known physician on the island in the first half of the 14th century, and a few years later, Vidal Cresques became secretary of the *aljama* of the city.

The grandson of Vidal, Cresques Abraham, was the first cartographer of the family, and he was held in high esteem by King Pedro, who gave him and his son Jafudá the title of royal relation, a distinction which indicates great respect and appreciation of the king towards them. Their greatest work was the Catalan Atlas, a map of the world known then, beautifully decorated. It was a gift offered by Infant Juan to King Charles VI of France, which was elaborated by Abraham between 1376 and 1381, most probably with the help of Jafudá.

Cresques Abraham died in 1387, the same year as King Pedro, but the production of maps and charts did not stop, since the new King Juan I continued to order important works from Jafudá. After the pogroms in 1391, Jafudá converted to Christianism adopting the name of Jaume Ribes, and in 1394 he moved to Barcelona. Despite these changes, the relation between the Majorcan and the king continued. We have evidence, on one hand, of his continuing to produce nautical charts for the king, and, on the other hand, of documents of privileges, concessions and licenses issued to the cartographer by Juan I himself, so that he could carry out his orders more quickly.

When Juan I died, Jafudá did not work for the Crown again. In 1399 the cartographer began to work for the Florentine pearl merchant Baldassare Ubriachi, who had ordered a mapamundi to serve as an example for the Genovese cartographer Francesco Beccà, who had received the order of producing a list of maps for the merchant Ubriachi.

Some researchers have identified Jafudá with master Jacome of Majorca, who worked as a cartographer for the King of Portugal, Enrique the Navigator, in the 1420s. More recent studies however have shown that this hypothesis is inviable. It is therefore most probable that Jaume Ribes and his family stayed in Barcelona, where he died before 1410 without any known descendants, thus ending the lineage of excellent cartographers.

OTHER OUTSTANDING PERSONALITIES

- Simó ben Zemah Duran, rabbinic authority, philosopher and scientist (1361–1444)
- Jafudà Lleó ben Mosconi, physician (1328–after 1370)
- Jonah Desmaestre, Talmudist and astronomer (second half 14th century)
- Isaac Nifoci, astronomer and physician (second half 14th century)

Patronat Call de Girona

Director: Assumpció Hosta

Museum of Jewish History

Director: Sílvia Planas

Curator: Assumpció Hosta

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Multimedia: Vidicam and Fluido. Digital experiences

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With the collaboration of: Ajuntament de Barcelona, Ajuntament de Besalú, Ajuntament de Castelló d'Empúries, Ajuntament de Palma, Ajuntament de Tortosa and Red de Juderías de España-Caminos de Sefarad

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PATRONAT CALL DE GIRONA

Ajuntament de Girona

Generalitat de Catalunya
Departament de Cultura

Diputació de Girona