

BELMONTE: A REPORTER REVISITS AN ANUSIM COMMUNITY

By Kitty Teltsch

DNA and the Sephardic Diaspora: Spanish and Portuguese Jews in Europe

By Abraham D. Lavender Ph.D.

The study of genetics, and especially the concept of DNA testing, has gained much interest in recent years in the medical and forensic areas. This interest also is beginning to increase in the area of genealogy and in several areas of academia. Since the mid-1990s, I have introduced my classes in ethnicity to the research of L. Luca Cavalli-Sforza, Paolo Menozzi, and Alberto Piazza, *The History and Geography of Human Genes* (Princeton University, 1994). These authors compiled charts (similar to road mileage charts showing the distance between cities) showing the genetic distance between numerous ethnic and nationality groups throughout the world. Using somewhat abstract numbers, one can see how Italians, French, Spanish, Portuguese, English, Polish and twenty other European nationality groups are related to each other genetically. They also have charts for Africans, Asians, Native Americans, and other nationality groups.

The use of genetics (DNA) to help understand one's own

ethnic, religious, nationality, and/or racial ancestry, also is increasing. This article first discusses some major concepts of DNA testing, and then discusses the use of genetics as it applies to descendants of the Jews of Spain and Portugal (Sephardim) and the tremendous Sephardi diaspora that developed as a result of the Inquisition in Spain and Portugal. Because the male Y-chromosome mutates more rapidly than the comparable female mtDNA, the male Y-chromosome is used for analyzing more specific genealogical



Abraham Lavender at our
San Diego Conference

patterns, but significant mtDNA research also is being conducted, and the future holds tremendous potentials for females and males (e.g., Mark G. Thomas et al, "Founding Mothers of Jewish Communities: Geographically Separated Jewish Groups Were Independently Founded by Very Few Female

More than a decade ago, I set out to write an article about the "secret Jews" of the South West on assignment from The New York Times. I had been warned by Dr. Stanley Hordes it would not be easy to interview these descendants of Spanish and Portuguese families who fled from the Inquisition 500 years ago and eventually found refuge in remote areas of New Mexico. He offered to help.

The search led me to a group of young people willing to talk about their memories of elderly relatives-- Outwardly practicing Catholics-- who continued to cling secretly to Jewish rituals such as lighting



Photo by Cary Herz

candles, reciting prayers in Hebrew and observing the Sabbath. With Cary Herz, the photographer, I searched old cemeteries for the gravestones she discovered bearing both Christian and Jewish symbols. And my story came together, running nationally in November 1990.

Four years later, Rabbi Joshua Stampfer and Hordes organized a trip to Portugal by the Society for Crypto Judaic Studies and we went along to follow the young descendants as they searched for their roots. Our trip took us to the Northern town of Belmonte near the Spanish border where we knew a large number of families had fled and continued in secrecy to practice Jewish traditions.

Even before we reached Belmonte, the young men from New Mexico became excited about the lush, green mountains and pasture lands, remarking, "It looks very much like our own Mora Valley at home." Their excitement pleased Hordes, who observed that it was entirely possible their ancestors had

Author Kitty Teltsch and Stanley Hordes visit
Belmonte's Jewish Cemetery in 1994

Ancestors,” *American Journal of Human Genetics*, Volume 70, 2002, pages 1411-1420).

Sophisticated DNA tests today give results for 25 markers, that is, 25 numbers representing specific points tested on a male’s genetic chain. Each marker or point has one number, which is from a possible range of about ten numbers (markers vary in the range of possible numbers). Other tests are based on a smaller number of markers tested, frequently 12 or 9. The more markers two males match on, the more recently they had an exact common male ancestor, and the more closely they are related. If two males match, for example, on nine out of nine markers, then they probably had a common male ancestor, but one has to go back a good number of centuries to reach the common male ancestor. If two males match exactly on 25 markers, then they are very closely related, and the common male ancestor is probably within the last several generations. With nine markers, one probably goes back to shortly before the Inquisition to have a 50% chance of having a common male ancestor, although the frequency of mutations is still debated (see Lev A. Zhivotovsky et al, “On the ‘Evolutionary’ Mutation Rate at Y Chromosome STRs,” paper presented at the 2002 Meetings on Human Origins and Disease, November 3, 2002, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, New York).

Whatever the number of markers used, if two males match on all the markers except one, and they are only slightly off on that one, they are said to be a one step mutation match. Results also frequently are given for two step mutation matches. If several males share a great-great-great grandfather, for example, then most of them will have the exact same numbers on all 25 markers, but one or more might differ on one marker (or, rarely, two) because of a mutation that occurred in one line of descendants. The further the distance from the common male ancestor, the more likely there are to be mutations on several markers, and therefore the less exact matches the two males will have. Males frequently will begin with nine or twelve markers, and if a relationship is found there, then they will upgrade to a more expensive 25 marker test to see how more closely/recently they are related.

When a male is tested for any number of markers, for example, nine markers, his nine numbers (representing the exact number for each of the nine markers), is referred to as his haplotype. A 9-marker haplotype could be, for example, 14 13 29 23 11 13 13 11 14. Many males, of course, can share a specific haplotype, especially when the number of marker numbers in a haplotype is small. Geneticists then group together a number of haplotypes which share certain genetic patterns, and this grouping or cluster of haplotypes is referred to as a haplogroup.

When a male is tested by a major testing company, such as FamilyTreeDNA, for example, he is given his haplotype, and the number of other men who match with him exactly on all markers tested, the number who match with a one step mutation, and the number who match with a two step mutation. If other men who matched have given permission for their names and contact addresses to be given, then the males can contact each other and pursue more information. FamilyTreeDNA, for example, with a database of over six thousand people and growing, also asks men to give their paternal country of origin if known. In some cases, people are identified as Ashkenazic

or Sephardic. However, in a family which was Jewish but left Judaism several centuries ago, many descendants will not be aware of an earlier Jewish origin going back fifteen or so generations, so the number of “Jewish distant cousins” is likely to be understated. But, FamilyTreeDNA makes a major contribution to Jewish research by giving results for people who have known Jewish ancestry.

There also are several databases on the web where a person can type in his haplotype, and find out how many exact matches he has in different categories. In the United States Database, he is given the number (no names) of exact matches he has among European-Americans, African-Americans, and Hispanics as self-defined by men tested (see <http://ystr.org/usa>). There also is an Asian database, which includes Turkey, Egypt, Syria, and eleven other countries which might be of interest to Sephardim (<http://ystr.org/asia>). Unfortunately for Sephardim, there is not a database for North Africa or for sites of heavy Sephardic settlement in the Caribbean and the Americas. But, to get an idea of one’s “distant cousins” in Europe, the European Database is most helpful (<http://ystr.charite.de>). Click on “Help” if you need help inserting numbers; if you see a box of comments when trying to type in a number, simply click on o.k.).

Many descendants will not be aware of an earlier Jewish origin going back fifteen or so generations, so the number of “Jewish distant cousins” is likely to be understated. But DNA studies make major contributions by giving results for people with known Jewish ancestry.

The European Database is compiled by receiving results for nine markers from labs which, after meeting stringent testing requirements, send their results to be added to the European Database. It is important to note that these site results are nearly always based on random samples taken from the geographical area, and do not come from criminal institutions. Even if an occasional “criminal” gets in, he might easily represent scores of close and distant noncriminal “cousins.” with the same haplotype. Results for nearly all of the sites have been published in scientific journals (see <http://ystr.charite.de>), then click on “The Forensic Y-User Groups” to see names of researchers and e-mails to contact them. I have e-

mailed a number of researchers for further details, and most have responded promptly.

The European Database grows as more lab results are received. In June 2002, the database had results from 72 sites (a city, region of a country, or small country) with a total of 9,607 men. By mid-November, there were 82 sites with a total of 12,259 men. This actually includes three sites in Latin America with European-based populations: Sao Paulo (Brazil), the Antioquia area of Colombia, and Argentina. Unfortunately, data from the Recife area of Brazil, where many Sephardim settled and stayed as Catholics after an expulsion in 1654, can not be a part of the European Database because a different method of testing was used. There is a “Portuguese” database which includes sites in Iberia and Latin American, but the numbers are not comparable to those in the European Database.

The sites currently averages 50 people per site (12,259 divided by 82), but the numbers currently vary from 44 for Friesland to 510 for Sweden (I have combined six small sites in Norway into one site with a total of 300). The smaller the sample size, the more one should view the results as suggestive rather than descriptive. One can compute a percentage for each site, and see where he has the most matches adjusted for sample size. Roewer *et al* note that the European Database

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Art Benveniste

Have you wondered how we picked the name *HaLapid* for this publication and what is the history of the slogans on the masthead? Several people have asked me about it.

The original *HaLapid* was published in Portugal by Arturo Carlos Barros Bastos. In World War I, Barros Bastos commanded a Portuguese infantry squadron in Flanders. He even survived a gas attack. He knew that he was descended from Jews who had been forcibly converted to Catholicism. After the war he returned to the open practice of Judaism and traveled the country to encourage other crypto-Jews to do the same. With the aid of philanthropists, he obtained funds to build a synagogue in the northern city of Oporto. He adopted the Hebrew name Abraham Ben Rosh and under that he published a newsletter for anusim. He called it *HaLapid*, Hebrew for "the torch." The subtitle, *O Facho*, was the Portuguese translation of the name. When SCJS started its publication, it was natural for us to adapt the name of Barros Bastos' original.

Some years ago, Inacio Steinhardt, Barros Bastos' biographer, sent me copies of the original *HaLapid*. I saw that it contained two sayings at the sides of the title, and added them to the masthead of our publication. To the left is written "*Tudo se illumina para aquella que busca a luz.*" (All is illuminated for he who seeks the light). On the right is written "...*alumia-voz e aponta-vos o caminho* (Enlighten and direct yourself to the right path.) Each is followed by the name Ben Rosh, Barros Bastos' *nom de plume*.

We are proud that our publication is inspired by and continues the tradition of the original *HaLapid*.

In December, members of the board met in Scottsdale, AZ for our semi annual meeting and a strategic planning session. We are thankful to Dolly Sloan for coordinating the event, to Jan Elsea for leading us in the strategic planning session and to board member Randy Baca for making arrangements and hosting us for dinner. We discussed many ways to improve and expand the work of this society. We are also seeking suggestions and more active participation from our general membership. If you have any comments or suggestions, please contact us at our website: mail@cryptojews.com. For more details of the meetings please see the article by Mona Hernandez on page 10.

In the last issue of *HaLapid*, I neglected to mention the excellent and informative walking tour of San Diego, conducted by Stanley and Laurel Schwartz. I apologize for that and I direct you to their article on page eight of this issue.

The new year brings us to another membership renewal time. Many have already sent in their 2003 dues. Randy Baca, VP/Membership will be sending out renewal notices soon. We hope that the coming year will see SCJS reach out to more people and expand its activities. Your dues will help us achieve our goals.

See our website at: www.cryptojews.com

FROM THE EDITOR

By Dolly Sloan

Each time I work on *HaLapid*, I am struck by the scholarship and insight embodied in the articles contributed by our members. The Winter 2002 issue is no exception. In his article on using DNA research to learn more about Spanish and Portuguese genealogy, Sociologist **Abe Lavender** explains the underlying concepts and goes on to illustrate them using a relevant haplotype, or combination of markers common in Iberian males. Retired New York Times writer **Kitty Telsch** presents her experiences with the anusim community of Belmonte, Portugal. Her article covers more than a decade as journalist and private citizen, and updates us on the community's return to Judaism. The article is illustrated with photographs by **Cary Herz**, whose work on crypto Jews is widely respected. Maestra **Elena Fissman de Saad** informs us on Francisco Rivas Pugcerver, Mexican publisher who encouraged immigration of Russian and other Jews into his country in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and whose publication, *El Sábado*, probably reached crypto Jews still living as Christians. As part of the pre-conference events of SCJS's 2002 meeting, **Laurel and Stan Schwartz** led a walking tour of Jewish San Diego. Their article in this issue describes the sites visited and other information on the city's crypto Judaic heritage. Laurel and Stan's booth of old and rare Judaic books was a popular exhibit for conference participants.

Mona Hernandez attended the December SCJS board meeting and strategic planning session in Scottsdale and describes it for *HaLapid* readers. Finally, we call attention to books written by **Trudi Alexy** and **Andree Aeolion Brooks**, the former about to be published and the latter reviewed by **Art Benveniste**. As a writer and speaker who has researched Doña Gracia Nasi, the subject of Ms. Brooks' work, I want to supplement Art's fine review and call attention to the earlier contribution of Historian Cecil Roth, whose work *The House of Nasi: Doña Gracia* was published in 1948. Then, as now, Roth was one of the few, if any, historians writing in English who presented Jewish history as it was lived by Sephardic Jews. Further, he realized that great credit was due Doña Gracia for her contributions to her people, and published his work on her as basic to his next book on her nephew, Don Joseph Nasi, Duke of Naxos of the Ottoman Empire. He not only called attention to remarkable Sephardim, but also paid tribute to an exemplary Jewish woman at a time when Sephardic and female contributions to humanity, other than as helpmeet and mother, were largely ignored. Ms. Brooks continues in the tradition he established with her perceptive work.



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left their homeland and instinctively found refuge eventually in a location where they felt at home.

When we finally reached Belmonte, we had the good fortune to meet Elias Nuñez, the leader of the Jewish community who greeted us as "one of us" and who later took us to the small apartment where members of the community held services. And then, we moved on to a nearby, bare hilltop where he told us the community would one day have a synagogue. The property already had been donated by a local family. Returning home, we each sent him a modest contribution.

It was a few years later, I signed up for another trip to Portugal where the government planned to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Edict of Expulsion with atonement ceremonies, including formal meeting of the parliament. The American trip was cancelled because of a lack of participants. I went anyway, the only American visitor to attend.

For me the most memorable experience was not witnessing the pomp and ceremony in Lisbon---there were many prominent visitors including the leader of the Israeli Knesset---but rather, the return to Belmonte.

Here, too, there were ceremonies--the City Hall was so crowded participant spilled out into the street. A small group marched off to the dedication of a Jewish cemetery. Three prominent visiting rabbis led the group in a solemn procession circling the barren field. And then, finally, there was a rush up the cobblestone streets to the newly completed synagogue.

The building was a modest white walled structure with red doors. It was named for the father of a Moroccan businessman who had contributed the funds: Synagogao Bet Eliahu. I was told that community members had watched the construction with awe, coming daily to see each gilded letter affixed above the doors, and later, competing to sweep the floors. But it was so poor! There were no benches, no seats in the women's balcony, no prayer books---even the Torah was borrowed from a Lisbon synagogue

But the pride of community members was so evident. Time and again I heard them say, "Here, the link was never broken."

In the years that followed, I heard disquieting reports about the Belmonte community. There were disputes about leadership (not unique to Belmonte) But there also were heartening reports that more members had re-embraced their religion.

Meanwhile, an artist friend, Laura Cesana, had completed her book of paintings based on her many trips from Lisbon to the Belmonte community on a Gulbeckian scholarship. She spent five years on her project and experienced the change. Her signature painting for the book *Quatro Tempos* shows three doors. In the first, the *candela* is hidden behind closed doors, in the second, the door is ajar, the third shows the door open and lastly, the *candela* is outdoors in sunlight for all to see. At last, it need not be hidden.

Had this really happened?

When I learned that my good friend, Rufina Bernadetti Silva Maussenbaum was preparing to make another trip to Northern Portugal, I had to go along.

When we arrived for an arranged dinner in the synagogue's downstairs community room, the table was set with a vegetarian supper, which must have been laboriously made by many hands. A dozen or more members were waiting, led by Fernando Vaz, the community's leader. There were prayers led by a member of our group, Rabbi Leo Abrami, as we took each other's measure. And there was young Miguel Vaz who we were told, spoke Hebrew and often led services in the absence of a rabbi.

Although we had paid for our dinner, there was no feeling of being exploited: this was a poor community and doing its best to greet us properly. There was the language barrier but we had some help, we managed to identify ourselves, and we sang together. We had the feeling they were open to receiving us. I was struck by a small exchange: At one point, an elderly woman seated in an honored position, looked across at Rufina and then clasped her hands over her own heart and extended them in an unmistakable gesture.

We learned the community had welcomed a dozen or more visiting groups and been open about its pride in re-embracing Judaism.

There have been scholarly works about the developments, some predictions that the community would lose its distinctive traditions as its members emerged from their secret lives. David Canelo, among others, had written of this prospect and cautioned the change would be evident within a couple of generations.

During their long secret past, it was the women who had passed along their old prayers, traditions and beliefs to their grand-daughters. The 500-year-old history was preserved, often at risk of persecution. Now that the community had come out, openly embracing Orthodox Judaism, with authority passing to the men of the community, there was the prospect the old ways would be lost.

On a trip to Belmonte, Alan Tigay, Executive Editor of Hadassah, encountered this expressed concern that the old *oracoes*, the prayers, would soon be lost. He came away assured that the elderly women still recited them at home.

Community members are seeking religious leadership but they also are concerned that they find someone sensitive to the difficulties then have faced.

Since our trip, a number of participants have been troubled by these considerations. But our group's leader, Rufina has identified a young Brazilian who might be an ideal religious instructor. The young candidate is himself a descendent of Anusim--the forced ones---who discovered his roots and went on to fulfill conversion. As such, he would be sensitive to the pressures on the community. He has had formal religious training in Israel and is a gifted linguist.

Most important, the Belmonte community seems eager to have him and his young family and have offered an apartment and other assistance. He would serve without salary with support for living costs.

Is the future of this small community of interest to outsiders?



Photo by Cary Herz

Friday Night candles like these were lit by the crypto Jews of Belmonte. The candles were hung inside earthenware jars so that the flame could not be seen from outside.

KITTY TELTSCH AND SCJS VISIT BELMONT IN 1994

Schulamith Halevy, researcher on crypto Judaism, with Elias Nunes, leader of the Belmont Community.



Photos by Cary Herz



Rabbi Joshua and Goldie Stampfer share a light moment with Nunes.

Colette Avital, former Israeli Ambassador to Portugal, has confronted this issue for years. She remembers going to the remote, Northern towns with Portuguese President Soares in 1989 and how he stunned a crowd at a rally by addressing to her an “apology” for the years of suffering by the Jewish people and admonishing them to hold up their heads with pride.

“This act is what really made the difference and gave those people the courage to say, ‘yes, we are Jewish.’”

There are so many Sephardim in the United States and elsewhere,” she argued, “but it is very difficult to be a community that numbers only 400 or 500. One should not neglect this small Jewish community.”



Photo by Cary Herz

A six pointed star has been added to a grave.

“should be equally useful in forensic analysis and anthropological or archaeological research” (“Online Reference Database of European Y-chromosomal Short Tandem Repeat (STR) Haplotypes,” *Forensic Science International*, Volume 118, 2001, pages 106-113). The authors also give a very good history and description of the database.

The haplotype I gave above as an example (14 13 29 23 11 13 13 11 14) is the second or third largest haplotype in western Europe. Therefore, it is not surprising that there will be many matches in Europe for this haplotype. Most men will not have the number of matches this haplotype has. In fact, for a number of haplotypes, there will be only a few or even zero matches in the European Database with “only” 12,259 men so far in the database. For examples of haplotype frequencies, see, for example “Distribution of Y-chromosome STR Defined Haplotypes in Iberia” (Annabel Gonzelez-Neira *et al*, *Forensic Science International*, Volume 110, 2000, pages 117-126; Mercedes Aler *et al*, “Y-Chromosome STR Haplotypes From a Western Mediterranean Population Sample,” Volume 119, 2001, pages 254-257).

The percentage of matches for the above haplotype was 1.35 for Spain, from which many Jews were allowed to leave from 1391 on. Although moderate or small, there were matches in seven out of eight sites in Spain (in descending order, Madrid, Asturias, Valencia, Barcelona, Galicia, Zaragoza, Andalusia, and, with no matches, Cantabria). Percentages were 1.79 for southern Portugal, and 3.82 for central and northern Portugal where most Jews were trapped from 1497 on when they were not allowed to leave without secretly escaping.

The percentages for other European areas are: 4.80 for Belgium and 4.48 for southern Netherlands (Holland and Zeeland) where major Sephardic communities existed (especially Amsterdam, referred to as “The New Jerusalem”); 2.18 for the northern Netherlands (Friesland and Groningen) where smaller Sephardic communities existed; 0.87 for Hamburg (where a Sephardic community was begun, but later lost numbers to Copenhagen), 2.41 for five sites in western Germany (Dusseldorf, Cologne, Limburg, Mainz, Freiburg) on or very close to the Rhine River whose mouth is in the Netherlands, 6.06 for Strasbourg, on the Rhine River, on the French-German border, which was referred to as “The Jerusalem of Germany,” 1.45 for seven sites elsewhere in Germany (Munster, Magdeburg, Rostock, Berlin, Leipzig, Stuttgart, Munich), 1.35 for Rome, 1.22 for four sites in northern Italy, and 0.27 for five other sites in Italy. London, England and Dublin, Ireland, both of which had Sephardic communities, had respectively 2.83 and 1.87.

There was a 6.35% match (to be interpreted cautiously because of a small sample size) for Copenhagen, Denmark, which had a Sephardic community, but for Scandinavian countries without Sephardic communities, there was 0.67% for Norway and 0.57% for Sweden. Finland was 0%. The percentage was 0.62 for eight sites in Poland, and 0.16 for four sites in Eastern Europe (Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, and Moscow). Budapest, Hungary, earlier part of the Ottoman Empire with a Sephardic community, had 1.71, Croatia, with a Sephardic community, had 2.00, and Krakow, Poland, also with a Sephardic community, had 0.93 (see Chaim Raphael, *The Sephardi Story*, Valentine Mitchell, 1991, pages 128-129, for a map of some communities).

Large numbers of Sephardim went to Greece and Turkey, but there were no matches for this haplotype in Greece and a small match in Turkey.. But, we must remember that we are

dealing with one case study, and so we cannot assume that “distant cousins from one very large extended family” went to every Sephardi area of settlement. Even a large “family” will not necessarily spread to every settlement; it is the overall pattern that is important. Even if this haplotype did go into exile in Greece or Turkey, however, we must remember that about 95% of the Spanish-Portuguese Jews in Greece (mostly in Salonika) were killed by the Nazis, and that after 1948 large numbers of Sephardim left Turkey for Israel and other places, its Jewish population (about 95% Sephardic) decreasing from 79,765 in 1945 to about 20,000 today (Daniel J. Elazar *et al*, *The Balkan Jewish Communities*, University Press of America, 1984; and Esther Benbassa and Aron Rodrigue, *The Jews of the Balkans*, Blackwell, 1995). There were also a few situations difficult to explain. Vienna and Graz in Austria had no matches, which was no surprise (although Vienna had a Sephardic community), but the Tyrol area of Austria, the Austrian panhandle sandwiched between southern Germany, Northern Italy, and eastern Switzerland, including Innsbruck, had a match of 2.62. I have been unable so far to find references to Sephardic settlements in that area. Lausanne, Switzerland, with 4.43%, is in a similar situation. It is possible that Huguenots from France, previously Sephardim, might account for a flow into Switzerland from France, but I do not know about these two sites, and welcome facts or suggestions. We also must know whether the community has changed significantly in genetic makeup in the last few centuries because of migration or other factors.

In general, the regions where I had large matches are known to have had Sephardi settlements after the exiles from Spain or Portugal. For references to some sites, in addition to Raphael above, see; Miriam Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation*, Indiana University Press, 1997; John Edwards, *The Jews in Christian Europe 1400-1700*, Routledge, 1998; Jonathan I. Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism 1550-1750*, Clarendon Press Oxford, 1985; and Haim Beinart, editor, *The Sephardi Legacy*, Magnes Press, 1992.

It is possible that a bottleneck, a number of gene patterns being greatly reduced because of a specific event, or genetic drift (random changing of genes over time), can lead to apparent matches that are not real or not as close as they appear. But, there is one major reason that causes hesitation in concluding that all of this data represents a Sephardic migration pattern after the Inquisition era. This can be referred to as the “ancient history” thesis. It is possible that these DNA patterns go back thousands of years to very early migrations to western Europe, and long predate a Jewish presence in western Europe (for a discussion of early genetic patterns in Iberia, see J. Bertranpetit and L.L. Cavalli-Sforza, “A Genetic Reconstruction of the History of the Population of the Iberian Peninsula,” *Annals of Human Genetics*, Volume 55, 1991, pages 51-67). This haplotype does have matches in areas of Europe other than areas of major Sephardic settlements. Similar patterns of varying degrees have been found by this author in analyses of twenty other haplotypes from Iberia.

The ancient history approach could be used to argue that the pattern discussed in this paper pre-dates the Inquisition-based Sephardic exile. Another suggestion is that Sephardic descendants of the exiles, in the 600 years since significant migrations began from Spain (migrations started in 1391, following a wave of persecution), have spread to many places within Europe, and that many of the descendants are today

In general, the regions where I had large matches are known to have had Sephardi settlements after the exiles from Spain or Portugal.

Christians who have no memory of their Jewish ancestry. We know from a number of writings that a significant number of Jewish descendants have been lost to the community in this manner. Certainly in Germany there have been major Jewish conversions to Christianity for several hundred years, and there are many descendants of Jewish families who have lost all traces of their Jewish ancestry. The pattern shown in this article, with the specific relationship between this DNA pattern and known Sephardic areas of settlement, is too strong to support an ancient history pattern of genetic distribution. Even taking into account the matches in areas with unknown Sephardic settlements, as in parts of Germany, the overall pattern is too strong to have happened by chance. Although I approach this conclusion with double caution because I share the haplotype analyzed, I do think that the pattern indicates that this haplotype is part of the Sephardic diaspora.

Other findings that deserve more attention come from an analysis which I have done using DNA patterns from a recent Israeli study which used six markers (Almut Nebel et al, "The Y Chromosome Pool of Jews as Part of the Genetic Landscape of the Middle East," *American Journal of Human Genetics*, Volume 69, 2001, pages 1095-1112). Five of these markers are also in the European Database, and I used these five for analysis. Out of a total of 526 men, the Israeli study had 78 men who identified themselves as Sephardic (over 70% identified as North African), and 79 men who identified themselves as Ashkenazic. Although these findings are preliminary, using samples from North African Sephardim and Ashkenazim, the Sephardi matches in Europe were, in descending order, in Albania, Bulgaria, Umbria (Italy), Budapest (Hungary), Latium (Italy), Marche (Italy), Freiburg (Germany), Mainz (Germany), Friesland (Netherlands), Lombardy (Italy), Tyrol (area of Innsbruck, Austria), Cologne (Germany), Denmark, Stuttgart (Germany), and Holland (Netherlands). On the other hand, the matches for those who identified as Ashkenazi were Novgorod (Russia), Wroclaw (Poland), Moscow (Russia), Warsaw (Poland), Graz (Austria), Groningen (Netherlands), Ljubljana (Slovenia), Eastern Norway, Bydgoszcz (Poland), Magdeburg (Germany), Lithuania, Romani of Bulgaria, Romani of Baranya area in Hungary, Dusseldorf (Germany), Munster (Germany), and Krakow (Poland). Although these five markers go back a number of centuries, the Sephardic pattern bears a striking similarity to that of the haplotype used in this study, and a marked contrast to the Ashkenazic pattern, despite conclusions that both Ashkenazi and Sephardi share Near Eastern origins. It seems to this researcher that several Ashkenazim had a Sephardi genetic pattern, and that several Sephardim had an Ashkenazi pattern, probably due to people being absorbed over time into the other culture through migration and/or marriage. Without these cases, the Sephardi-Ashkenazi distinction would be even greater.

There have been conversions to Judaism (and other forms of gene input) throughout history among both Ashkenazim and Sephardim, and a maternal based Jewish status has brought at least some "new" male Y-chromosomes into Jewish communities going back centuries. Much more research is needed for both Ashkenazim and Sephardim, and DNA research must be approached with an open mind and integrated with knowledge of a group's specific history, culture, and migration patterns. Why Spanish-Portuguese Jews went into exile, how many went, where they went, how many were left in Spain or Portugal, and how many immediately or eventually left Judaism must be integrated into DNA research. SCJS can play a major role in this area.

ABE LAVENDER PhD, a sociologist, specializes in ethnicity 7

and the Jewish community, with a special interest in Sephardim. One of his courses is *World Jewish Communities*.

Dr. Lavender expresses appreciation to Dr. Rene Herrera, geneticist, Department of Biological Sciences, Florida International University, and to Reese Mazingo of Raeford, North Carolina, for their assistance and takes full responsibility for all interpretations and positions taken on still controversial issues.

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EDITORIAL POLICY OF

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Halapid contributors come from all over the world. The editors respect different national writing styles and, where possible, have left each item in the author's style. We edit for grammar, spelling and typographical error.

Many contributions are memoirs or retelling of family stories and legends. They may or may not be historically accurate, although they are indeed valid, sacred memories that have been passed along through time. We do not attempt to change individual perceptions as long as they are reported as such, but we do change obvious misstatements or historical error.

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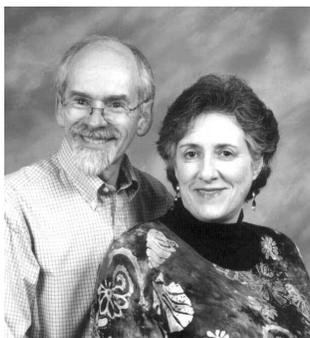
A WALKING TOUR OF JEWISH SAN DIEGO

By Stan and Laurel Schwartz

As part of the SCJS conference held in San Diego last August, we conducted a walking tour of Jewish Old Town San Diego. The tour, which included both Ohr Shalom Synagogue members and conference attendees, started at Old Temple Beth Israel. Completed in 1889, it is one of the oldest existing synagogue structures in the American West and one of the two oldest in California. Jews have been in San Diego since the early 1850's and we talked about their social habits, business ventures and involvement in the community. The talk, walk and lunch afterwards were well received. More information about San Diego's pioneer Jews can be found in our book, "Old Town, New Town, An Enjoyment of San Diego Jewish History" which is available through our website www.schwartzjudaica.com. All proceeds from the sale of this book go to the Jewish Historical Society of San Diego.

We really can't say for sure if there were any Crypto-Jews or even Sephardic Jews in early San Diego. However, there is a good possibility that some of the soldiers or even priests who came with Father Junipero Serra in 1769 when he founded the first California mission here, might have been Crypto-Jews. As far as we know, no research has been done on this topic.

Occasionally, at various local history events, we meet people with "suspect" names and backgrounds such as Carvajal, Orozco, Diaz. When they hear that we're from the Jewish Historical Society, they often ask us how they can research their family history since they had heard there might have been Jews in the family tree. There is also a society here called Los Californios, all of whom trace their heritage back to colonial times. One of the members told us that a few of them have Jewish roots as well. Yes, there is much work to be done here in San Diego.

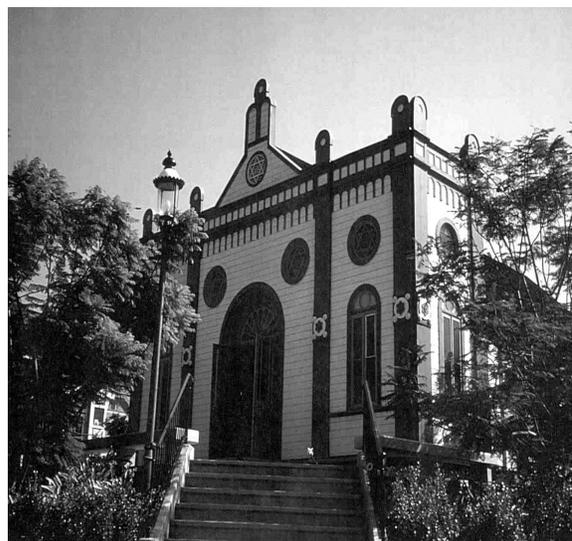


Stan and Laurel Schwartz

We are members of the Jewish Historical Society of San Diego. Besides our avocation as historians, our vocation is selling Jewish books and we sometimes get similar inquiries about crypto Judaism from our customers. We are often the first contact for people seeking to enter the Jewish community. In searching for information about their possible heritage, they look for books on genealogy, basic Judaism, the history of the countries of their ancestors' origin and on the Inquisition.

Though our personal family trees go straight back to Russia and Poland, we feel a kinship to the Sephardim and we are happy to share in their rich heritage.

Schwartz Judaica specializes in out-of-print and used Jewish books and antiquarian Judaica. Its website can be seen at: <http://www.schwartzjudaica.com>



Old Temple Beth Israel



Colorado House



A scene from Old Town San Diego

FRANCISCO RIVAS PUGCERVER:

Converso Publisher Advocated Jewish Immigration to Mexico

By Maestra Elena Fissman de Saad

Francisco Rivas Pugcerver was a Mexican publisher of Jewish ancestry who promoted Jewish immigration into Mexico in the latter part of the nineteenth century. From a *converso* family, Rivas was born in the state of Campeche in the Yucatan Peninsula in 1850. When he was very young, his parents sent him to New York where he studied classical languages. He returned to a Mexico torn by conflict between conservative and liberal parties, with President Lerdo de Tejada (1825-1889) leading the liberal faction.

The young man soon met and married a young Cuban woman named María, also of *converso* descent. Their marriage of 40 years was childless. In his will, he directed that his extensive library, in which he had compiled valuable material on the crypto-Jews of Mexico, would go at his death to the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Unfortunately, his wishes were not followed, as the University was still under construction when he died. The library passed to his servants and was lost. The information in this vast treasure may be lost forever.

Publisher Rivas advocated Jewish immigration into Mexico through his newspaper, *El Sábado* (The Sabbath, 1889). He was convinced that his country was the most liberal in the world at that time. This liberalism, however, was centered only in an elite group of intellectual politicians. One of them was Jesus Díaz de León, also a descendant of Spanish crypto Jews, who introduced the Hebrew language into the Preparatoria Nacional, one of the most prestigious colleges in Mexico City.

There was no established community of Jews and no institutions or recognized Jewish groups in Mexico when Rivas published his newspaper of Jewish content. One wonders how many crypto Jews, hidden and living like Christians at that time, were reading his newspaper.

Rivas spoke English, French, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic and German. He was a descendant of the *Jovhelim*, a Jewish sect that was expelled from Spain and came to America as "*marranos*." In his own words, his ancestors came from the highest Jewish Sephardic aristocracy. From his father's side he claimed descent from Rivas Abravalla (Av-rabban-el), a divine teacher, and from his mother he acquired the last name of Pugcerver Colonimo Gurario, Colonimo from the Greek Kolonyomos, a famous rabbi born in the year 1170.

His last name, Gurario or Gurati, came from the two Jewish tribes of Judah and Jeshua ben Joseph, of importance in Jewish history.

When his family was persecuted in Spain, they found refuge in Bujaraiza, a small town. They lived there until the nineteenth century, when they decided to immigrate to Mexico. When the authorities discovered they were Jews, however, their possessions were confiscated.

Professor Rivas visited Rabbi Zielonka early in the twentieth century with the intent of promoting the immigration of Russian Jews into Baja California. President Porfirio Díaz agreed to it, saying that he wanted the Jews to mix with the Indians to "better the race." The Jewish Agency opposed the idea, stating that no Jew could live in such a desolate land, lacking infrastructure.

Rivas had his own version of the discovery of America. He believed that Columbus was a converted Jew. Many crypto

Jews had participated in the first voyage of Columbus. Rivas wrote that "... in the crew, was Roi of Triana and Daniel Bermejo, both converted Jews whom we know by their Christian names, Juan Rodrigo and Juan Bermejo. The translator on the voyage was Luis de Tories, also a convert, he tried to communicate with the Indians in Hebrew."

Many more facts indicate that Columbus was a Jew. The captains of the two ships that sailed with him were the Pinzón brothers, who later were accused of being crypto Jews and were burned at the stake by the Inquisition. But the strangest fact was that there was no priest on this first voyage. This shows the importance of the Jews in development during the Colonial Era. Thousands of crypto-Jews obtained false papers, came to Mexico and became deeply rooted in the economic and political development of the country.

In the time of Porfirio Díaz in the early twentieth century, the famous writer Israel Zangwill wrote that Joseph Fels of the Jewish Territorial Organization was exploring the idea of bringing thousands of Jews to Mexico, but this movement was too late, because in Europe the Zionist ideas of Theodore Herzl were gaining support and the emphasis was on the return of the Jews to their own land of Israel.

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This article was taken from the author's work, Cuatro Casos de Inmigración a México en el Siglo XX, professional thesis to obtain licensure in History at La Universidad Nácional Autónoma de México, 1981, 224 pp. Maestra Saad spoke on this topic at SCJS's 2002 conference.

EXHIBIT: JEWS IN MEDIEVAL SPAIN

The Spanish government is sponsoring a major exhibit in Toledo on the life of Jews in medieval Spain. You can view part of the exhibit at:

<http://www.jta.org/story.asp?id=021222-exhi>

THE WOMAN WHO DEFIED KINGS:

*The Life and Times of Doña Gracia Nasi,
A Jewish Leader During the Renaissance*

Reviewed by Arthur Benveniste

A remarkable woman lived in the sixteenth century. We know her as Doña Gracia Nasi. Born in Portugal thirteen years after the forced conversion of the Portuguese Jews and eighteen years after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain she was raised in a family of crypto Jews. In her early life she lived openly as a Christian under her Christian name, Beatrice de Luna and secretly as the Jewess, Gracia or Hannah.



Andrée Brooks

In 1528 she married Francisco Mendes (originally Benveniste) who, along with his brother Diogo, ran the House of Mendes, a powerful trading company with agents across Europe and around the Mediterranean.

In 1538 Francisco died, leaving Gracia with an infant daughter. Gracia now assumed the management of the Mendes commercial empire. Her enormous wealth put her into a position to

influence kings and popes and she used that influence to protect crypto Jews. Crypto Jew were helped to escape Portugal and Spain and letters of credit issued by the Mendes company enabled these Jews to transfer their funds to their new homes. The House of Mendes, under Doña Gracia, dealt with Henry II of France, Henry VIII of England, Charles V of Spain and the Holy Roman Empire, Queen Marie, Regent of the Low Countries, Popes Paul III and Paul IV and Suleiman the Magnificent, Sultan of the Ottoman Empire. These dealings involved commercial activities, loans and bribes. Payments to the Pope delayed the establishment of an Inquisition in Portugal.

When it became difficult for her to live in Lisbon, she managed to escape to Antwerp, where her brother-in-law, Diogo ran the Low Countries branch of the House of Mendes. There she continued her efforts on behalf of the secret Jews. In time it became unsafe for her to remain in Antwerp and once again she had to escape. This time to Venice and later another escape to Ferrara.

Again, pressure from Catholic authorities made it unsafe for her to remain in Italy. Again she escaped. This time, with the aid of the Sultan, to Constantinople. There she shed her Christian veneer and openly identified with Judaism. While residing in The Ottoman Empire, she called for a boycott of Ancona where Jews had been executed. For the remainder of her life she continued her support of crypto Jews and endowed Jewish centers of learning in Tiberias and elsewhere.

Until recently the main resources for one who wanted to learn about Doña Gracia was Cecil Roth's History *Doña Gracia and the House of Nasi* or the fictionalized novel *The Ghost of Hanna Mendes* by Naomi Ragen. Cecil Roth has produced several important books on Sephardic and crypto Jewish history and his book on Doña Gracia was considered to be the definitive one.

Andrée Aelion Brook started from the foundation set by Cecil Roth and expanded on it. She came to the 2002 SCJS in San Diego and delivered a paper on her research for the book, *The*

THE MARRANO LEGACY:

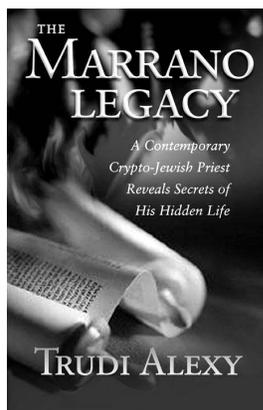
New Book by Trudi Alexy

Trudi Alexy's first book, *The Mezuzah in the Madonna's Foot* was well received critics and has become a standard in the field of crypto-Jewish studies. Most members of the SCJS are familiar with it. Trudi has been an active member of this society and has delivered papers at several of the conferences.

The Mezuzah in the Madonna's Foot included the story of a contemporary Catholic priest who is secretly Jewish.



Trudi Alexy



One male member in each generation of his family became a priest so that the other family members could confess to him without fear of exposing their Jewishness.

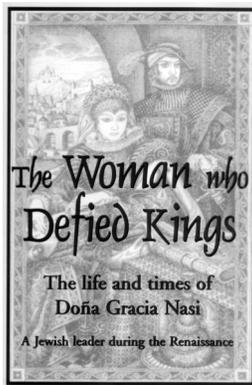
The Marrano Legacy shows that the priest of the first book was not unique. For several years, Trudi has been in communication with another priest with a similar story. Now that story can be made public. The new book will be available soon and we hope to review it in the near future.

Woman Who Defied Kings, The Life and Times of Doña Gracia Nasi. Brooks went beyond the work of Cecil Roth. She found, copied and had translated important documents from all over Europe and the Middle East. Personal letters, commercial contracts, diplomatic reports even Vatican archival papers were found.

We now have a more complete view of Doña Gracia and her times. We learn more about the genealogy of the Mendes and Nasi families. We find that Doña married her uncle. We have a better understanding of how payments were made to royal houses, how secret Jews transferred their funds and how bribes were paid. Gracia becomes more human. Her personal life, her relations with her sister, daughter, son-in-law and brother-in-law come into better focus though some conclusions are base more on conjecture than research. We even gain a better knowledge of the personalities of the Christian and Moslem monarchs of that time.

Brooks who has written for the New York Times and other periodicals, writes in the style of a journalist and, as a result, her book is more readable than that of Cecil Roth.

The Woman Who Defied Kings, is a welcome addition to our library.



SOCIETY BOARD MEETS FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING

By Mona Hernandez

The SCJS Board of Directors met in Scottsdale, AZ, December 14-15 for its semiannual meeting and to plan the organization's upcoming events in 2003.

President Art Benveniste summarized the year's accomplishments and gave the Treasurer's report for Rabbi Joshua Stampfer. The treasury now exceeds \$9,000.

Stan Hordes, VP/Programs, announced that Seth Kunin, as Conference Program Chair will seek out more diversity among speakers. Seth will issue a Call for Papers. Program ideas for the San Antonio conference, August 3-5, include a reading of the play *The Secret Thing* by Elaine Romero and a video showing of Myron Fink's opera, *The Conquistador*.

Stan described plans for Rabbi Dennis Sasso, previous speaker at a society conference, to meet with New Mexico anusim in late spring. He will also be giving a public lecture. Although this is not an SCJS sponsored event, we will call attention to it in *HaLapid* and on our website.

Randy Baca, VP/Membership, announced that we have doubled our membership in one year to over 180. She shared her vision of 300 by next year and 1000 in five years.

Dolly Sloan, VP/Communications, recommended upgrading the quality of paper for *HaLapid* and experimenting with color when feasible, with color. She requested a publication budget so she would know cost parameters. Dolly will do a cost analysis of ways to improving photo quality. She also proposed that the Society publish a scholarly journal as a long term goal. The board asked her to explore the cost and other factors in publishing the proceeding of the annual conference.

Orfa Salinas, Board Member at Large, will be coordinating our website mailbox and guestbook. The website has been successful and responses to it are increasing.

Flavio Montoya, Secretary, reported on his efforts to set up an archive of all society correspondence and publications.

Gloria Trujillo, Immediate Past President and Conference Chair, reported on hotel plans for the 2003 San Antonio, Conference. She has been working with Local Chair Orfa and member Lupe Garcia to secure the site. Conference committee members are Orfa, Lupe, Walter Cohen, Leo Greenblum and Bill Munter. Bill will contact a local congregation to host Shabbat services the Friday before. The board will recommend to the August membership meeting that the 2004 conference be scheduled for the second part of June.

Dolly suggested that we form regional clusters within our membership in local areas such as Texas and Colorado and New Mexico to build *esprit de corps*. Orfa requested outreach to better inform Ashkenazim about crypto Jews.

We are moving forward with the application for 501.c.3 non-profit status and should be receiving it soon.

The DNA studies committee will be meeting sometime in March. Members are Flavio, Abe Lavender, Gloria, Seth Ward, Roberta Weisgrau and Max Valerio. The board discussed a possible mini conference. Flavio and the committee will discuss dates and place and report to the board. The San Antonio conference will feature a panel on DNA. We hope to assemble experts in the field. Randy suggested that we seek a grant for study.

New Business included an evaluation of the organization's history, its mission statement and potential programs. Ideas for the future are an endowed university chair; grants

for genealogical, DNA and other research projects; partnerships with other organizations and a permanent repository for our archives at a scholarly institution.

Support for the Belmonte, Portugal anusim community was discussed. It was clarified that although we cannot support religious activities, we can sponsor secular ones such as trips to Belmonte and fund raising for computers. Flavio and Dolly described present efforts along these lines.

The strategic planning meeting on Sunday was led by Jan Elsea, Ph.D. and focused on SCJS' achievements, concerns/barriers, its future and its mission statement. Jan emphasized that a mission statement is not carved in stone and can be changed. It presently reads "The Society serves the following purposes: the fostering of research and networking of information and ideas into the historical and contemporary development of Crypto-Jews of Iberian Origin." Change in the wording of the mission will be proposed to the membership at the annual business meeting. Jan recommended rearranging the statement to read "The Society focuses on the historical and contemporary development of crypto Jews of Iberian origins through research, information, and the opportunity to learn & share."

It was agreed that the term "Crypto Jews" is appropriate in describing *conversos* who migrated from Spain and Portugal to the Spanish colonies. Board members were asked their concerns about the Society. The resulting list included lack of trust, respect and cooperation.

Jan used a road map as a metaphor in determining the society's direction, where it had been and where it is going. Since its establishment in 1991, SCJS has evolved and grown. It has made tremendous progress in its objective to teach all who are interested in this fascinating, little known, and misunderstood segment in Hispanic/Latino history

Goals discussed were: providing a welcoming environment, broadening the geographic sites of Crypto Judaic studies and scholars, establishing organizational systems, membership expansion, establishing clusters or chapters, receiving grants and fund raising, sponsoring historical and genealogical research, and providing press services such as kits.

Editor's Note: This review of the meeting was written by Mona Hernandez, long-time SCJS member, who attended as observer. She writes that "I am grateful to the individuals who made the decision to establish this organization; without it, I would not have had the opportunity to learn about my true identity, my Sephardic history, and about the many customs and traditions that make me the person that I am. Our membership has grown to include historians and descendants of the crypto Jews. Hence, we are all pioneers in this quest to share with love and respect our knowledge and discoveries of a virtually unknown and almost lost group of people who unfortunately were persecuted for their beliefs and way of life. Therefore, what attracted us to the Society for Crypto Judaic Studies? For me it was to learn/discover who we are and to share/network with one another."