

Francesca Bregoli, *Mediterranean Enlightenment. Livornese Jews, Tuscan Culture, and Eighteenth-Century Reform* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014)

The archaeology of *Etruria* (e.g. the Phoenician elements in the royal tombs of Pisa and the temple of Pyrgi), the Islamic contribution to the Romanesque Art of Pisa and Florence, and the life of Leonardo Fibonacci da Pisa (i.e. the mathematician who introduced Arab numbers in Europe) are only a few notable examples of this long and intense relationship that needs to be better known, both by scholars and by the public at large.

The last main chapter of this long Semitic history of Tuscany is the one related to the Jewish communities of the region. The main Jewish community in Tuscany was that of Livorno, the new harbour-city of Pisa, created by Medici dynasty as the new commercial hub of Tuscany and one of the main commercial centres of the Mediterranean region. Livorno, once called simply "Porto Pisano" was from the very beginning of its history declared *porto franco* and put under the protection of the Tuscan Navy of the Military Order of Saint Stephen, which had its monastic and educational buildings in Pisa, but its arsenal and fortress in Livorno. Together with its mother-city Pisa, the site of the Tuscan University and of the Royal Palace, Livorno, which was well-linked to Pisa by a large network of canals, was a kind of second capital of Tuscany, after Florence.

In Livorno, Tuscany offered full protection from any interference to everybody ready to participate in the economic life and growth of the country. Religious freedom was guaranteed to everybody and even the Papal Inquisition could not enter the city. The interaction between Tuscan culture and the minority cultures in Livorno produced very interesting fruits, both in demotic and educated cultural forms. Studies like those conducted by Fabrizio Franceschini on the linguistic and literary landscape of Livorno during the 18th and 19th centuries have proved it clearly.

Today, after the end of the *porto franco*, the devastation of the second world war and the *damnatio memoriae* enacted by the Italian Kingdom as well as by Fascist and Republican industrialism and urbanization, visitors have no easy task finding the remains of the long and glorious past of Livorno. But with a good guide and a boat, you can find in the network of canals the still-standing monuments of the "Venice of Tuscany": the Jews' *ghetto*, the Protestant churchyard, the Dutch docks, the Armenian and Greek-Orthodox church, the

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Greek-Catholic church and the Church of the Corsican Nation.

If you are not going to visit Livorno in near future, then the book by Francesca Bregoli, assistant professor at the Queens College of the City University in New York, is a valid alternative that offers you an impressive experience of Livorno's past. The book brings you to know the life of Livorno's Jewish community during the 18th century, at the time when many Jewish intellectuals participated actively in the economic, cultural and scientific life of the Tuscan nation. Despite the scholarly character of the book, meant to clarify how Jewish minorities related to non-Jewish cultural traditions in 18th-century Mediterranean regions, the book is very enjoyable even to a reader that is not specialized in Jewish studies.

Combining the analysis of economic data, judicial and governmental documents with cultural analyses of the *nazione ebrea* of Livorno, the book covers the development of Jews cultural institutions in Livorno during the period going from the final two decades of Medicean rule over Tuscany to the departure of Grand Duke Leopold I for Vienna in 1790. The first four chapters trace the participation of the Jewish community, protected by the Tuscan rulers, in Tuscan culture, its awareness of Enlightenment thought, and the related scientific reformist aspirations. These first chapters show also how Tuscan Galilean culture helped local intellectuals, including the *nazione ebrea*, to adopt Enlightenment culture. Particular focus is cast upon Joseph Attias, Angelo de Soria, Joseph Vita Castelli, Graziadio Bondi, and how attendance of studies at the University of Pisa strengthened the ties between Jewish intelligentsia and the Tuscan State.

Chapter Five is dedicated to Tuscan Enlightenment reformism, which was appreciated and studied all over Europe at that time, and it shows how changes in Tuscan public health did not diminish the spiritual concerns of benevolent confraternities. The three final chapters concentrate on Jewish reactions to Tuscan reformist efforts that had important consequences on the economic and political life of the *nazione ebrea*. In particular, chapter Six explores 18th-century Jewish and Tuscan governmental attempts to regulate social behavior by focusing on Jewish coffeehouses and the laws on gambling within those premises. The chapter shows, for example, that in the sphere of leisure time, developments in the *nazione ebrea* paralleled and mirrored reformist endeavours championed by the Tuscan authorities at large. Chapter Seven is dedicated to the study of Leopold I's reforms on the cultural life of

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the *nazione ebrea*, especially on Livornese Hebrew printing activity.

The final chapter takes a comparative look at the processes of Jewish inclusion in the 1780s, suggesting the need to look at the Tuscan example in a different way from that used to explain better-known cases of continental Western Europe and in already studied “port Jews” cases. Among the most interesting conclusions of the study we can mention the fact that commercial utility justifying the many rights of the Livornese Jewish community bolstered its corporatist understanding and hindered the political emancipation of its individual members.

The book is without doubt an important contribution to the knowledge of Tuscan history and it also demonstrates the importance of studying Tuscany as a separate cultural and institutional reality, therefore inviting to be cautious *vis-à-vis* applying to Tuscany what has been concluded about other parts of 18th-century Italy and Europe.

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