

THE PORTUGUESE MARRANOS COMMITTEE.

A contribution to an unknown history

Ana Gabriela da Silva Figueiredo

Bolseira de doutoramento da Universidade de Lisboa

The international press and the Portuguese Marranos

The creation of the Portuguese Marranos Committee stemmed from a series of initiatives, both national and international, among which we highlight the work of the Polish engineer Samuel Schwarz and the contacts of Professor Adolfo Benarus, to raise awareness of the public opinion.

The advice that the doctor Max Nordau gave to Samuel Schwarz – “*Je ne doute pas que vous communiquerez au monde leurs résultats dans un avenir pas trop éloigné*”¹ – was realised with the publishing of the book *Os Cristãos-Novos em Portugal no Século XX*, in 1925, but before it was published, we can find news about the existence of Crypto-Jews.² Cardoso de Bethencourt (1861-1938) identified, 20 years before Samuel Schwarz, the existence of Crypto-Jewish communities and the continuity of Jewish traditions such as lighting candles in Friday evening, keeping the Shabbat or the Day of Atonement.³ In 1912, Chicago’s *The Sentinel* published

1 Schwarz, 1925, v.

2 The first references to Crypto-Jews in the 19th century are by Israël Solomon, who was in Lisbon in 1819 (Schechter 1917, 72).

3 Bethencourt 1903, 260-264.

the news of Nahum Slouscz's trip to Portugal, and he said that the Marranos "still regard themselves as members of the Jewish race".⁴ Some years later, the *Paix et droit* registered the impressions of Ariel Bension, in which he referred to the fear and discrimination inflicted upon the Marranos.⁵

The discovery of communities who followed the Jewish religious practices was good news. At least, the international disclosure provided hope to those witnessing the rising persecution of Jews in central Eastern Europe. Complaints expressed by *Paix et droit*, that, at the same time, wrote about the "adventure" of the Portuguese "brothers", in a clear account of the resilience and unswerving faith of the "the stiff-necked"⁶ people.

On 25 June 1924, the *Jewish Chronicle*⁷ informed its readers that the Lisbon Jewish Community had written to the Chief Rabbi of Israel asking for advice regarding the matter of the Marranos. On 8 August 1924, the letter was published: "Marranos' Letter to Jerusalem Rabbinate", preceded by a text by the editor which stressed the cultural and scientific contribution of the Jewish community in the Iberian Peninsula and contextualised the appearance of the Marranos:

The letter they have addressed to the Chief Rabbinate of Jerusalem is a living document. It tells the one who will pierce beneath its words for the spirit underlying it, so much to account for the deathlessness of Israel and the abiding power of Jewish national sentiment and Jewish Religious faith.⁸

The signers of this letter, whom we did not identify, attested the centuries-old suffering, the identity ambiguity, and indestructible faith, but also the hope of returning to the Land of Israel and the immortality of its people:

4 "The Marranos in Portugal" 1912, 12.

5 "Ce qui me frappa tout d'abord c'est que la crainte s'est perpétuée chez eux. On dirait que la hantise des Inquisiteurs les poursuit encore, et leur vie religieuse se passe dans une atmosphère de mystère. Dans la contrée on sait cependant assez généralement qu'ils sont de descendance juive, et, à l'école, les enfants traitent leurs petites camarades de 'sales juifs' tout comme en Russie et en Pologne" ("Les Marranos au Portugal" 1921, 15).

6 Ex. 33:5.

7 "Jewish Proselytes. Marranos and Bedouins" 1924, 15.

8 "The Day. Marranos return" 1924, 6. This two news and the letter of the Marranos was publicised in French by the newspaper *L'aurore, journal d'informations juives*, of Cairo, whose readers were mostly descendants of Greek and Turkish Jews. At the same time, it informed of the international effort regarding the support to other Jews "lost" in time, in the reorganisation of a society created in Shanghai, in 1900, to support the Kaifeng Jews and the request of the conversion to Judaism of the *al Shmalni* Bedouin tribe ("Les retours de l'histoire" 1924, 1).

The baptism of our forbears [sic] was only pretended because of the terror of the Inquisition and the Auto-da-fé. In the depths of our hearts, however, we, their descendants, have maintained our love and our loyalty to our Jewish people. . . . The Jewish laws have become strange to us. . . . It pains us that we do not understand the words of these Hebrew commands. We Marranos never cease to speak of our return to Jerusalem. . . . We wish to participate openly and honestly in the lot of our people throughout the world, for we belong to it by blood, race and spiritual life.⁹

In this letter, they pointed out Lisbon Jewish Community's reservations¹⁰ and their dislike at the use of the term "Marranos" which they considered to be pejorative as it was associated to a condition of hypocrisy, to a "make-believe" and a lie, from which they wanted to free themselves.

Two letters with different content which astonished Wilfred S. Samuel, a member of the London Spanish and Portuguese Jew Congregation and of the Jewish Historical Society, a researcher of the history of the London Sephardic community,¹¹ who read the news and through an officer of the British Mandate Government in Jerusalem, managed to get a copy of the letter. He then verified that the content of the letter he had in hands was substantially different from the one reported by the *Jewish Chronicle*.¹²

The letter had two questions: one of a religious nature – how to deal with the people that contacted the Lisbon Jewish Community and wanted to circumcise their sons –; and another of a political and social nature – the growing anti-

9 "Jewish Proselytes. Marranos' letter to Jerusalem rabbinate" 1924, 17-18.

10 These reservations were justified by the "lack of historic continuity" Esther Mucznik explains. She prefers to speak of the "return of Judaism", in the 19th century, and not of the "return of the Jews". Despite the family names of a remote Sephardic origin, the Jews that came from Morocco and Gibraltar came to Portugal looking for better living conditions, and not for a question of memory or consciousness of their origin. They were people of "a cultural level above average, they knew how to read, write, and spoke, beyond liturgical Hebrew, English, Arabic, and Haketia, the Judeo-Spanish-Moroccan dialect. They had numerous international contacts; not only due to commercial activities but also due to family ties that they had all around the world. These factors explain their rapid economic and cultural growth". Two completely different realities that explain why the Marranos felt like "strangers" when seeking Lisbon Jewish Community's help (Mucznik 1999).

11 A successful entrepreneur in the world of gramophones and musical instruments, a business he inherited from his family, *Barnett Samuel and Sons Limited*. As a military man, he performed duties connected to the Intelligence Service. As from 1933, the persecution of German and Austrian Jews, who in the meantime had arrived in London, made Wilfred Samuel work full-time as a volunteer at the Jewish Refugees Committee created by Otto Schiff. According to Edgar Samuel, Wilfred Samuel's consolation was to go work on Sundays at the Jewish museum in London where he was the director, this served as an antidote for all the barbarism (Samuel 1987, 246-258). In 1924, Wilfred. S. Samuel published the book *The First London Synagogue of the Resettlement*. Lucien Wolf and Dr. Gaster proposed a vote of appreciation for the research carried out by Wilfred Samuel who, at a meeting at the Jewish Historical Society, shared the results of his research ("Jewish Historical Society" 1924, 13).

12 Samuel 2007, 173.

-Semitic feeling which was felt in Europe. Two issues which denoted the more than justified concern and the religious complexity of the matter. How can we explain the existence of two letters from the same sender but whose content is so different? A mere mistake of the journalist regarding the sender? The letter sent by the Lisbon Jewish Community was published a year later in the Dutch newspaper *De vrijdagavond*¹³ and, much later, in 1946, in the newspaper *Ha-Lapid (O Facbo)*, with a laconic comment “the readers may acknowledge a little-known document”.¹⁴ For Wilfred Samuel, Rabbi Jacob Meir’s reply was “clear and impressive rule. But the political programme suggested was less impressive”.¹⁵

The Marranos were Jews and the Lisbon Jewish Community should circumcise their sons and have no fear as to them, in the future, remaining indifferent to Judaism. As for the concern that the mass conversion would arouse a wave of anti-Semitism, it was suggested that the organisations responsible for the emigration towards Palestine should be contacted. The Rabbi asked for details regarding the moral and financial situation and the number of individuals wishing to leave.¹⁶ This reply would trigger comments that the return of Marranos to Judaism was more of a Jewish national matter rather than a religious one.¹⁷

This answer began a new phase which demanded a lot of work and financial resources. Adolfo Benarus published, in the *Jewish Guardian*¹⁸ and the *Jewish Chronicle*, appeals to international aid:

We want to draw public attention to the Crypto-Jews of Portugal, more commonly known as Marranos. Portugal is today the only nation where they still exist. . . . we are desirous of helping them to the utmost extent of our ability . . . the best course to take would be to have a Jewish school in Lisbon, with board and lodging, where their children might be educated. Unfortunately, we are not in a situation to do this alone . . .¹⁹

13 Letter published in an article by D. S. Jessurum Cardozo regarding the problematic of the Marranos’ identity and the expectation upon Lucien Wolf’s visit to Portugal (Cardozo 1925, 103-105).

14 “Documento sobre Maranus” 1946, 5-6.

15 Samuel 2007, 175.

16 Letter from Chief Rabbi Jacob Meir to the President of the Lisbon synagogue, apud Samuel, 2007, 181.

17 Cardozo 1925, 105. J. S. da Silva Rosa was chief-editor, he published in 1925 the book *Geschiedenis der Portugeesche Joden te Amsterdam 1593-1925*. In the foreword from the 14th of May, he tells the reader that his work addressed the fact of the inexistence of a History of the Portuguese Jews in Amsterdam. His aim was to arouse the interest of the members of the community about their past. We believe that this book and that of Samuel Schwarz published that same year aroused the interest regarding the Portuguese reality of the Marranos and the memory of a common past (Rosa 1925, VII-VIII).

18 Letter published on 23 January 1925 in the *Jewish Guardian* to which we did not have access.

19 “Correspondence Epitomised” 1925, 17-18. Cairo’s newspaper *L’aurora, journal d’informations juives*, published a letter addressed to the Chief Rabbi of France Rev. Israël Lévy by the Lisbon Jewish Community in

The international community was “extremely” astonished when, in January 1925, it learned of the existence of Crypto-Jews. The fact was not totally ignored, but there was no hard data regarding numbers and situation.²⁰

We feel that the expression “extremely” which was used is decontextualized because the international Jewish press had been mentioning Portuguese Crypto-Jews since the beginning of the century.²¹ However, other more consensual and serious requests prioritized the congregations’ interventions, such as a report by someone as distinguished as Lucien Wolf, that would clarify the situation.²²

Mr. Wolf’s Marranos

The Anglo-Jewish Association, the Alliance Israélite Universelle,²³ and the Spanish & Portuguese Jews’ Congregation chose Lucien Wolf²⁴ to assess the religious and social conditions and identify the necessities of the Crypto-Jewish communities in Portugal. In January 1926, Wolf arrived in Portugal, on a trip sponsored by Wilfred S. Samuel,²⁵ who decided something needed to be done regarding the Marranos.²⁶ He stayed in Portugal for four weeks and visited several cities and villages (Lisbon, Guarda, Belmonte, Caria, Covilhã, Coimbra and Oporto). He was 68 at the time and the trip was difficult, considering the incipient means of transport and road networks in the interior of the country.

February 1925, requesting financial aid for a school: “L’éducation juive de leurs enfants devint leur principal souci. Les enfants sont désormais tous circoncis. Mais les parents tiennent à ce que leurs enfants soient instruits dans leur religion. Malheureusement, nous n’avons pas d’école juive qui puisse les recevoir. Nous avons une petite école, de création récente, elle ne possède d’internat. Les enfants marranes viennent tous de l’extérieur. Il nous faudrait un internat pour leur permettre de fréquenter régulièrement les classes. Après quelques années passées à l’école, les enfants, revenus près des parents, seraient les meilleurs missionnaires juifs” (“Les marranes du Portugal” 1925, 3).

20 Roth (1932) 2001, 247; Wolf 1926a, 134-136.

21 “When one sees an attempt to re-establish the Mosaic Law among the Jews of Kai-fen-fu, one asks oneself if the same work could not be undertaken, with more success among the small groups of New Christians in the North of Portugal” (Bethencourt 1903, 263).

22 Cardozo 1925, 105.

23 Founded in 1860, it aimed to promote the education of the Jewish population, mainly in the Balkans and the Middle East, and to combat anti-Semitism (Cf. André Kaspi. 2010).

24 Wolf 1926a, 134-136.

25 Wilfred S. Samuel “generously sponsored the expenses of a research mission to Portugal by the veteran diplomat Lucien Wolf” (Roth [1932] 2001, 247).

26 “He decided that something ought to be done to reconvert the Portuguese secret Jews to mainstream Judaism, and approached Laurie Magnus, the Editor of *The Jewish Guardian*. He proposed to Magnus that the Anglo-Jewish Association send their secretary, Lucien Wolf, to Portugal to investigate the problem and to report on what action should be taken and offered to pay for the trip on condition that is donation be kept anonymous” (Samuel 2007, 175).

The visit to the communities was carefully prepared by the Lisbon Jewish Community. Adolfo Benarus wrote to Paul Goodman, at the time secretary of the Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue, tranquilising him as to the diplomat's reception.²⁷ The acknowledgements Wolf made at the end of his report to Moses Amzalak, Adolfo Benarus, but in particular to Samuel Schwarz, whose book had made him understand the Marranos, are testimonies of the warm reception he received.²⁸ Lucien Wolf discussed the matter with the leaders of the Lisbon Jewish Community, with the President of the Republic, with the Prime Minister and other important individuals of the national *intelligentsia*. He met Barros Basto, whom he found friendly and trustworthy.²⁹

In London, at the meeting of the Anglo-Jewish Association Board,³⁰ he made his first declaration and put forward a proposal of intervention as to what he considered to be a work of the utmost importance for the international Jewish community. He evoked the duty of memory and the interest for the history of Judaism: "beyond doubt that Marranism still existed, though in a somewhat degenerate form".³¹

Despite the affinity he showed with S. Schwarz's enthusiasm and study, he did not agree as to the number of Marranos, 10,000, which he considered to be excessive and to the decision of opening a school, in Lisbon, for their children.³²

D'Avigdor Goldsmid, Chairman of the Board of the Anglo-Jewish Association, asked for a report before the final decision.

Wolf's assessment referred the complexity of the matter, namely in what concerned the ambiguity of the definition of the concept Marrano, which he inserted between inverted commas in the title.³³ The restraints were many: the

27 LMA, Postcard from Adolfo Benarus addressed to Paul Goodman, 10 September 1925.

28 Wolf 1926b, 20.

29 Wolf 1926b, 17.

30 The report is presented on the 7th of March at the Great Western Hotel. Some of the members who would, later on, be part of the London committee (Portuguese Marranos Committee) were present: d'Avigdor Goldsmid, E. N. Adler, Joseph Meller, Claude G. Montefiore, Leonard G. Montefiore and Joseph Prag. ("The Marranos in Portugal" 1926, 18-19).

31 Wolf 1926b, 4-5.

32 Samuel Schwarz remained firm in his idea of creating a school. A letter dated 7 July 1928, addressed to Silvain Halph of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, requested: "*Nous voudrions en outre fonder ici une école juive avec internat pour l'éducation des enfants marranes de province. Est-ce que l'Alliance ne serait pas en état de nous prêter son bienveillant concours pour cette œuvre scolaire juive d'un si haut intérêt national?*" (Schwarz apud Livia Parnes 1994, 22).

33 Wolf 1926b, 4-5.

forgetfulness, the ignorance, the assimilation, the mixed marriages, and the number of Marranos seeking help.³⁴ However, he pointed out another potentially interesting phenomenon, that of the “semi-Marranos” who were part of the financial and industrial *bourgeoisie*, the “free-thinkers” and learned people.³⁵ Thus the urgency in organising the communities and the building of synagogues that would attract a group long distanced from the Catholic faith, but with affinities with Judaism.

The plan of action proposed and followed by Portuguese Marranos Committee did not remove Lisbon Jewish Community’s importance in the movement which would soon be triggered for two reasons: it was a work of national scope and because men of action and undeniable value were part of it, such as Moses Amzalak, Adolfo Benarus and Samuel Schwarz. But the proximity of the regions of the Marranos (Trás-os-Montes, Beira Alta and Beira Interior) called for the centre of the “Work of Redemption” to be in Oporto and its leader to be the president of the small and recently established Oporto Jewish Community, the only Marrano, according to Lucien Wolf, that in the last 150 years had re-entered the Synagogue. A decision which did not please everyone.

On the 16th of July, Lucien Wolf wrote to Artur Carlos de Barros Basto informing him about the creation of a committee whose aim was to help Portuguese Marranos return to official Judaism.³⁶

The Portuguese Marranos Committee

The Board of Elders of the Spanish & Portuguese Jews Congregation, on the 30th of June, and the Executive Board of the Anglo-Jewish Association, on 11 July 1926, decided on the creation of the Portuguese Marranos Committee. They decided on a financial aid of £100 for the initial expenses and an annual grant of £50 for a period of five years. Members of the respective congregations

34 “In spite of the Jewish interest which has be aroused among them by the wonderful energy and enthusiasm of M. Schwartz, not more than three or four have manifested the slightest desire to re-enter the Synagogue” (Wolf 1926b, 14).

35 Wolf 1926b, 14.

36 [Basto] 1927, 7.

were also designated. For the former, Rev. David Bueno de Mesquita, Sir Francis A. Montefiore (absent from this meeting), Leon B. Castello, Eustace A. Lindo, Edward Lumbrozo Mocatta, and Jonathan Pinto. For the latter, Leonard G. Montefiore, Joseph Prag, d'Avigdor-Goldsmith, and Elkan N. Adler.³⁷

At the first meeting, on 14 July 1926, at the headquarters of the Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue (in London, Henage Lane, Bevis Marks), there were other individualities who were present and became associated with the committee by invitation: Lucien Wolf, Cecil Roth, Lionel David Barnett, M. L. Ethinghausen, Wilfred S. Samuel, Morris Duparc, and Isaac Cansino. He was not present at the meeting, but it was registered in the minute that the representative of the Alliance Israélite Universelle was Chief Rabbi Israël Lévy.³⁸

Action strategies were prioritised: the choice of a dully-qualified Rabbi to perform functions at Oporto Jewish Community and divulging, to Sephardic communities of several countries, a newsletter whose content referred to Lucien Wolf's report in attachment.³⁹ The Marranos' suffering stood out as if the pain they experienced were the key to the integration within the people of Israel with no theological debates.⁴⁰

Paul Goodman, the honorary secretary of the Spanish & Portuguese Congregation and, later on, Oporto Jewish Community's 2nd honorary Vice-President, had a fundamental role in divulging the movement. Described as being "a thriving writer and active organiser",⁴¹ his dedication was registered in the

37 LMA, Minute Book, 14 July 1926.

38 Later, in a minute dated 13 July 1927, it was agreed that the associations subscribing to the movement would have to choose a representative (Alliance Israélite Universelle; Anglo-Jewish Association; Israelitische Allianz, Vienna; Spanish & Portuguese Congregation, Shaar Ashamaim, London; Spanish & Portuguese Congregation, Manchester; Spanish & Portuguese Congregation, Shearith Israel, New York; Spanish & Portuguese Congregation, Mikveh Israel, Philadelphia; Temple Beth-El, New York, USA; Preussischer Landesverband Jüdischer Gemeiden, Berlin; Verband Bayerischer Israelitischer Gemeiden, Munich and Jewish Community of Vienna). The following members were appointed: Shearith Israel, from New York, H. S. Hendricks; Mikveh Israel, Philadelphia, A. Simon W. Rosenbach; Preussischer Landesverband Jüdischer Gemeiden, Dr. Alfred Lee; and of the Israelitische Allianz Zu Wien, Dr. Kaminka (LAM, Minute Book, 13 July 1927).

39 The newsletter, the first of many, called upon financial aid. The ones responsible considered that for the work to be successful, at the very least £10,000 would be necessary. Five thousand would be distributed along five years, after which, they believed, the Marrano communities would be self-sufficient (LAM, Portuguese Marranos Committee Correspondence).

40 "On sait que les souffrances véries au nom du judaïsme ont justifié l'intégration des marranes à la diaspora et participent de cette culture du martyre qui est fondamentale dans la Nação . . . la douleur devient un critère d'appartenance et de prestige au sein de la société judaïsant?" (Muchnik 2016, 3).

41 *Dedicação Solene da Sinagoga Kadoorie Mekor H'aim* 1938, 4.

committee's minutes, in the newspaper *Ha-Lapid (O Facho)*,⁴² and in the brochure *Dedicação Solene da Sinagoga Kadoorie Mekor Haïm*. He was responsible for raising funds to support the complex work; he composed and sent newsletters, press releases, annual reports, and miscellaneous correspondence in order to inform the subscribers, or potential supporters, about the progress of the "Work of Redemption". But, more important, he was a mediator between the international Jewish community and the Oporto Jewish Community. He managed conflicts and made decisions, with the endorsement of the other elements of the committee who respected his opinions, namely that of reiterating their trust in captain Barros Basto when it became necessary.

The Portuguese Marranos Committee meetings were held, on average, twice a year. In the years 1931 and 1935, the committee met three and four times respectively, a fact which was due, in the first year, to the development and somewhat success of the movement, and in the second to serious internal dissensions. As from 1938 and the following years, with the breaking out of the 2nd World War, the committee did not meet, or if it did, it was in an irregular way.

There were moments of great enthusiasm – admissions, donations, progresses on the ground, the opening of the Mekor Haïm Synagogue – which were overshadowed by periods of great tension: the worsening of anti-Semitism in Europe, the opposition of the conservative faction of the Catholic Church, the financial difficulties, the internal rivalries, the differences of opinion with the *Nederlandsch Marranen Comité*⁴³ and, mainly, the anonymous letters that destroyed the Barros Basto's life.⁴⁴

42 [Barros] 1929, 3.

43 Created in 1930 under the leadership of Mordechai Van Son.

44 Cf. Mea et Steinhart 1996, 125-161.

The composition of the Committee

In 1926, Portuguese Marranos Committee's board, which was unanimously approved, was composed by Edward Lumbrozo Mocatta, the President; Leonard G. Montefiore, the Vice-President; Joseph Prag,⁴⁵ honorary Treasurer, and the honorary Secretary Paul Goodman.

Joseph Prag died in 1929, this led to L. B. Castello being appointed treasurer. Joseph Meller was then chosen by the Anglo-Jewish Association to become a member of the committee.⁴⁶ Following Leonard Montefiore's resignation, he will occupy the post of Vice-President and, in 1935, with Sir Francis Montefiore's death, he would be appointed President.

Dr. Ettinghausen resigned in 1930. Goodman asked him to reconsider, as his services were invaluable.⁴⁷ The following year, the committee was in mourning for the death of Lucien Wolf whose work was considered priceless.⁴⁸ Two other highly regarded people passed away: Eustace A. Lindo, who chaired the first meeting, and Jonathan Pinto.

That same year, Mordechai Van Son, the President of the recently created *Nederlandsch Marranen Comité*, was elected member of the London committee and was present at the November meeting. A situation which would not last long due to the differences between the two committees.⁴⁹

Also invited, Joseph Shalom Elmaleh⁵⁰ and the entrepreneur Edwin Edwards, who was frequently in Oporto.

45 He was one of the pioneers of Zionism. An active member of several communities and associations, he was a member of the Anglo-Jewish Association Council. An advocate for the rights of the Jews, he published several articles on the colonisation of Palestine ("Joseph Prag, English Jewish Leader Dies" 1929, 2).

46 LMA, Minute Book, 30 April 1930.

47 In this letter, Dr. Ettinghausen is informed by Goodman of the creation of the Dutch committee and of objectives, "under influential auspices". He regretted that the movement's annual report, widely divulged, failed to raise not more than £100, £50 of which came from M. D. Sasson & C.^o. Despite having resigned, Ettinghausen contributed with £50 (LMA, Letter from Paul Goodman to Ettinghausen, 1 May, 1937).

48 LMA, Minute Book, 27 January 1931.

49 Following his visit to Portugal and meeting in London, Van Son, presented, in the name of the Dutch committee, a proposal to reorganise the Oporto community under the responsibility of rabbi Jacob Shebabo, the Hebrew teacher. He believed: "the promotion of Judaism among the Marranos could best be effected by the education of a number of Marrano children in Lisbon and by the work being entrusted to a Committee in Lisbon, which was intended to include Capitão Barros Basto." The London committee rejects this proposal. Unanimously, the members agreed that the demands were not possible to fulfil, unacceptable and they wrote Van Son an answer. This was the beginning of the dissension between the two committees (LMA, Minute Book, 16 November 1931 and 23 March 1932).

50 The brother of Rabbi Leon Haïm Elmaleh from Philadelphia."

However, it was Wilfred Samuel's resignation that had the most impact on the committee's life. The accusations made against captain Barros Basto by Leon and Alfonso Cassuto led to a schism. On 8 December 1937, a few days from the opening of the Oporto synagogue, Paul Goodman invited Wilfred Samuel to be present at a moment of great emotion and pride:

In spite of the fact that you have chosen to be no longer actively associated with the Portuguese Marranos Committee, I feel certain that you would desire to receive this intimation and invitation. For, permit me to remind you, it was at your house that the idea of a benefactor on a generous scale was originally discussed and that this led ultimately to the Kadoorie Synagogue being erected.

History will also recall that yours was the incentive that led to the work being undertaken by this Committee at the instance of the late Lucien Wolf, and that you then and for years afterwards very generously supported it.

The responsibility for carrying on this work, which I accepted in the hope that I would thus serve a cause in which we were both deeply interested, has been very much greater than I had expected . . .⁵¹

His absence was felt and, in the committee's 12th-anniversary report, a special acknowledgement was registered:

The cause promoted by the Portuguese Marranos Committee owes debts of gratitude to the various bodies that initiated the Movement by their financial support and to those private individuals . . . Mr. Wilfred S. Samuel was among those who initiated the Movement by a financial contribution and generously supported it by a subscription of 30 per annum for a period of ten years.⁵²

The relationship between the two men remained cordial, so we are led to believe. At Goodman's eldest son's wedding, Maurice to Vera Appleberg, among many guests we could find Mr and Mrs. Wilfred S. Samuel.⁵³

51 LMA, Letter from Paul Goodman to Wilfred Samuel, 8 December.

52 Portuguese Marranos Committee 1938, 17.

53 "Casamentos Elegantes" 1936, 5.

The committee's reports and the financial statement

The annual reports were fundamental elements that responded with hard data to the initiatives and the fulfilments *in situ* promoted by Barros Basto. Cecil Roth's visits in 1929 and Paul Goodman's in 1931 to Trás-os-Montes contributed to the understanding of the difficulties reported by the captain: ignorance, fear, the difficulties in communicating, and, with the passing of the years, the worsening of the political situation, and the clerical fanaticism made an already in itself complex work even harder.

A month prior to the committee's 4th meeting, Paul Goodman transmitted anxiety in the letter he wrote Barros Basto:

I feel that no time should be lost in setting up the Synagogue and, likewise, in submitting to the Committee a further plan of work outside the Oporto Congregation . . . perhaps you might be so good as to let me know what your plans are not only in Oporto but in some of the surrounding Marranos settlements.⁵⁴

Portuguese Marranos Committee needed hard data that would justify the donations and the admissions of the subscribers. A week later, Barros Basto reported the result of his trips in Trás-os-Montes (Bragança, Miranda do Douro, Moncorvo, Vilarinho de Mogadouro, Lagoaça, Vimioso, Vila-Flôr) and also to Foz Côa and Meda. The meetings with Crypto-Jews, the ceremonies, the conferences and the publishing of two issues of the *Ha-Lapid (O Facho)* newspaper completed an initial phase of a work in progress. The idea of creating a school "where general and particular Jewish instruction could be given" was greeted with enthusiasm by the members of the London committee.⁵⁵

Financial aid to the "Work of Redemption" was the key to all the problems, said Cecil Roth. The expenses were many and the communities had no conditions to support themselves without help from abroad. The requests for financial aid came from the Oporto Jewish Community, from Bragança and even from private individuals. Books, magazines, newspapers, Torah scrolls, sacred objects and

54 LMA, Letter from Paul Goodman written to Barros Basto, 2 June 1927.

55 LMA, Letter from Barros Basto to Paul Goodman, 13 June 1927.

schools were needed.⁵⁶ Portugal was a very poor country and the illiteracy rates were over 70 % in the intervened regions.⁵⁷

Between 1926 and 1939, the Spanish & Portuguese Jews' Congregation, the Anglo-Jewish Association and the Alliance Israélite Universelle contributed several years (14, 10 and 9 respectively), with £50 a year. The first two complemented the support with an initial £100 and the latter with an allowance to captain Barros Basto.⁵⁸

Following the first release, the first donations arrived from the Mikveh Israel Congregation of Philadelphia in November 1926. Reverend Leon H. Elmaleh was, from the beginning, an enthusiast of the work, which he divulged in his letters to the members of the community, in the synagogue and in the articles published in the newspaper *Exponent*. He had a list of also enthusiastic donors and, despite the financial requests and commitments, namely with the Joint Distribution Committee, he believed that the community would contribute with \$500 for six years, totalling \$3,000. This initiative and other similar one encouraged the committee.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, the donations were arriving from all around the world, including New Zealand and Australia, under the initiative of Wilfred S. Samuel.⁶⁰ But also the refusals, justified by commitments and financial difficulties of many congregations, came one after the other.⁶¹

The following graph, drafted based on the financial report from 1926 to 1939, shows how the annual donations and subscriptions made by private individuals registered a high contribution, the majority during the first two years of the movement.⁶² This evidence testifies the enthusiasm and the coverage that ensued. The decrease in the donations, as from the 30s, resulted from the severe economic and financial depression raging the world and the emergency in helping

56 Roth 1929, 4.

57 Direcção Geral de Estatística 1933, 56-79.

58 LMA, Minute Book, 16 November 1931.

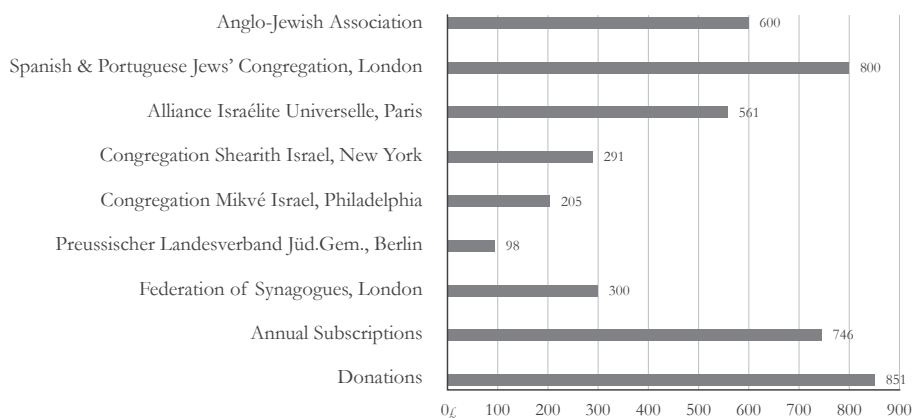
59 This subscription would not take place, not because of L. H. Elmaleh's unwillingness, as he personally contributed. A. Simon W. Rosenbach substituted him in his functions as spokesman between Congregation Mikveh Israel and the Portuguese Marranos Committee (LMA, Letter from Paul Goodman to Leon H. Elmaleh, 14 January 1927).

60 In 15 April 1930, Paul Goodman wrote to A. W. Hyman and rabbi Francis L. Cohen of the Sydney community requesting the renewal of the annual subscription, sending them the movement's reports.

61 LMA, Minute Book, 13 July 1927.

62 On 16 July 1928, the committee registered a financial statement of £1.670,12,10: donations £889,10,1 and subscriptions £781,2,9 (LMA, Minute Book, 16 July 1928).

the German Jews.⁶³ On the other hand, the differences and the lack of consensus regarding the “Work of Redemption” made Goodman turn to a limited circle of people with the necessary discretion in order to avoid inappropriate publicity.⁶⁴



Graph 1. Financial support: congregations and private⁶⁵

The contribution of the donations at a personal level was very important. Conferences and meetings were organised in order to promote the “Work of Redemption”. The journalist Lilly Jean Javal was an example of this work. She accompanied Barros Basto to Bragança in October 1929.⁶⁶ Later on, in Paris, with Madame Halpern, they managed to raise 88,300 francs to build the synagogue, 84,000 of which in the memory of Dona Gracia Mendes Nassi.⁶⁷

Reverend David de Sola Pool of New York was also moved by what he saw in Oporto. He created a fund for the students of the Theological Institute of Oporto and he promoted conferences:

63 The research made in the *Jewish Historical Press* attests the media coverage of the “Work of Redemption” and its leader, Artur Carlos Barros Basto, between 1925 and 1934.

64 LMA, Letter from Paul Goodman to M. A. Sasson, 9 December 1934.

65 LMA, Cash Statement for the period 6 December 1926 to 31 December 1939, on 6 June 1940 Herbert H. Marks, F.C.A.’s audit. The donations, in pounds, were rounded up to the unit.

66 “Obra do Resgate” 1929, 6.

67 “Vida Comunal” 1930, 8.

As to the Marrano matter, I have been giving and am continuing to give a number of public talks on the Marrano situation, and in each case, contrary to my usual custom, I am asking a fee, and I am turning it over to a fund which I am raising for the Marrano work. . . . Our Congregation is making an appeal among its own members in the near future. The money which I am personally raising I would like to have designated for the support of the Yeshiva, not for the Oporto Synagogue construction fund.⁶⁸

The Bragança community was, in the meantime, financially supported by the Central Conference of American Rabbis with \$500, from the Lucius Littauer fund, and \$250 more from their own funds (approximately £480).⁶⁹

Expenses kept increasing. The building of the Oporto synagogue proved to be very expensive. A special fund was created for its building. Baron Edmond Rothschild contributed with £500, to which £500 were added from the fund created for the purpose by the London committee and £308.16 from private donations.

The success of the contacts made and of the meetings held by Joseph Meller and Morris Duparc with the representatives of the Kadoorie family materialised in the donation by Lawrence and Horace Kadoorie of £4,700. The “miracle” everyone was waiting for and that would allow the largest synagogue in the Iberian Peninsula to be completed.⁷⁰

Reactions to the movement

The support that ensued triggered opposition from those who considered the “Work of Redemption” to be a “novel”, a “luxury item”⁷¹ and an “unfortunate lack of perspectives.”⁷²

Lucien Wolf’s action was criticised in the *Jewish Chronicle* in an article by the “Mentor” who says he does not understand Wolf’s interest in the Portuguese Marranos:

68 LMA, Letter from Rev. David de Sola Pool to Paul Goodman, 24 January 1930.

69 LMA, Cash Statement.

70 On 15 October 1932, Lawrence Kadoorie writes a letter, which was read at the committee’s meeting, in which he stipulates the conditions for the donation to build the Oporto Synagogue (LMA, Minute Book, 30 November 1932).

71 Ben-Ammi 1926, 623.

72 “The Portuguese Marranos” 1927, 5.

Now, as I say, this story is of much interest – it possesses all the alluring elements of romance and history, enhanced by the religious considerations involved, and sharpened by the secrecy which is at the basis of this community's existence. But I confess that I do not understand why Mr. Wolf has exercised his great powers as a writer over these Crypto-Jews of Portugal; nor why he has thrown the piercing searchlight, which is ever at the tip of his facile pen, on just this segment of people Jewish origin. Still less do I understand upon what he justifies the appeal he has made to Anglo-Jewry to salve this almost forgotten remnant of Israel.⁷³

Using sharp criticism, he referred to the problem of assimilation in British society,⁷⁴ the disappearance of religious precepts and rituals and the secretive life they led which surprisingly made them resemble the Portuguese Marranos. “Mentor” believed that if someone would initiate a movement to “redeem” them they would be thankful if they wouldn't.⁷⁵

Rabbi Maurice Lieber, under the pen name Ben-Ammi, was quite critical in the article he wrote, a month after Portuguese Marranos Committee's creation. A fascinating story, he said, whose main characters were not Marranos, but their descendants, who experienced a religion of their own which they believed to be Judaism. Superstition, he said, more than religion and there was no proof that they wanted to return to Judaism. The only viable solution to save the Portuguese Marranos was to have them emigrate to Palestine, Brazil or even the French southeast where agricultural labour was needed and where a lot of Spaniards and Portuguese were already working. Closer to other organised Jewish congregations and communities they'd have a better chance to convert to normative Judaism. This article outraged Barros Basto who replied with “La confession d'un ancien Marrane”.⁷⁶

In the same way, the editor of the *Jewish World* clearly stated not to feel any type of enthusiasm regarding the movement, which he considered to be a matter

73 Mentor 1926, 9.

74 “Be a Jew at home and a man on the street” was Moses Mendelssohn's motto, he defended the integration of Jews in society. The emancipation of the Jews in the 18th century, following the French Revolution and the statement of the trilogy Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, came to recognise the Jews' equality of civic and political rights – “it is necessary to give everything to Jews as individuals, refuse them everything as a nation” – thus spoke Clermont-Tonnerre at the 1789-1791 French Constitutional Assembly. However, the assimilation, from the Jewish point of view, means the loss of the Jewish identity and the absorption in the dominant community. In the 19th and 20th centuries, with the anti-Semitism, the assimilationist currents lost their appeal (Mucznik 2009, 61).

75 Mentor 1926, 9.

76 Basto 1926.

for those who felt a responsibility towards their past; it is, therefore, a personal matter and not a work of interest for Judaism in general:

Frankly, I do not feel much enthusiasm about this appeal and its objects, having regard to the many much more urgent claims just now upon Jewry. The purpose of the movement, it seems to me, is not worth diverting even the comparatively small sum that is asked for. . . . Wherever we look, money is needed for the help of living Judaism, and not least in that centre where some of us hope to see arise a new intensive Jewish life, which will radiate all Jewry to the utmost ends of the earth.⁷⁷

The three opinions show the complexity of the Marrano identity, loyalty to religion, the question of assimilation, the confusion and ambivalence, but also the real and contemporary concern with persecutions and anti-Semitism.⁷⁸

The Jewish community was divided regarding the support to be given to the movement, some considering it to be an initiative of little importance.

Summary

Joseph Meller reasoned, in reply to the remark Goodman made to his work, that the latter's action and that of Barros Basto had been "vital" and only the future historians would be able to analyse if the efforts had been in vain or not.⁷⁹

With the opening of the Kadoorie Mekor Haïm synagogue in 1938, the Portuguese Marranos Committee's work did not end, but the idea which prevailed was that:

In a sense, the task which the Portuguese Marranos Committee set itself has been accomplished. The forlorn and almost forgotten remnant of then Jews in Sepharad which has survived . . . have now had door of Judaism opened to them.⁸⁰

77 "The Portuguese Marranos" 1927, 5.

78 At the annual meeting on 2 November 1927, the Central Committee of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, showed concern regarding the violation of the treaties that defend the rights of religious minorities. They were not respected in Hungary, Romania, where under the government of general Averesco the authorities tolerate and encourage violent attacks. These situations were reported in the League of Nations ("Séance extraordinaire annuelle du Comité Central de l'A.I.U." 1927, 13).

79 LMA, Letter from Joseh Meller to Paul Goodman, 21 December 1938.

80 Portuguese Marranos Committee 1938, 18.

The committee's contribution was fundamental in the success, although temporary, of the movement. The 30s conjuncture complexity, at a national and international level, with the consolidation of regimes of a fascist and totalitarian nature, erected walls that isolated and divided.

The critics of the movement consider it a project that lived on enthusiasms and passions, and they were right because they are forces History cannot and should not subordinate. But this was also a story of militancy and resistance.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Manuscript sources

LMA – London Metropolitan Archives (London)

**Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation. Portuguese Marranos Committee.
LMA/4521/A/01/17. From Collection: LMA/4521.**

Cash Statement for the period 6 December 1926 to 31 December 1939, on 6 June 1940
Herbert H. Marks, F.C.A. Chartered Accountant Auditor.

Letter from Barros Basto to Paul Goodman, 13 June 1927.

Letter from Joseh Meller to Paul Goodman, 21 December 1938.

Letter from Paul Goodman to A. W. Hyman, 15 April, 1930

Letter from Paul Goodman to Leon H. Elmaleh, 14 January 1927.

Letter from Paul Goodman to M. A. Sasson, 19 December 1934.

Letter from Paul Goodman to Wilfred Samuel, 1 May, 1937.

Letter from Paul Goodman to Wilfred Samuel, 8 December 1937

Letter from Paul Goodman written to Barros Basto, 2 June 1927.

Letter from Rev. David de Sola Pool to Paul Goodman, 24 January 1930.

Minute Book.

Postcard from Adolfo Benarus addressed to Paul Goodman, 10 September 1925.

Printed sources

[Basto, Barros]. 1927. "A Obra do Resgate." *Ha-Lapid (O Facho)*, May 1927, 7-8.

———. 1929. "Ala de Honra." *Ha-Lapid (O Facho)*, April-May 1929, 3-4.

———. 1946. "Documento sobre Maranus." *Ha-Lapid (O Facho)*, July-August 1946, 5-6.

Basto, Barros. 1926. "La confession d'un ancien marrane." *L'univers israélite*, 10 September 1926, 6-8. URL:
<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k62461979/f6.image.r=marranes%20portugal>. [Access date:
09.05.2020.]

Ben-Ammi [Maurice Lieber]. 1926. "Peut-on sauver les marranes portugais?" *L'univers israélite*, 27 August 1926,
621-623.

Bethencourt, Cardozo. 1903 "The Jews in Portugal from 1773 to 1902." *Jewish Quarterly Review* 15 (2):251-274.
Doi:10.2307/1450434.

Cardozo, D. S. Jessurun. 1925. "De Marranen in Portugal. Eenige Opmerkingen." *De vrijdagavond, joodsch weekblad*,
13 November 1925, 103-105.

- “Casamentos Elegantes.” 1936. *Ha-Lapid (O Facho)*, March 1936, 5.
- “Correspondence Epitomised.” 1925. *Jewish Chronicle*, 13 February 1925, 17-18.
- Dedicação Solene da Sinagoga Kadoorie Mekor H'aïm no Porto, Programa-Recordação do Serviço Litúrgico*. 1938. [s.l.]: [s.n.].
- Direção Geral de Estatística. 1933. *Censos da População de Portugal 1 de Dezembro de 1930*. Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional.
- “Jewish Historical Society.” 1924. *Jewish Chronicle*, 28 November 1924, 13.
- “Jewish Proselytes. Marranos and Bedouins.” 1924. *Jewish Chronicle*, 25 August 1924, 15.
- “Jews in Peninsula-II. The Lisbon Community.” 1934. *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 December 1934, 25.
- “Joseph Prag. English Jewish Leader, dies.” 1929. *Jewish Daily Bulletin*, 25 June 1929, 2.
- “La requête des marranes.” 1924. *L'aurore, journal d'informations juives*, 5 Septembre 1924, 1.
- “Le banquet en l'honneur de M. Lucien Wolf.” 1927. *L'avenir illustré*, 5 March 1927, 6.
- “Les marranes au Portugal.” 1921. *Paix et droit*, 1 Novembre 1921, 14-15.
- “Les marranes du Portugal désirent retourner au judaïsme.” 1924. *L'aurore, journal d'informations juives*, 1 August 1924, 1.
- “Les retours de l'histoire.” 1924. *L'aurore, journal d'informations juives*, 1 August 1924, 1.
- Mentor [pseud]. “Marranos.” 1926. *Jewish Chronicle*, London, 30 April 1926, 9.
- Portuguese Marranos Committee. 1938. *Survey by the Portuguese Marranos Committee, London, 1928-1938*. London: Vestry Offices, Bevis Marks.
- Rosa, J. S. da Silva. 1925. *Geschiedenis der Portugeesche Joden te Amsterdam 1593-1925*. Amsterdam: Menno Hertzberger.
- Roth, Cecil. 1929. “O Apóstolo dos Marranos (Recordações de Viagem em Portugal).” *Ha-Lapid (O Facho)*, December 1929, 3-5.
- Schwarz, Samuel. 1925. *Os Cristãos-Novos em Portugal no Século XX*. Lisboa: Associação dos Arqueólogos Portugueses.
- “Séance extraordinaire annuelle du Comité Central de l'A.I.U.” 1927. *L'avenir illustré*, 30 November 1927, 13.
- “The Day. Jewish Proselytes. Marranos' Letter to Jerusalem Rabbinate.” 1924. *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 August 1924, 17-18.
- “The Day. Marranos Return.” 1924. *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 August 1924, 6.
- “The Marranos in Portugal.” 1912. *The Sentinel*, 27 September 1912, 12.
- “The Marranos in Portugal.” 1926. *The Jewish Chronicle*, 12 March 1926, 18-19.
- “The Portuguese Marranos.” 1927. *Jewish World*, April 1927, 5.
- “Vida Comunal.” 1930. *Ha-Lapid (O Facho)*, June-July 1930, 8.
- Wolf, Lucien. 1926a. “Les survivants des marranes du Portugal.” *La famille israélite*, [supplement de *L'univers israélite*], 7 May 1926, 134-136. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k62465345/f19.image>.
- . 1926b. *Report on the “Marranos” or Crypto-Jews*. London: Anglo-Jewish Association.

Studies

- Kaspi, André. 2010. *Histoire de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle: de 1860 à nos jours*. Paris: Armand Collin.
- Mea, Elvira de Azevedo, et Inácio Steinhardt. 1997. *Ben Rosh, Biografia do Capitão Barros Basto, o Apóstolo dos Marranos*. Porto: Afrontamento.
- Muchnik, Natalia. 2016. "La condition marrane: un fait social total à l'épreuve de la longue durée." *Les actes de colloques du musée du quai Branly Jacques Chirac. Nathan Wachtel. Histoire et anthropologie*, 1-9. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/actesbrantly/724>. [Access date: 09.05.2020.]
- Mucznik, Esther. 1999. "Os Judeus em Portugal – Presença e Memória." Comunidade Israelita de Lisboa (Website). URL: http://old.cilisboa.org/hpt_esther.htm. [Access date: 09.05.2020.]
- . 2009. "A Assimilação." In *Dicionário do Judaísmo Português*, coord. Lúcia Liba Mucznik, José Alberto R. Silva Tavim, Esther Mucznik, et Elvira de Azevedo Mea, 61. Lisboa: Presença.
- Parnes, Livia. 1994. "Ha Lapid (O Facho): le journal des marranes portugais (Porto 1927-1958), Première approche." Master thesis, Université de Sorbonne.
- Roth, Cecil. (1932) 2001. *História dos Marranos: Os Judeus Secretos da Península Ibérica*. Lisboa: Civilização.
- Samuel, Edgar. 1987. "Decca Days – The Career of Wilfred Sampson Samuel, 1886-1958." *Jewish Historical Studies* 30:235-274. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29779849>. [Access date: 09.05.2020.]
- . 2007. "Jewish Missionary Activity in Portugal between the Wars." *Jewish Historical Studies* 41:173-181. URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/29780097?> [Access date: 09.05.2020.]
- Schechter, Frank I. 1917. "An Unfamiliar Aspect of Anglo-Jewish History." *American Jewish Historical Society* 25:63-74. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43058050>. [Access date: 09.05.2020.]