

EARLY MODERN WORKSHOP: Jewish History Resources

Volume 12: Continuity and Change in the Jewish Communities of the Early Eighteenth Century, Ohio State University, Columbus, August 17-19, 2015

A Jewish *casino* in Livorno

Francesca Bregoli, Queens College of the City University of New York

Deliberacoims do Governo, Libro B, 56r-57r, Archivio della Comunità Ebraica di Livorno, Livorno, Italy*

Introduction

In the spring of 1712, a Jewish *casino* was established in the Mediterranean port of Livorno (the *casini* were exclusive sites for conversation and game playing among the upper classes). Although in the seventeenth century the Jewish leadership had opposed them, it allowed this one to open as a way to prevent more dangerous forms of entertainment among young people. The venue was explicitly intended for the solace of the Livornese Jewish merchants and was given official sanction by the Grand Duke of Tuscany. In 1714, the *massari* (lay leaders) of the community assumed control of the space, by renting rooms on behalf of the community, and appointed one Isache Zamero as their agent to manage it. The following document includes some of the motivations that led the *massari* to accept the *casino*'s establishment, as well as the regulations they issued in order to guarantee decorum and modesty within its premises. By establishing this *casino*, the Livornese *massari* aimed to create an exclusively Jewish space where polite conversation over a licit game of cards was permissible; they justified game playing by considering the *casino*'s premises as domestic (not public), ruling

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that guests should be in fact considered as house hosts. We can surmise that they hoped to strengthen specifically Jewish recreation and socialization, within a protected and monitored environment managed by the community, in opposition to the non-Jewish space of the larger society and its more “dangerous” forms of entertainment. Jewish leaders, contrary to previous assumptions about Jewish recreation in early modern societies, were thus willing to promote secular leisurely activities for certain members of the community, embracing change in the hope of policing more threatening behaviors and deviations.

Short bibliography

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Original Text

Adì 13 marzo 1713 [1714]

[...]

I SS.ri Massari della Nazione Ebraica di Livorno, sentito il S.r Isache Zamero che rappresentava alle SS.rie LL. Molt' Ill. i, qualm. te con benigno rescritto di S.A.R. del dì 4 Aprile 1712 era stato concesso alla m.a nazione ebrea il poter eriggere un casino, ed aprire le stanze del pubblico in sollievo delli mercanti e persone civili della medema nazione trattenendosi in onesti discorsi, e potendo quelle persone che volessero divertirsi giocare alle minchiate et ombre come si era praticato prima nelle stanze d'attenenza del S.r Eliau Valensin e doppo nelle stanze di proprieta' de SS.ri Zacuto come a tutti e' pubblico e notorio [...]

E che havendo doppo i dd. SS.ri Zacuto proprietari di dd. Stanze dove si teneva d. casino di conversazione e giuoco licenziatoli per servirsene ad'uso di magazzino sia stato alcun tempo interrotta d.a conversazione e trattenimento, e deliberando d.o S.r Zamero far cosa grata a detta sua nazione, ed assistere in tale stanze, tenendole polite, aperte in tutti i tempi addobbate et illuminate compiacendo in tutte le cose oneste a i mercanti,

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Faceva istanza pregando le SS.rie LL. molt' Ill.ri a concederli la facoltà di tenere le dette stanze del pubblico, e nelle quale si esibisce a tenere li tavolini che occorreranno ad obbi e lumi necessari e persona che assista a tutto ciò che sarà necessario in dette stanze aperte per conto del pubblico sottomettendosi a quelle regole et ordinazioni che li saranno prescritte [e] date da dd. i SS.ri Massari obbligandosi a mantenere questa impresa per tre anni

Quali SS.ri Massari essendosi pienamente informati della verità de i fatti sopra esposti e narrati da d.o S.r Zamero e particolarmente dell' essersi per più e più anni giocato all' ombre e minchiate nelle dette stanze già d'attendenza del S.r Valensin [56v] e già di proprietà de SS.ri Cesare Leone, come col motivo d'essere un onesto divertimento e non contrario alle disposizioni delle leggi per remedianti i disordini ne i quali suol incorrere la gioventù

Visto e considerato l' acetazione di rescritto e grazia concessa da S.A.R. accettata da più particolari e approvata dal seggio delli SS.ri Massari di quel tempo [...] che si considera sempre fatta con l'istesso retto fine di trattenere la gioventù occupata e divertita senza scandolo [...] concedono al d.o S.r Isache Zamero facoltà di tener le stanze già prese da dd. Massari a pigione per conto del comune della nazione come agente e ministro delli medemi SS.ri Massari per conto et interesse del pubblico della Nazione Ebraea, a favore dei quali, e di ciasched' uno di essi mercanti e persone civili è stata emanata la d.a Benigna Grazia e come tale intendono li dd. i SS.ri Massari che ciasched' uno di loro in particolare ed universalmente siano considerati come padroni di casa e che abbino ciasched' uno di loro [...] dominio e facoltà come in casa propria, tutto ad' ogni miglior fine ed effetto, con le regole che saranno concordate da osservarsi da d. Zamero [...]

Dato questo dì 6 marzo 1713

Josef Attias sen[ior]
Selomo d' Abram di Medina
Abram di Jacob Haim Pegna
David de Medina

Capitoli da osservarsi nelle stanze pubbliche di proprietà della nazione concessa da S.A.R. per sollievo de mercanti e persone civili, stabiliti in

seguito alla deliberazione delli molto ill.i SS.ri Massari del di' 6 del corente mese di marzo 1713.

1° Che dette stanze devano aprirsi due ore avanti mezzo giorno, e doppo pranzo di state, a diciott'ore e l'inverno a ore vent'una, e devano serarsi di state a tre ore e d'inverno a ore quattro.

2° Che qual'unque persona che v'intervenga deva stare col dovuto rispetto, e [57r] moderazione, senza alzare la voce, ne tenere discorsi disonesti, ne gareggiare in dispute e contenzione, ne parlare in danno e pregiudizio d'altri, ma solo in novità di negozio e sopra le gazzette e nuove pubbliche e notizie storiche.

3° Che si deva in esse intervenire col solito abito che si va per la città, e che sia permesso levarsi la perucca, porsi in testa qualche obietto decoroso e che non sia tela bianca pura.

4° Che alcuno non possa introdurre in dette stanze, che mercanti e persone civili, a tenore del comando di S.A.R.

5° Non s'ammette nelle dette stanze alcun servitore se non a portar qualche ambasciata alla porta.

6° Che non possano nelle dette stanze fumare ne mangiare.

7° Che in dette stanze si possano fare accademie tanto di musica che di belle lettere.

8° Non possano giuocare a dado secco, ne alla bassetta, ne a primiera, ed altri simili giuochi di minor numero di otto carte, essendo solo permesso quelli giuochi di minchiate ed hombre che S.A.R. in detta Benigna Grazia à concesso, e questi non continovam.te, ma interrottamente in modo tale che alcuna persona non possa incorere nella taccia di giocatore assiduo, e continovo, et in tutti i giuochi devansi mettere sul tavoliere il denaro, non lassando giocare ad'alcuna persona su la parola, et in caso ch'alcuna persona giocasse su la parola sia obligato chi perde a non pagare, per essersi considerato non obligato.

9°: Che alle minchiate non si possa giuocare più che un giulio il resto, et a tutti i generi dell'hombre ad un paolo la poglia e comradiglio ed inquiglio a quattro crazie la poglia.

X° Che per ciasched'un mazzo di carte basse si deva pagare crazie venti e per le minchiate quattro pavoli e devano essere tutte nuove.

XI° Che ciasched'uno delli concorrenti devano contribuire con quella cortesia che li passa per aiuto delle pigioni, et spese di dette stanze una volta tanto all'anno da mettersi nel ceppo.

XII° E riconoscendo i SS.ri Massari che le loro occupazioni del Tribunale non li permettono una competente assistenza per superintendere a dette stanze, per tanto senza declinare elessero et eleggano i SS. Paltiel Arias, Rafael di Medina, e David de Isache Attias per diputati da durare il tempo di tre anni, con autorità a medesimi di provvedere all'inconvenienti che potessero succedere, et occorendo si compiegheranno con i SS. Massari per poter procedere al castigo contro di contravenisse o usasse alcuna disattenzione.

Josef Attias sen[ior]

Selomo d'Abram di Medina

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English translation by Francesca Bregoli

Messrs. Massari of the Hebrew Nation of Livorno, after having heard Mr. Isache Zamero, who stated to Their Very Illustrious Lordships how, with a benign rescript issued by His Royal Highness on April 4, 1712, it had been granted that the Hebrew Nation might establish a *casino* and open public rooms to offer solace to the merchants and civilized people of the same nation, so they can be entertained in honest conversations, and those people who so wish are allowed to play the games of *minchiate* and *ombre*, in the same way as it was customary earlier on, in the rooms managed by Mr. Eliaiu Valensin, and later in the rooms owned by Messrs. Zacuro, as it's public and well-known to everybody [...]

And since -- after said Messrs. Zacuto, owners of said rooms where the casino devoted to conversations and games was held, dismissed it in order to use [the rooms] as a warehouse -- said conversation and entertainment has been interrupted for some time, and said Mr. Zamero -- reckoning [he could] do something valuable for his nation, and assisting in said rooms, keeping

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them clean, and open at all times, decorated and illuminated, pleasing the merchants in all honest things -- submitted a plea, beseeching Their Very Illustrious Lordships to grant him the faculty of keeping said public rooms, in which he promises to keep the necessary tables, decorations and lights, and an assistant for everything that will be needed in said rooms, open on behalf of the public, following those rules and ordinances which said Messrs. Massari will prescribe and give to him, pledging to maintain this enterprise for three years,

Which Messrs. Massari, having fully established the truth of the facts mentioned above and narrated by said Mr. Zamero, and in particular of the fact that for several years [people] played the games of *ombre* and *minchiate* in said rooms, previously managed by Mr. Valensin and previously owned by Messrs. Cesare Leone, with the reason that it is an honest diversion, and one that is not against the dispositions of the laws, as a remedy to the turmoil that youth often succumbs to,

Seen and considered the acceptance of the Rescript and Grace granted by His Royal Highness, accepted by several individuals and approved by the seat of the Messrs. Massari of that time [...], which is considered to have been proposed with the same rightful goal of keeping the youth occupied and entertained without scandal, [...] they allow said Mr. Zamero to maintain the rooms, already rented by said Messrs. Massari on behalf of the Nation, as an agent and minister of the same Messrs. Massari, on behalf and for the interest of the public of the Hebrew Nation, in whose favor, and in favor of each merchant and civilized person, said Benign Grace was issued, and as such said Messrs. Massari wish that each of them, in particular and universally, be considered as house hosts, and that each of them have full authority as if [he were] in his own home, everything [is set] to reach the best end and effect, with the rules that will be agreed upon, to be observed by Zamero [...] Issued on March 6, 1713

Joseph Attias senior
Solomon of Abraham di Medina
Abraham of Jacob Haim Pegna
David de Medina

Chapters to be observed in the public rooms owned by the Nation [which was] granted by His Royal Highness as a relief for merchants and civilized people, established after the deliberation of the Very Illustrious Messrs. Massari on the 6th day of the current month of March 1713.

1st: Said rooms ought to open two hours before midday, and [also] after lunch, at eighteen hours in the summer, and at twenty-one hours in the winter, and ought to shut at three hours in the summer and at four hours in the winter.

2nd: Whoever attends ought to maintain due respect and moderation, without raising his voice, and ought not entertain dishonest conversations, nor compete in disputes and contentions, nor speak to damage and prejudice others, but [should] only [speak] in relation to commercial news, and about the gazettes, and public news and historical information.

3rd: One should attend [the rooms] wearing the same garb, as one wears in the city, and it is permissible to remove one's wig and to put on one's head something decorous, and not [just] pure white cloth.

4th: Nobody ought to introduce into said rooms but merchants and civilized people, in keeping with His Royal Highness' command.

5th: No servants are allowed into said rooms, if not to bring news to the door.

6th: They ought not smoke or eat in said rooms.

7th: It is permissible to organize academies in said rooms, both musical and literary.

8th: They ought not play *dado secco*, nor *bassetta*, nor *primiera*, nor other similar games that use less than eight cards, those games of *minchiate* and *hombre* that His Royal Highness allowed in his Benign Grace being the only ones permissible; and these [ought not be played] continuously, but rather with interruptions, so that nobody may be accused of being an assiduous and

continuous player; and in all games the money ought to be put on the table, and nobody should be allowed to play on his word -- and in case anybody plays on his word, whoever loses is obliged not to pay, since he's considered as not obligated.

9th: It is not permissible to play more than one giulio [...] for the *minchiate*, and in all kinds of *ombre* to play a stake of one paolo, and at *compradiglio* and *inquiglio* a stake of 4 crazie.

10th: For each deck of low cards 20 crazie ought to be paid, and 4 paoli for the *minchiate*, and [the cards] ought to be all new.

11th: Each of the participants ought to contribute, with the courtesy they are able to, in order to offset the rent and expenses of said rooms, once a year, [and the monies are] to be put in the charity box.

12th: And acknowledging the Messrs. Massari that their occupation with the Court do not allow them the ability to competently supervise said rooms, for this reason, without declining, elected and elect Messrs. Paltiel Arias, Raphale di Medina, and David of Isaac Attias as deputies for three years, with the authority of taking care of any inconvenience that may occur, and on occasion they will consult with Messrs. Massari to be able to punish anybody who might contravene [these rules] or show any lack of attention.

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