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To cite this article: Tommaso Munari & Francesca Trivellato (2022) Gino Luzzatto and the contested place of Jews in the economic history of Mediterranean Europe, *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 37:2, 203-228, DOI: [10.1080/09518967.2022.2119349](https://doi.org/10.1080/09518967.2022.2119349)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518967.2022.2119349>



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Published online: 29 Nov 2022.



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## Gino Luzzatto and the contested place of Jews in the economic history of Mediterranean Europe

Tommaso Munari<sup>a</sup> and Francesca Trivellato<sup>b\*</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*Dipartimento di Studi Storici, University of Turin, Turin, Italy;* <sup>b</sup>*School of Historical Studies, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, NJ, USA*

The few Anglophone readers for whom the name Gino Luzzatto (1878–1964) still has a familiar ring know him as an economic historian of medieval Europe, with a focus on Italy and on Mediterranean trade. But throughout his career he also cultivated a consistent if secondary interest in Jewish history and weighed in on controversial debates on the role of Jews in the development of Western capitalism. A socialist and an assimilated Jew, Luzzatto was persecuted first for his political ideas and later as a consequence of Mussolini’s Racial Laws. This article examines his largely forgotten contributions to the economic history of medieval and early modern Italian Jews in order to illuminate a little-known chapter in the ever-contentious relationship between economic history and Jewish history. By placing Luzzatto alongside his contemporaries, it elucidates his commitment to integrate Jewish history into general European history and compares his approach to competing interpretations dating from the inter-war and immediate post-war periods. It thus broadens our knowledge of the range of scholarly traditions that have sustained the study of Jews’ economic roles before the current revival of interest in the topic.

**Keywords:** Livorno; Venice; medieval trade; medieval Italy; early modern Italy; fascist Italy; anti-semitism

### Introduction

Gino Luzzatto (1878–1964) was the founder of economic history in Italian academia. His 1961 *Storia economica di Venezia dall’XI al XVI secolo* (The Economic History of Venice from the Eleventh to the Sixteenth Century) was heralded by Frederic C. Lane as “the capstone to the many special studies of Venice by Italy’s foremost economic historian”.<sup>1</sup> At Luzzatto’s death, Carlo Cipolla described his Italian colleague as one of “the three giants of economic history” together with Henri Pirenne and Marc Bloch, and as a genuine European character, imbued by “scholarly as well as human universalism”.<sup>2</sup> If political and personal circumstances did not allow Luzzatto to travel as much as Pirenne or Lucien Febvre, he was a prolific scholar and a polyglot, up to date on foreign academic trends, and admired by colleagues near and far. He was among the few historians who, as Cipolla remarked, were never, “even when they wrote about national or local history [...] prisoners of a merely parochial point of view”.<sup>3</sup> In spite of the prestige that he enjoyed during his life, Luzzatto is now largely unknown. This is all the

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\*Corresponding author. Email: [ft@ias.edu](mailto:ft@ias.edu)

more true for his writings on the economic history of medieval and early modern Italian Jews.<sup>4</sup>

This article sheds light on Luzzatto's work on the place of Jews in the economic history of Mediterranean Europe – both his published work and a project that he merely sketched – in order to clarify his stance on the often combative relationship between Jewish history and economic history. In so doing, it restores Luzzatto's position in the debates that unfolded during the inter-war and post-war periods, especially those sparked by the theses advanced by Wilhelm Roscher and Werner Sombart on the role of Jews in the commercial development of medieval and early modern Europe. Today we witness a growing interest in the economic history of past Jewish societies after a long reluctance to approach the topic in the wake of the Second World War. The time is ripe to revisit Luzzatto's contributions to the subject.<sup>5</sup>

One would look in vain for bold pronouncements by Luzzatto concerning the place of Jewish history in his research or in European historiography at large. Our interpretative effort is thus geared towards extrapolating from scattered comments his overall argument that the economic history of pre-emancipation Jews belongs squarely within the general field of economic history. We find clear evidence of this argument in between the lines (and more rarely in direct statements) across his minor publications and private correspondence. We begin with a short biographical sketch describing the personal sensitivity to Jewish marginality in Christian Europe that Luzzatto developed first as an anti-fascist and later as a persecuted Jew. We then turn to a close examination of an aborted research project, whose larger meaning we decipher in light of Luzzatto's little-known essays on Jewish economic history and some revealing book reviews.

### **Gino Luzzatto**

Raised in Padua in a middle-class assimilated Jewish family during the first two decades after Italy's unification, Luzzatto grew up during the golden age of Italian secular liberalism and arguably internalized a patriotic formula popular during the Risorgimento: "Jews at home and citizens in public." His family transmitted to him a sense of the Jewish tradition, but he did not receive a religious education. Less than satisfied with his first university degree in literature, he took a second one in law and wrote a thesis on public finance in Italian medieval communes.<sup>6</sup> From then on, he regarded himself first and foremost as an economic historian, with a special focus on Italy and the Middle Ages and a predilection for archival research concerning medieval international merchants and the city of Venice.

At the same time, from the beginning of his career, he cultivated more than a passing interest in Jewish history. Initially centred on the role of Jewish bankers and merchants in medieval and Renaissance Italy, his interest predated both fascist persecution, which made many assimilated Italian Jews aware of their Jewish identity, and most of the finest contributions by German scholars to Jewish economic history. That interest intensified and expanded in scope during the 1930s. Never tempted to join the Zionist movement, Luzzatto nonetheless respected and sympathized with it even after the 1956 Suez Crisis.<sup>7</sup> At the age of 83, during a conference organized by the Italian Jewish Youth Federation in 1961, he was clearly describing his own sentiment when he emphasized that "those who consider themselves to be good Italian citizens" can also feel "the pride of being Jewish and preserving that identity" (*l'orgoglio di sentirsi e conservarsi ebrei*).<sup>8</sup>

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, an undergraduate degree in law was a conventional first step for those wishing to be trained in medieval economic history. In Italy as elsewhere, there were no faculties of economics and the law curriculum had a considerable historical component. Max Weber, who was 14 years older than Luzzatto, studied law in Heidelberg and Berlin before devoting his first book to medieval trade (1889) and taking up a post as professor of economics and finance (Nationalökonomie und Finanzwissenschaft) in Freiburg in 1893.<sup>9</sup> A number of influential Italian legal scholars, chief among them Ercole Vidari, Enrico Bensa, Giuseppe Salvioli, Alessandro Lattes, and Arturo Segre, also wrote defining contributions on the institutions of medieval commerce and finance.

These scholars were among the authors who informed Luzzatto's second monograph, a history of Mediterranean trade from Antiquity to the Middle Ages (1914) that built on his lecture notes at the University of Bari, which had recently been elevated to the rank of a university but retained the profile of a commercial school.<sup>10</sup> In 1921 Luzzatto moved to the University of Trieste; only a year later he was able to join the University of Venice as the first holder of a chair in economic history in Italy. He had been eager to move to Venice not only for the academic prestige that came with the chair, but also, as he wrote in his request to be transferred there, because the city's state archives housed "a precious and vast body of documents for the scholar of economic history".<sup>11</sup> From then on, save for the years when Luzzatto was banned from all Italian state archives by the fascist anti-Jewish laws, he frequented those in Venice almost daily.

Throughout his life, Luzzatto was actively engaged in politics. In 1911 he followed the writer and historian Gaetano Salvemini in rescinding his membership in the Italian Socialist Party to protest the party leadership's support of Italy's protectionist policies and military intervention in Libya. In the same year, Salvemini founded a weekly newspaper, *L'Unità*, which became the leading voice of Italian socialist internationalism and enlisted among its regular contributors Benedetto Croce, Luigi Einaudi, and Luzzatto himself, who wrote several articles on colonialism, universal suffrage, the Italian "southern question", class struggle, and other pressing political and economic issues.<sup>12</sup>

Marxism shaped both Salvemini's and Luzzatto's early historiographical works, which interpret the social and civic conflicts in late-thirteenth-century Florence as a confrontation between the old feudal aristocracy and a new merchant class.<sup>13</sup> The two men maintained a close friendship even after Salvemini fled into exile in 1925, first to Paris and then to London. In 1934 Salvemini relocated to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he taught at Harvard University for 15 years, albeit in a non-permanent position.<sup>14</sup> He was there in spring 1940 when, as we will see, news reached him of Luzzatto's expulsion from academia and of his interest in the Jewish merchants of Livorno.

Having signed Croce's "Manifesto of Anti-Fascist Intellectuals" in 1925, Luzzatto was stripped of his position as the newly elected chancellor of the University of Venice. Three years later, he was arrested and spent nearly a month in prison in Milan for his association with an underground anti-fascist organization, "Giovane Italia". Thus began the most difficult period in his life. Although in 1931 he agreed to pledge his oath to Mussolini's government in order to maintain his chair (only a handful of university professors in all of Italy refused), he was increasingly marginalized as both an anti-fascist and a Jew.

And yet, during the 1930s Luzzatto's scholarly reputation grew both in Italy and abroad, especially after the publication of his remarkable study of the Venetian public debt in the late Middle Ages.<sup>15</sup> Einaudi recruited him when he launched the *Rivista di*

*storia economica*, for which Luzzatto wrote six articles in eight years. Pirenne quoted from Luzzatto's many essays. Bloch paid him a visit in Venice in 1934, and the newly founded *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale* introduced his work to French readers by reviewing his books and publishing a piece by him that Hans Baron described as a "masterful article".<sup>16</sup> In 1944, when he sent his book on the fifteenth-century Venetian merchant Andrea Barbarigo to press, Lane was effusive in expressing his gratitude to Luzzatto.<sup>17</sup>

These were only some of the pre-eminent international scholars who kept close company with Luzzatto. He also corresponded with John H. Clapham, Michael Postan, and Eileen Power in the United Kingdom, and with Earl J. Hamilton, Norman S.B. Gras, and Florence Edler de Roover in the United States. In short, Luzzatto was a chief protagonist of the historiographical renewal that in the 1920s and 1930s transformed and legitimized the study of European economic and social history. For the following half-century, no self-respecting historian could ignore subjects that today appear highly specialized, such as the public debt, limited partnerships, double-entry book-keeping, sharecropping, or seed-to-yield ratios. They animated vibrant debates not only about the roots of Western capitalism, but also about European civilization *tout court*.

With the proclamation of the Racial Laws in the autumn of 1938, neither his pledge of allegiance to the Fascist government nor his fame could spare Luzzatto the fate that befell all Jewish university professors. In December he was dismissed from his post at the University of Venice.<sup>18</sup> However traumatic, the ousting did not initially halt his research, but on 10 March 1940 a subsequent order issued by the Minister of the Interior forbade him – and anyone who was deemed to be of the "Jewish race" – from accessing all Italian state archives.<sup>19</sup> Within two years, the same prohibition was extended to all national libraries.<sup>20</sup> For a man like Luzzatto, these interdictions were even more painful than the fact that he was forced to publish under a pseudonym and, to make ends meet, had to resort to modestly compensated academic translations.<sup>21</sup> Faced with the impossibility of carrying on his research, he plunged into a bleak pessimism and even contemplated leaving the country, as others had done, finally deciding to remain in the interest of his family. Only a visit to the synagogue archives in Livorno lifted his spirits. Why Livorno? Why its synagogue archives? What was there to generate such excitement?

### **The archives of the Livorno synagogue in spring 1940<sup>22</sup>**

From the time he had to leave academia until the German invasion of Venice in 1943, Luzzatto worked for the Jewish community in Venice, where he was put in charge of the education committee (by November 1938, Jewish pupils had been banned from Italian public schools at all grade levels). He also oversaw the local chapters of two organizations that assisted Italian Jews in finding work or in emigrating.<sup>23</sup> It was probably to fulfil some of his new responsibilities that he travelled to Tuscany in spring 1940. As we learn from a postcard he wrote to Armando Saporì, another towering figure of Italian economic and medieval history, Luzzatto arrived in Florence on Monday 18 March 1940, coincidentally the day when Mussolini met Hitler on the border between Austria and Italy.<sup>24</sup>

While in Tuscany, Luzzatto spent two days in Livorno, exploring the archives of the city's synagogue. Having written the entry on Livorno for the *Enciclopedia Italiana* in 1930, he was well acquainted with its history, its prominent role in early modern Mediterranean trade, and its diverse resident merchant communities of Jews, Greeks,

and Armenians, as well as English, Flemish, French, and others.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, by the time he reached Tuscany in spring 1940, Luzzatto was almost certainly familiar with an article by Cecil Roth that singled out the untapped value of the records housed in the Livorno synagogue.<sup>26</sup> He had also likely heard the rabbi of the Venetian Jewish community, Adolfo Ottolenghi, speak about his native Livorno and perhaps about the documents held in the synagogue where Ottolenghi had prayed and studied as a young man.<sup>27</sup>

In a handwritten note preserved in his personal archives – undated but certainly penned in March 1940 – Luzzatto wrote that among the documents preserved in Livorno, “the richest collection is that of the registers of Civil Acts, [dating] from 1626 to 1808 (a total of 268 registers, each very thick), which covers civil disputes (mostly over commercial matters) between Jews, who were subjected to the Massari’s jurisdiction”.<sup>28</sup>

The records of the Tribunal of the Massari that captured Luzzatto’s attention were indeed extraordinary. In 1593, after protracted negotiations, the Medici grand dukes permitted the creation of a Jewish tribunal in Livorno headed by the five elected lay leaders of the community, and conferred upon it jurisdiction over all civil and criminal disputes among Jews. Nothing of the sort had ever existed elsewhere. The uniqueness of this tribunal was twofold: its judges were laymen, usually wealthy merchants, rather than rabbis; and their jurisdictional prerogatives were unparalleled (the syndics of Amsterdam’s Spanish and Portuguese Jewish congregations were modelled on Livorno’s Massari, but the state never delegated to them a comparable degree of power).<sup>29</sup>

In March 1940 Luzzatto was likely the first person to leaf through the entire collection of documents produced by the court of the Massari. He was also the last, as the series would not survive the Second World War. Although Roth put the history of the Marranos of Livorno on the map for scholars of Jewish history, it is not clear whether he spent any time in the synagogue archives whose value he touted; if he did, it was not to consult records pertaining to commercial litigation.<sup>30</sup>

Luzzatto knew Roth and his works well and held him in high regard. A decade prior, he had reviewed Roth’s book on the Jews of Venice and read through the proofs of its Italian translation. At the end of the Second World War he would assist Roth in compiling information on the persecution of Italian Jews during the Nazi occupation of Italy.<sup>31</sup> However, back in Venice after his short trip to Tuscany in 1940, Luzzatto did not write to Roth with news of his archival discovery, but rather to the young historian Roberto Lopez. Retrospectively, this choice was neither obvious nor wise.

In spite of their difference in age (32 years), Luzzatto and Lopez had developed a loyal and warm friendship animated by a shared passion for medieval economic history and archival research. Lopez had deep family ties with Livorno, where both his parents were born of direct descendants of Iberian Marranos. While not technically a student of Luzzatto, Lopez considered him one of his teachers.<sup>32</sup> Before the proclamation of the Racial Laws, Lopez had found academic employment in Italy and began to publish on the economic history of medieval Genoa. He would go on to become a pre-eminent medievalist and the author, among others, of two landmark publications: *The Birth of Europe* and *The Commercial Revolution of the Middle Ages*.

Unlike Luzzatto, Lopez left Italy immediately upon the proclamation of the Racial Laws. After a few months in London, in September 1939 he was admitted, with a fellowship, as a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, home to specialists of medieval Genoa. In spite of the professional demotion that the position involved, the fellowship provided Lopez with a cherished new beginning. From

Madison, he wrote long letters to his Italian *maestro* to keep him abreast of his peregrinations and his new life.

Unemployed and forbidden from accessing any state archives, Luzzatto needed to find someone to sponsor his research in the Livorno synagogue, where he was still free to work. Lopez had arrived in Madison only seven months prior to receiving the letter in which Luzzatto relayed his excitement about the richness of the documents housed in the Livorno synagogue and the cry for help that accompanied it. On 16 April 1940 Luzzatto described those archives to Lopez as “a veritable mine [of documents], an absolutely virgin territory” for historians. Admitting to having spent only two days in Livorno, he nevertheless submitted to Lopez an ambitious proposal. He would need 12 months of assiduous reading to analyse the over 200 volumes of civil suits adjudicated by the Massari (an optimistic estimate even for an expert palaeographer such as Luzzatto). The research, he acknowledged, would require considerable commitment, but, he added:

If I could be sure that someone would publish the work and could help me defer my expenses, I would do it with great pleasure, because I believe that it could yield a very interesting study, not only for the history of Jews, but also for Mediterranean commerce during the early modern period.<sup>33</sup>

Luzzatto needed generous sponsors, and did not hesitate to ask his young friend in Madison to look for them. He hoped that Lopez knew someone among “the leaders of the Jewish Publication Society of America in Philadelphia” and could ask them “whether they were available to take on [his] project and under which conditions”. If that publishing house turned out not to be a viable option, Lopez should call on Gras, the Isidor Strauss professor of business history at the Harvard Business School and the former teacher of Edler de Roover and Raymond de Roover. Luzzatto was very precise in his instructions: in the event Lopez were to approach Gras, he would have to be more explicit “about the nature and content of the documents” housed in Livorno – a recommendation presumably made on account of Gras’s lack of familiarity with the history of Tuscany and of Jews more generally. In either case, Luzzatto stressed, he did not intend to write “a history of the Jews of Livorno” but rather to “speak of the Jews in the commercial life” of the city (of “your city”, as he wrote to Lopez). For this reason, he stressed, he did not envision a volume that would fit in the “Jewish Communities Series” promoted by the Jewish Publication Society of America.

Trapped in Italy, unemployed, and unable to make progress in his research, the highly respected Luzzatto’s only resource at this juncture was a single junior pupil on the other side of the Atlantic. The closeness between the two allowed for a blunt request. But Lopez was still far from the notable academic he would later become (he taught at Yale University from 1946 to 1981). There was not much Lopez could do, and yet he did what he could. Although his reply to Luzzatto is missing, we know that he consulted Salvemini, Luzzatto’s long-time friend, who by then was well established at Harvard. In late May 1940 Salvemini sent Lopez a disheartening reply. He called Luzzatto’s project “absurd”, noting that a “hurricane of disasters” was about to befall Italy (which would enter the Second World War less than two weeks later, on 10 June). He predicted that, given what was looming on the horizon, Italian Jews would soon be excluded from accessing all the country’s archives, not only state ones. For reasons he did not spell out but may have involved Luzzatto’s proposed subject, Salvemini doubted that Gras, in spite of his position at the Harvard Business School and his regard for Luzzatto, could lend a hand. He suggested that Lopez call instead on two men in Madison: Selig

Perlman, a professor of labour economics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and an active member of the local Jewish community; and Max Kadushin, one of America's leading Conservative rabbis and director of the Hillel Foundation at the same university from 1931 to 1942.<sup>34</sup>

The surviving correspondence bears no trace of any additional steps taken by Lopez to deliver to Luzzatto the help he had asked for. If other attempts were made, they led nowhere. Remembering Luzzatto soon after the man's death, Lopez recounted the facts succinctly, if with a twinge of regret: "Neither Salvemini nor I found anyone willing to support a project that would have spared a rich archival collection that the war would soon destroy".<sup>35</sup>

### **Roth and Cassuto: two models of Jewish history**

Luzzatto may have thought of the records of the Tribunal of the Massari instrumentally as a means to support himself while continuing to do what he loved most. But there is no doubt that he also felt genuine enthusiasm for the material he encountered. What kind of history did he envision writing? Had he found a proper sponsor, how would Luzzatto have designed his study of the Jewish merchants of Livorno? What models (if any) did he have in mind in 1940, when Fernand Braudel and Shlomo D. Goitein had yet to make their mark?<sup>36</sup> Any answer must remain speculative, but raising these questions affords us the opportunity to scan the different, sometimes antagonistic scholarly approaches to Jewish and Mediterranean history that flourished during the inter-war period.

As the saying goes, beggars can't be choosers. Yet in April 1940 Luzzatto had made it clear to Lopez that the "Jewish Communities Series" promoted by the Jewish Publication Society of America, whose help he so yearned for, was not suitable for his purposes.<sup>37</sup> The volume in this series he knew best was Roth's on Venice (1930), published, like another volume on London (1930), a year after the inaugural book on Frankfurt (1929). It is possible that by 1940 Luzzatto had also seen (some of) the other tomes in the series: those on Vienna (1936), Regensburg and Augsburg (1939), Rome (1940), and Cologne (1940).<sup>38</sup> They all focused on the internal life of each of these Jewish communities, at best examining the community's relationship with their respective secular authorities. This perspective was antithetical to Luzzatto's and incompatible with his wish not to write a "history of the Jews of Livorno", but rather to concentrate on "the Jews in the commercial life" of Livorno and beyond.<sup>39</sup>

His was an informed assessment. Roth had praised Luzzatto's first book (*I banchieri ebrei in Urbino nell'età ducale*, 1902) as "both the finest study of the Jewish loan-banks of the close of the Middle Ages and the most competent contribution to Jewish local history in Italy".<sup>40</sup> Not one who felt obliged to reciprocate, Luzzatto expressed his admiration for Roth in turn. Throughout his career, he penned numerous, elegant, and judicious book reviews of Roth's work, mostly in Italian academic journals. They tell us a great deal about the breadth of his knowledge, his effort to introduce foreign authors to Italian academics, and his historiographical inclinations. Luzzatto's review of Roth's *Venice* was surprisingly positive – surprising in light of Luzzatto's demanding evidentiary standards and stylistic preferences, which at first sight might not seem to align with Roth's. Luzzatto lamented the fact that "the first organic and complete history of the Jews of Venice had arrived from America and was the work of an English scholar", but praised Roth for his accuracy and his "broad and commanding knowledge not only of Jewish history, but also of the Venetian context"<sup>41</sup> – a comment indicative of the



premium that Luzzatto placed on the integration of Jewish history into what Israeli academics referred to as general history.

After remarking on several inaccuracies in Roth's treatment of the medieval period, Luzzatto extolls his coverage of the Renaissance, noting that, unlike the vast majority of historians of Italian Jewry to that day, Roth does not

limit himself [...] to studying the relationship between the [Jewish] community and the state that hosted or tolerated them, but offers a complete and lively portrait of the life of the [Venetian] Jewish community in each of its aspects – political, juridical, socio-economic, religious, literary, and artistic – in its internal relationships as well as those with the external world, both locally and internationally.<sup>42</sup>

In spite of the absence of footnotes in Roth's text, Luzzatto commended the volume for its "knowledge of the Venice State Archives".<sup>43</sup> Not even Roth's choice to adopt a narrative style tailored to "a cosmopolitan reading public, for whom the volumes of the 'Jewish Publication Society of America' are intended", curbed Luzzatto's overall positive judgment.<sup>44</sup> If Luzzatto himself wrote frequently and passionately about current politics and economics in political and daily papers and devoted considerable energy to high-level synthesis and textbooks, he was not a popularizer in the way Roth was. But he always aimed to be fair, and recognized that Roth's command of Jewish literature was a critical complement to the knowledge of those who, like himself, relied primarily on the documents preserved in the Venice state archives.

It is unclear whether Luzzatto was aware of Roth's mixed reputation among historians of both the Jewish past and early modern Europe in 1930. Having completed a first-rate Oxford thesis on Renaissance Florence, Roth was unable to procure a university post in Italian studies or history in the United Kingdom.<sup>45</sup> Meanwhile, lacking the proper training in the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, or any interest in German topics, he was considered a dilettante by Jewish historians, whom he criticized in turn for having "changed Clio from a muse to a scavenger".<sup>46</sup> Not one to mince words, Roth placed the blame for the late start of his career squarely on his critics. In 1928 he wrote acerbically: "The Goyim say: 'This man is not a historian: he is a Jewish antiquarian.' And the Jews say: 'This man is not a Jewish scholar: he is merely a historian.'"<sup>47</sup> Eventually, he triumphed over his detractors. In 1938 he was appointed to a privately endowed position in Post-Biblical Jewish Studies at Oxford, the first such position to be housed in the Faculty of History rather than the Faculty of Theology or Oriental Studies.

Luzzatto seems to have remained unperturbed by the storm of conflicting views that always surrounded Roth, even after the latter's book on Venice was translated into Italian and met with an uneven reception.<sup>48</sup> As late as 1950, by when he had likely caught wind of some of the scepticism about Roth's work, Luzzatto called his English colleague "the best historian of medieval and modern Jews" since the passing of Simon Dubnow.<sup>49</sup> Coming from an exigent empirical historian and someone not prone to hyperbole, this praise, albeit pronounced privately and as part of a thank-you note for Roth's participation in Luzzatto's *Festschrift*, must have sounded like music to Roth's ears.

Luzzatto's appreciation for Roth comes into even sharper relief once we compare it with his assessment of the other landmark study of Italian Jews from the inter-war period: Umberto Cassuto's *Jews in Florence during the Renaissance* (1918).<sup>50</sup> Its author was a graduate of the Italian Rabbinic College and one of the most learned representatives of Jewish scholarship in the Italian liberal state of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Cassuto taught Hebrew Language and Literature at the university in

Florence and Rome before accepting a chair in Biblical Studies at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in 1939, where he remained until his death. Unlike Luzzatto, he had been a Zionist even before the rise of fascism.

Committed to bringing Jewish history into the fold of mainstream historiography, in 1919 Luzzatto included Cassuto's study in a review essay devoted to five recent books of Italian economic history.<sup>51</sup> He stressed the author's unique ability to write a history of Jews in Florence from 1437 to 1571 that also drew from Hebrew language documents. Having found the volume "so weighty and complete in every other respect", Luzzatto was nevertheless disappointed by its lack of in-depth discussion of the economic aspects,

which may have a secondary interest for those who wish to write the history of the Jewish community from the Jewish national point of view [*dal punto di vista nazionale giudaico*], but remain of the utmost importance for those who study those events as an element of general history [*come elemento della storia generale*].

As if intuiting that someone may have found the criticism unfair given Cassuto's scholarly training and objectives, Luzzatto explained why, from his point of view, a study of Jews in Renaissance Florence should have included an accurate description of their economic contributions:

[I]t should furnish the means to establish which were the activities and functions of Jewish bankers and merchants in a large mercantile city where, already by the thirteenth century, movable capital began to circulate widely and was increasingly directed toward credit and currency exchange operations.<sup>52</sup>

Put simply, Luzzatto criticized Cassuto for not having taken on Sombart. While he disagreed with the German scholar's characterization of the Middle Ages as a feudal age, Luzzatto admired Sombart's three volumes on the genesis of European capitalism enough to have laboured over a translation of large portions of them.<sup>53</sup> He had a much more negative opinion of Sombart's 1911 *Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben* (*The Jews and Economic Life*), whose thesis on the primacy of Jews in the development of Western capitalism he found "exaggerated and unilateral". It could be debunked easily, he added, by examining the history of "the major [medieval] communes in Italy and Flanders, where capitalism appeared with all its traits two centuries before Jews settled in Antwerp or Amsterdam". "For this reason", he

wished that Cassuto's work had been as exhaustive on this topic as in all others, and shed new light on the position that Jewish capital held in the Florentine economy between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries and its relationship to Catholic bankers and merchants.<sup>54</sup>

On the basis of some quick calculations, Luzzatto concluded that Jews' "largest riches were still far inferior to those of the main Florentine families of the time, such as the Medici, the Pitti, the Strozzi, and many others, all of whom had roots in trade and banking".<sup>55</sup>

For Luzzatto, Cassuto had failed to realize that Jewish economic history was part and parcel of the history of Florence. By failing to show that Jewish bankers and money-lenders had played an insubstantial role in Renaissance Florence, he had missed a precious opportunity to challenge a pernicious and then influential thesis that distorted the history of Jews as much as the history of Western capitalism.

In short, long before arriving in Livorno under straitened circumstances in 1940, Luzzatto had articulated which kind of Jewish history he valued most. At a minimum, his appraisal of two very different, if equally influential works lets us imagine which history of the Jews in Livorno he did not wish to write. He was not going to focus on the religious and intellectual achievements of the Jewish elites or on the relationship between the organized community and the Tuscan authorities. Nor would he write a popular history for the broad public. But how exactly was he going to make a study of Jewish merchants relevant to a broad analysis of early modern Mediterranean trade? To broach this question, we need to take another step back.

### **The economic roles of Jews in the Middle Ages**

Published in 1902 when he was 24, Luzzatto's very first, if short, monograph focused on the activities of Jewish bankers in the town of Urbino, in central Italy, during the fifteenth century. There we find an early and rare statement of the author's position on the subject: "no special ethnic aptitude" had led Jews to lending at interest in the Middle Ages, as evidenced by the fact that they had been shepherds and peasants in Antiquity, and that throughout the diaspora they had performed a multiplicity of economic roles, depending on what circumstances demanded of them.<sup>56</sup> In medieval Urbino and elsewhere, Jews specialized in trade and finance just as other minority groups sometimes did.

Citing from the lesser-known section of a highly influential 1875 article by Roscher, one of the founders of the German Historical School, Luzzatto drew an analogy between Jews in Italy, Huguenots in France, and Quakers in England.<sup>57</sup> He then turned to illustrate the range of activities that the Jews of fifteenth-century Urbino carried out beyond moneylending – some were goldsmiths, tailors, tanners, and a few bought large quantities of paper from the dukes' famed paper factories in Fabriano.<sup>58</sup> In keeping with his Marxist views of Italian city-states, Luzzatto also stressed the pyramidal structure of the Urbino Jewish community and its small wealthy elite. The fragile toleration that the duke of Urbino afforded the Jews, in Luzzatto's account, came to an end at the close of the fifteenth century as a result of two phenomena: the creation of the *Monti di Pietà* (Christian lending institutions that charged very low interest rates), and the appearance of well-to-do Jewish refugees from Iberia, whose arrival intensified antisemitic sentiments among the general population.<sup>59</sup>

After this early venture into the economic history of medieval Jews, Luzzatto abandoned the subject except to incorporate it in his many surveys. In 1914 he published his lecture notes on the history of commerce from Antiquity and the Middle Ages. A work of synthesis that condensed the state of the art on the subject at the time, including foundational German and French scholarship, it articulated Luzzatto's lifelong commitment to linking the history of long-distance trade to the birth of Western capitalism, with a focus on the pivotal role played by the Italian city-states in the commercial revolution of the Middle Ages.<sup>60</sup> To note that the book appeared in the same year as Pirenne's seminal essays on the same subject is to realize the pioneering quality of Luzzatto's contributions to the field.<sup>61</sup>

After a review of the place of long-distance trade in the ancient Mediterranean, Luzzatto zooms in on the "urban economy" of the Italian communes, whose development he describes as a "genuinely revolutionary event" that led to "the formation of a bourgeois class", which "prepared the most profound economic transformation that occurred in Western Europe from the fall of the ancient world until today".<sup>62</sup> These

words did not sound as inflated then as they do now, and represented the emerging consensus among a group of medievalists who challenged the dominant view, which had been promoted by social theorists as diverse as Karl Marx, Weber, and Sombart, who all dated the origins of Western capitalism to the sixteenth century at the earliest.

Luzzatto's argument bears the imprint of two strains of literature: the Marxist-oriented historians of the Italian medieval communes and the German and Italian legal scholarship on the organization system and contracts that sustained the expansion of long-distance trade during the thirteenth century (state galleys protecting commercial ships, seasonal fairs, merchant guilds, commission agents, brokers, account books, partnership agreements, and bills of exchange).<sup>63</sup>

The few pages that Luzzatto devotes to Jews' economic roles during the Middle Ages derive from the standard account of the subject established by the German historiography – but also aim to correct it. Luzzatto returns to Roscher's essay, which he had quoted in his early study on the Jewish bankers in Urbino and which outlined what was destined to remain the dominant paradigm of the rise and fall of Jewish commerce in the Middle Ages for decades to come. "Among the Germanic peoples the Jews were better treated during the earlier than the later Middle Ages," Roscher wrote, identifying the Black Death as the turning point. In the earlier period, he argued, Jews were the only ones "carrying on a professional trade in goods". This supposedly exclusive position stirred the resentment of Christian rivals, who sought to exclude Jews from the riches of international trade. "The Jewish persecutions of the later Middle Ages," Roscher concluded, "are in large measure a product of trade jealousy".<sup>64</sup>

Guido Kisch, who ensured the publication of Roscher's essay in English in 1944, embraced its thesis as a celebration of the economic contributions of Jews to the early development of European capitalism.<sup>65</sup> A strong rebuttal to this idea came from Toni Oelsner in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In two well-documented pieces, she showed that the Roscher thesis, born out of a philo-semitic liberal ideology, had been turned into an instrument of "the destructive Nazi 'Jewish science'".<sup>66</sup> But she did not succeed in discrediting it – perhaps also on account of her status as a woman without a proper academic affiliation. Only recently have specialists debunked the Roscher-Kisch thesis by showing that it overestimated Jewish control of long-distance trade in the early Middle Ages, and that it reflected the rising antisemitism of the Second German Empire. However, even the scholars who have done the most to demonstrate how exaggerated and misleading this narrative was paper over Luzzatto's earliest and seminal rebuttals to it.<sup>67</sup>

Already in 1914 Luzzatto expressed caution with regard to the historical interpretation put forth by Roscher, measuring his words, as he would always do. He maintained that in the eleventh century, Jewish wholesale traders crisscrossed "nearly all regions of the world as it was known at the time", embarking on lengthy voyages connecting France to China, but he never claimed that Jewish merchants held a monopoly on trade.<sup>68</sup> Luzzatto was more explicit in his reassessment of Jews' economic influence during the late Middle Ages. He noted that already in the thirteenth century, that is, before the Black Death, Jews had been reduced to "itinerant peddlers and usurers".<sup>69</sup> If in 1919 Luzzatto reproached Cassutto for having disregarded the marginalization of Jews from international trade, it was also because he had been clear on this point: during the Renaissance, "completely excluded from manufacturing and commodity trade, [Jews] were unable to partake in the large-scale banking and capitalist functions exerted by the large merchant and industrial firms" (who were by definition Christian).<sup>70</sup>

Luzzatto never wrote the planned second volume of his history of Mediterranean commerce, which would have covered the early modern and modern periods; as a result, in 1914 he merely alluded to Livorno, which only rose to prominence after the sixteenth century.<sup>71</sup> Throughout his career, he alternated in-depth monographs and articles with highbrow syntheses and textbooks. Consistent with his views of the Italian communes and his critique of Sombart, he devoted little space to Jews' economic roles. However, his 1958 survey of Italian economic history from the fall of the Roman Empire to the sixteenth century, which is also his only monograph translated into English, was unequivocal in stating that "the importance of the Jews in medieval moneylending is often exaggerated".<sup>72</sup>

### Unlike Braudel and before Goitein

As soon as the first French edition of Braudel's *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World* was published in 1949, Luzzatto reviewed it in the academic journal *Nuova rivista storica*, of which he was then editor-in-chief and, for which, since 1919, he had been curating a review essay section on recent contributions to economic history. It was an appropriately laudatory review, which defended Braudel from the accusation of favouring "historical materialism" or "the transformation of history into historical sociology", and praised his ability to illuminate the interaction between the "physical environment and human development".<sup>73</sup> Though admiring, Luzzatto's assessment of part two of Braudel's study – the one devoted to the economic history of the early modern Mediterranean – is more detailed and more critical. He chides Braudel gently for having indulged in generalizations not fully supported by empirical evidence. According to Luzzatto, for example, the French historian overstated the import of Baltic grains by English and Dutch ships during the 1590s crisis and distorted the then-recent findings by Cipolla when he described sixteenth-century Venice as an "industrial port" in order to counter the historiographical consensus about the Mediterranean's decline after the 1490s.<sup>74</sup>

Luzzatto's closing remarks speak to his overall scholarly demeanour: he questions Braudel's "choice of the Mediterranean as an object of historical analysis, especially during a period of rapid developments as was the second half of the sixteenth century". In his view, this choice forced Braudel "to enlarge his field of observation to regions that were not only very far from the Mediterranean but also that had little direct relation with it". Luzzatto finds it plausible to speak of a "Mediterranean unity" as long as one focuses on rural and urban economies. But he objects to Braudel's inclusion of the world-wide trade in gold and silver, which led him to expand the scope of his analysis to the entire European continent and beyond it, a move that the cautious Luzzatto could not endorse.<sup>75</sup>

Curiously, Luzzatto omits any comment on Braudel's (admittedly marginal) treatment of Jews in the first edition of his magisterial tome. Perhaps he did not wish to criticize his eminent French colleague any further, or perhaps he judged that the topic was merely a dot in Braudel's vast fresco and thus not worth dwelling on.<sup>76</sup> Be that as it may, in 1949 Luzzatto was immersed in reading about Jewish merchants in early modern Venice.

It was the first time in his career that he turned his full attention to Jews' economic activities not during the Middle Ages, but in the period between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. The occasion arose from invitations to contribute to volumes in honour of noted Italian Zionists. We have no way of determining whether the short visit

to the Livorno synagogue or his reading of Braudel influenced the documents that Luzzatto chose to see once he was able to return to his beloved Venetian state archives at the war's end. What we know is that he accepted those invitations and used them to venture beyond his former areas of expertise. The results are three short but dense essays which, although published in less-than-prominent venues between 1950 and 1964, uncover new primary sources regarding the economic and demographic position of Jews in early modern Venice and marshal those sources toward a reevaluation of the city's economic decline in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>77</sup>

In the first and most substantial of these essays, Luzzatto counters Roth's assertion that Jews in Venice suffered a severe economic crisis during the eighteenth century.<sup>78</sup> Roth's conclusion, Luzzatto shows, only applies to the Jewish Community as an administrative and charitable institution, but does not capture the economic dynamism of a few single Jewish individuals and firms. Luzzatto is able to make this distinction because he approaches the subject as an economic rather than a Jewish historian, and with an acute sensitivity towards wealth inequality. His sources come from the Venetian magistrates that oversaw the city- and state-wide economy, rather than from those who taxed and controlled the resident Jewish population. He finds evidence that some wealthy Jews owned large manufacturing establishments (until 1777, when they were prohibited from doing so) and that others, who traded freely with the Levant, enjoyed the protection of Venetian authorities – a much-coveted privilege that until the early sixteenth century had remained a prerogative of the Venetian patriciate.

Luzzatto concludes that “maritime trade and the ownership or outfitting of ships were among the chief economic activities of many Venetian Jews during the eighteenth century”.<sup>79</sup> Such was their influence that in 1797, during the short-lived democratic regime that followed Napoleon's invasion and preceded Venice's annexation to the Habsburg Empire, Jews were responsible for 25% of the taxes due to the city government by all merchants and shipowners in town.<sup>80</sup> According to Luzzatto's calculations, throughout the eighteenth century a third of the Jewish population in Venice was involved in lucrative economic activities that put Jewish merchants on the same footing as the most well-to-do local bourgeoisie.<sup>81</sup> In a companion essay published in 1964, Luzzatto adds detailed data about the Jewish ownership of (shares of) Venetian commercial ships in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the 1770s, as many as 27 Jews partook the ownership of such ships, which were manned by Christian captains and often had biblical names.<sup>82</sup>

Although the presentation style of these short essays is antithetical to that of Braudel, the themes they tackle are the same as those that lie at the heart of *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World*: the relevance of Mediterranean trade after the European expansion in the Atlantic and Indian oceans, and the consequences of the retreat of the urban elites from commerce in favour of land ownership.<sup>83</sup> Evidently, Luzzatto did not shy away from big issues, and brought Jewish economic history to bear on them. He argued that the more the Venetian patriciate pulled its capital away from long-distance trade, the more the Venetian Senate sought to woo those segments of the Jewish diaspora that were most commercially active, notably, “Levantine” Jews coming from the Ottoman Empire and “Ponentine” Jews fleeing Iberia. His conclusions were both original and prudent: if a number of affluent Jews continued to flourish and to keep Venetian commerce afloat through the end of the Republic, their activities did not offset Venice's overall economic decline during the eighteenth century. His argument may seem to echo that of the homonymous seventeenth-century rabbi Simone Luzzatto, who in 1637

defended the city's Jews from a threat of expulsion by inflating their economic contribution to the Venetian state beyond any reasonable measure and stressing their relative docility in comparison to European or Ottoman merchants, who were backed by hostile political powers.<sup>84</sup> In fact, Gino Luzzatto's evidence is far sounder and his argument more circumscribed.

Let us now return to the dramatic spring of 1940 with the insight gained from an overview of Luzzatto's published work on Jewish economic history. In the letter that Luzzatto wrote to Lopez in the aftermath of his trip to Livorno in April 1940, we spot an uncharacteristic lack of caution and even a factual mistake. He relayed that "as a result of the charter issued in 1591 [by the Medici grand dukes], the Elders of the [Jewish] Community [of Livorno] had both civil and criminal jurisdiction over all the city's Jews, including in disputes involving non-Jews".<sup>85</sup> In reality, the tribunal of the Elders of the Jewish Community of Livorno (the Massari), created in 1593 (not 1591), had no jurisdiction whatsoever over non-Jews.<sup>86</sup>

This is a puzzling inaccuracy. Although until that moment Luzzatto had only written about the economic role of Jews in the Middle Ages, a scholar of his calibre and sensibility surely knew that in the segregated, hierarchical, and Judeophobic societies of pre-emancipation Europe, a Jewish tribunal could not try non-Jews. How can we explain Luzzatto's mistake? Perhaps, given the anomalous degree of jurisdictional autonomy granted to Jews in Livorno by the Medici grand dukes, he got carried away and imagined that the jurisdictional reach of the Massari was even greater than it was. Perhaps it was an innocent slip of the pen due to the stress he was under.

Whatever the reason for it, this mistake suggests that, for Luzzatto, part of the allure of the records of the Tribunal of the Massari was the possibility that they did not concern Jews alone. This was a daring idea. Goitein's first volume of *A Mediterranean Society*, devoted to trade, would only appear three years after Luzzatto's death. Amidst a dearth of documentary sources on the economic life of the medieval Islamic world, it advanced the brilliant and controversial claim that the Cairo Geniza was the opposite of an archive (since it collected material meant to be discarded) and that this repository of Jewish "sacred trash" reflected the practices of both Jewish and Muslim traders, who shared a free-trade commercial zone.<sup>87</sup>

The documentary landscape in Livorno is (and was) very much unlike that in Cairo. The records of the Massari are far from the only ones illuminating Jews' economic life, let alone the activities of non-Jewish merchants. It is not clear if Luzzatto realized the extent to which his research would have had to lean on the state archives of Livorno and Florence (a moot question at the time, since he was barred from entering both). Judging from his scant but revealing published work on Jews' economic history, we can be sure that he would have soon grasped the necessity of relying on both Jewish and Christian sources and welcomed the chance to shuttle back and forth between multiple archives in order to integrate the history of Livorno Jews' commercial activities into that of the urban economy.

### **The near destruction of the archives of the Livorno synagogue**

After the armistice of 8 September 1943, which led to the German occupation of northern Italy, Luzzatto fled Venice, from which 246 Jews were deported beginning in November of that year. He survived the rest of the war in Rome, hiding in the home of a friend – a gentile university professor.<sup>88</sup> Having reached Sicily in July 1943, the Allied troops made slow

headway north and liberated Rome on 4 June 1944. In the meantime, Livorno's strategic position as a port with an oil refinery along the railway line ensured that it became a target of both German and Allied bombardments. Beginning in May 1943, Allied aerial raids left the Tuscan city heavily damaged; within two years, Livorno was largely destroyed. Libraries and archival repositories were not spared. The synagogue burst into flames, and with it two-thirds of the archives that had left such an impression on Luzzatto.

The destruction of Jewish cultural and archival patrimony during the Second World War was far from unique to Livorno or Italy, but in a sad and paradoxical turn of events, more was often saved in locations where physical and cultural annihilation was far more brutal than in Tuscany.<sup>89</sup> By the time Luzzatto came across the rich archival collections housed in the Livorno synagogue, the city had long ceased to be an international hub of commerce and Jewish scholarship, and the Jewish population had declined considerably. Not even the census of the library holdings of all Italian Jewish Communities conducted in 1935–1936 registered the existence of Livorno's records.<sup>90</sup> Nor could the few who knew about those documents have done much to keep them safe. While they have always been able to boast of a few great intellectual figures, Italian Jews have also been demographically inconspicuous within the larger Jewish world. That was the position in which Italian Jewish émigrés found themselves after the rise of fascism. Their structural fragility made it impossible to create rescue operations and networks of international solidarity that proved essential to other segments of the diaspora.

Today, the oldest register of the Tribunal of the Massari that is preserved dates to 1753 (the original collection inspected by Luzzatto started in 1626).<sup>91</sup> Very few scholars have ploughed through these few surviving records, in spite of their relevance for historiographical themes of intense and immediate interest such as legal pluralism, inter-religious coexistence, and cultural hybridity. Written in Portuguese, Italian, and Hebrew, these records require expertise in multiple fields. Many of the Jews who were called before the Massari hailed from different parts of the Mediterranean, and carried with them different traditions and expectations. The tribunal occasionally consulted with local rabbis and regularly adjudicated on the basis of an unusually heterogeneous range of sources of law: Halakhah, Roman law, and the positive law of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany (including its Merchant Statutes of 1577), as well as printed and orally transmitted commercial customs. Moreover, while on paper the Medici accorded Livorno Jews unusual jurisdictional autonomy, the possibility of appealing the sentences issued by the Massari meant that many Jewish litigants solicited the intervention of Christian secular tribunals and magistrates at a later stage.

Had Luzzatto been afforded the opportunity to explore the records of the Tribunal of the Massari of Livorno as he wished, he would have soon realized that they did not include “disputes involving non-Jews”. But he would have also found confirmation of his intuition that a Jewish tribunal could open a window onto important aspects of the history of early modern Mediterranean commerce, an intuition that still remains only partially explored.<sup>92</sup>

## Conclusion

Reinstated in his faculty post at the University of Venice in the summer of 1945, Luzzatto was also elected chancellor of the university, a position that he held until 1953. During the last 20 years of his life, he published at a rapid pace and accumulated numerous academic, civic, and political positions (he was an elected member of the



Venice municipal council from 1946 to 1958). We do not know whether, busy as he was, he ever thought of returning to his notes about Livorno or what kind of essays or monograph he might have written had he persisted with that project. What we have tried to show is that in the letters in which Luzzatto sketched the idea for a study of the Massari court as well as in his published work, one finds a telling record of the different strains of Jewish economic history that developed in the inter-war and immediate post-war periods.

The hallmark of Luzzatto's personality and scholarship was a sober judiciousness that distinguished him from most of the great scholars of his generation, who were prone to reaching for bold theses that did not withstand the test of time. He was averse to inflated rhetoric and kept his distance from the Italian idealist tradition that inspired most of his colleagues to study literary and philosophical texts. As his dear friend Roberto Lopez noted at his death, Luzzatto "was not afraid of syntheses, even when they had to be based on fragmentary evidence, but he cared to accompany every general statement with a mitigating sentence, and every mitigating sentence with further specifications".<sup>93</sup>

Luzzatto's reviews of Cassutto, Roth, and Braudel, although published in different journals and many years apart, confirm this disposition, while they also suggest that when it came to Jewish history, Luzzatto was perhaps willing to take a few more risks than usual. Cassutto's and Roth's were the only two major scholarly monographs on Italian Jews published during the inter-war period. They could not be more different: Cassutto's is densely written and heavily annotated; Roth's is riveting and full of anecdotes, with no footnotes and barely two pages of bibliography at the end. Luzzatto, consistently generous and fair-minded, recognized the merits of both. But curiously for someone of his historiographical temperament, who put a premium on novel archival research, he preferred Roth over Cassutto. He could only conceive Jewish history as an integral part of general history, and, in this respect, Roth appeared to him more promising.

When he reviewed Braudel, arguably a more masterful historian than Roth at subsuming archival research into broad new interpretations, Luzzatto tempered his enthusiasm and raised several caveats. He "did not hesitate to place the book among the best of the recent historiography", but the tenor of his criticisms makes plain that he would have been content had the French historian drew more modest conclusions.<sup>94</sup>

In light of his notable prudence, Luzzatto's reaction to the archives housed in the Livorno synagogue stands out. For once he seems to have allowed his imagination to roam freely. We have no way of knowing how he planned to demonstrate, as he wrote when he pleaded for help, that these archives would matter "not only for the history of Jews, but also for Mediterranean commerce during the early modern period". But, as Lopez put it elegantly, Luzzatto had a remarkable ability "to shed light on the document by means of his fantasy and to anchor his fantasy to the document".<sup>95</sup>

Ultimately, all we have by Luzzatto on the subject of Jewish merchants in the early modern Mediterranean are the three essays that he wrote after the Second World War using material from Venice rather than Livorno. Although they draw from a very different body of sources – documents produced by the rulers of the Republic rather than by a Jewish tribunal – they are indicative of Luzzatto's penchant for weaving together the economic history of Jews and of the Mediterranean, as well as for empirically grounded and bounded arguments. It seems fair to assume that, had history unfolded differently, whatever Luzzatto would have written on Livorno would have been unlike either Roth's or Braudel's and would have resembled more his studies of

the Jews of early modern Venice. In these essays, Luzzatto, piecing together new evidence in dry and deliberate prose, revised commonly accepted views of the city's and its Jewish community's economic decline during the eighteenth century. This is no small achievement if one considers the landscape of Jewish economic history in the aftermath of the Shoah. At the time, rarely did Jewish scholars broach the subject. Having survived murderous antisemitism, they hesitated to revisit arguments that touched on questions – and inevitably antisemitic stereotypes – about Jewish economic prowess.

In the past two decades, this reluctance has given way to considerable enthusiasm for the subject, but only limited awareness of the varied national and disciplinary traditions of previous inquiries.<sup>96</sup> Published in Italian in minor venues, Luzzatto's works on the economic history of Italian Jews have been overlooked even by those who have sought to excavate some of these traditions. His study of the Jews of Urbino dates to the start of the twentieth century, when there existed no robust literature on Jews' economic activities; his essays on Jews in early modern Venice appeared when few dared to approach the topic. Over the decades, even in the face of enormous personal and world-historical tragedies, Luzzatto maintained the same commitment to empiricism and the same desire to bring the economic history of Jews to bear on European history at large. These are the reasons why, as we have sought to demonstrate, Luzzatto should be recognized as having made significant contribution to academic debates whose reverberations are still very much with us.

## Notes

1. Lane, "Recent Studies on the Economic History of Venice," 312.
2. Cipolla, "Tre maestri," 875.
3. *Ibid.*, 875.
4. While the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* includes a short entry on Luzzatto by Giorgio Romano, no mention of him or his works is made in the Oxford Bibliography on "Jewish Economic History" authored by Cornelia Aust: <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199840731/obo-9780199840731-0106.xml> (accessed July 8, 2022).
5. Reuveni, "Prolegomena"; Karp, "Can Economic History Date the Inception of Jewish Modernity?"; Kobrin and Teller, "Introduction"; Kobrin, "Breaking the Taboo."
6. Berengo, "Profilo di Gino Luzzatto," 879–91.
7. See the anonymous report of Luzzatto's 1933 lecture titled "The Wandering Jew in the Twentieth Century," published in 1933 with the title "Da Venezia"; and the 1956–1958 correspondence between Luzzatto and Luigi Einaudi held at the Fondazione Luigi Einaudi (Turin), box 2, folder *Gino Luzzatto*.
8. Luzzatto, "Gli ebrei in Italia," 13.
9. Weber, *Zur Geschichte* (translated as *The History of Commercial Partnerships*); Swedberg, *Max Weber*, 182.
10. Luzzatto, *Storia del commercio*, vol. 1, *Dall'antichità al Rinascimento*. Only the first of a projected two volumes initially appeared in print, although Luzzatto later published his lecture notes covering the entire period from Antiquity to the present: Luzzatto, *Lezioni di storia del commercio. Il commercio nell'età moderna* and *Lezioni di storia del commercio. Il commercio nell'Età contemporanea*.
11. Gino Luzzatto to Luigi Armanni, head of the Istituto Superiore di Economia e Commercio di Venezia, September 26, 1921, in Ca' Foscari University of Venice (Italy), Archivio storico, series *Personale docente*, folder *Gino Luzzatto*.
12. The last issue of Salvemini's *L'Unità* was published in December 1920. See Golzio and Guerra, "Introduzione." This periodical should not be confused with that by the same name

- founded in 1924 by Antonio Gramsci as the official newspaper of the Italian Communist Party.
13. Salvemini, *Magnati e popolani in Firenze*, and Compagni, *Cronica*.
  14. On Salvemini's years at Harvard, see Killinger, *Gaetano Salvemini*, 241–66, and Camurri, "Introduzione," xlvii–lvii.
  15. Luzzatto, *I prestiti della repubblica di Venezia*.
  16. Luzzatto, "Les activités économiques du patriciat vénitien." Hans Baron's reference appears at the opening of his Review of *Andrea Barbarigo* by Lane, 787. Bloch's meeting with Luzzatto in 1934 is recorded in a letter that the French historian sent to Pirenne: Lyon and Lyon, eds., *The Birth of the Annales History*, 163. For his part, Luzzatto featured several reviews of his French colleagues in the prestigious Italian academic journal, *Nuova rivista storica*, of which he became the editor-in-chief in 1930.
  17. Lane, *Andrea Barbarigo*, 7.
  18. Amintore Fanfani, who later served as prime minister of the post-war Italian Republic, occupied Luzzatto's university post while the Racial Laws were in place.
  19. Ministry of the Interior, Protocol no. 8900, Rome, March 10, 1940–XVIII.
  20. Ministry of Education, Protocol no. 1919, Rome, February 10, 1942–XX.
  21. Between 1940 and 1943, he signed 11 articles as Giuseppe Padovan. His translation of Kent Roberts Greenfield's *Economics and Liberalism* (1940) was published without mention of his name. A seasoned translator, before 1940 Luzzatto had already rendered in Italian works by Alfred Doren, Ludo Moritz Hartmann, Friedrich Naumann, Walter Rathenau, and Sombart (on the latter, see n. 53).
  22. This section summarizes but also expands on Munari and Trivellato, "Gino Luzzatto."
  23. The two organizations were the Comitato di Assistenza per gli Ebrei in Italia, founded in 1938, and the Delegazione Assistenza Emigranti Ebrei, or D.E.L.A.S.E.M., established in 1939. See Berengo, "Profilo di Gino Luzzatto," 920. Luzzatto was vice-president of the Venice Jewish Community from 1942 until his death.
  24. Luzzatto to Armando Saporì, Venice, March 14, 1940, and Venice, April 4, 1940: Zavattoni, "Caro Saporì," 264, 266.
  25. Luzzatto, "Livorno." Entries in the *Enciclopedia Italiana* omit any bibliographical reference, but judging from Luzzatto's personal library, he borrowed generously from a comprehensive study on the port of Livorno and from the thesis of a former student, published as an article, on the golden age of the port-city in the seventeenth century: Baruchello, *Livorno e il suo porto*, and Di Pietro, "La funzione economica del porto di Livorno."
  26. Roth, "Notes sur les Marranes de Livourne," also published in Italian as "I Marrani di Livorno."
  27. In 1929–1930, as a testament to his friendship with Ottolenghi, who perished in Auschwitz, Luzzatto reviewed three minor historical works by him in a respectable local academic journal: "Leon da Modena," "Il governo democratico di Venezia," and "Abraham Lattes."
  28. Ca' Foscari University of Venice (Italy), Biblioteca di area economica, Archivio Gino Luzzatto, box II/A, folder 12. The only scholar who, to our knowledge, ever mentioned this research note mistakenly attributed it to the period when Luzzatto lived in Pisa (1906–1910): Levis Sullam, *Una comunità immaginata*, 182, n.86.
  29. On the establishment of the Tribunal of the Massari and its prerogatives, see Toaff, *La Nazione Ebraica*, 48, 205–41.
  30. Neither Roth's "Notes sur les Marranes" nor his *History of the Marranos* imply any extensive research in the Livorno synagogue archives. As with all Roth's books on Jewish history, the latter text does not include footnotes, and gathers only a few bibliographical references at the end: *ibid.*, 213–19.
  31. Luzzatto, Review of *Venice* by Roth. In a tribute to Luzzatto published soon after his death, Roth transcribed the notes that Luzzatto had sent him in 1945: Roth, "Gino Luzzatto," 168–9. Those notes were incorporated in Roth, *History of the Jews*, 509–53.
  32. "In Italy, my teachers are [Gino] Luzzatto, [Armando] Saporì, and [Vito] Vitale, although formally, I have not studied with any of them." Roberto Lopez to Anthony Molho, New Haven, undated letter, likely from 1981 or 1982, Brown University Archives, Anthony Molho Papers, folder *Robert S. Lopez*.

33. Luzzatto to Lopez, Venice, April 16, 1940: Yale University Library, Manuscripts and Archives, Robert Sabatino Lopez Papers, MS 1459, box 7, folder 148. The full text is reproduced, with minor typos, in Mogavero, "Dal carteggio tra Gino Luzzatto e Roberto Lopez," 136–7.
34. Gaetano Salvemini to Roberto Lopez, Cambridge, MA, May 29, 1940: original on Harvard University letterhead in possession of Roberto Lopez's heirs; partial transcription in Varsori, *Roberto Lopez*, 131. For biographical details on the two individuals mentioned by Salvemini, see "A Memoir of Selig Perlman," and Steinberg, "Max Kadushin."
35. Lopez, "Uno scienziato e un'alta coscienza," 151.
36. Braudel, *La Méditerranée*; Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*.
37. Luzzatto to Lopez, Venice, April 16, 1940, cit. n. 33 earlier.
38. Freimann and Kracauer, *Frankfort*; Adler, *London*; Grunwald, *Vienna*; Straus, *Regensburg and Augsburg*; Vogelstein, *Rome*; and Kober, *Cologne*. One more volume would appear in 1943, the only one to have since been republished (in 1992): Cohen, *Vilna*. On the history of the Jewish Publication Society of America, see Madison, *Jewish Publishing in America*, 25–42.
39. Luzzatto to Lopez, Venice, April 16, 1940, cit. n. 33 earlier.
40. Roth, "Gino Luzzatto," 167.
41. Luzzatto, Review of *Venice* by Roth, 123. The paucity of studies of Italian Jewry before 1930 becomes evident if one leafs through Gabrieli, *Italia Judaica*, and Milano, *Biblioteca Historica Italo-Judaica*.
42. Luzzatto, Review of *Venice* by Roth, 125.
43. *Ibid.*, 124.
44. *Ibid.*, 124.
45. Roth, *The Last Florentine Republic*. Incidentally, this monograph, unlike his following ones, is amply annotated.
46. Roth to Henry Hurwitz (editor of *Menorah Journal*), London, January 26, 1927, cit. in Krome, "Creating 'Jewish History,'" 227.
47. Roth to Hurwitz, London, June 1, 1928, cit. *ibid.*, 226.
48. Roth, *Gli Ebrei in Venezia*; Momigliano, Review of *Gli Ebrei in Venezia*; Ruderman, "Cecil Roth."
49. Luzzatto to Roth, Venice, July 17, 1950, cit. in Nahon, "Spigolature," 565.
50. Cassuto, *Gli ebrei a Firenze*. See also Luzzati, "La storiografia italiana," 130.
51. Luzzatto, "Rassegna." None of the other books under review treated a Jewish subject.
52. *Ibid.*, 637.
53. Sombart, *Il capitalismo moderno*. See also Luzzatto, "L'origine e gli albori del capitalismo." No complete English translation of Sombart's three-volume work exists.
54. Luzzatto, "Rassegna," 638. Luzzatto had already summarized and discussed Sombart's thesis in his lecture notes: *Lezioni di storia del commercio. Il commercio nell'età moderna*, 15–17. In 1931 he again took aim at Sombart when he reviewed the lectures on ancient economy by the German Catholic and Liberal historian Lujo Brentano, who had been among the earliest critics of Sombart's views of early modern Jews and capitalism. As Luzzatto noted, Brentano stressed that in ancient Palestine Jews were peasants and shepherds: Luzzatto, "Rassegna di storia economica," 145.
55. Luzzatto, "Rassegna," 638.
56. Luzzatto, *I banchieri ebrei in Urbino*, 10.
57. Roscher's article had been published simultaneously in German and Italian, and Luzzatto cited from the latter version: Roscher, "La situazione degli ebrei." Note that the later English translation omitted the second half of Roscher's piece (see n. 64), which is devoted to a comparison between Jews and other ethno-religious minorities.
58. Luzzatto, *I banchieri ebrei in Urbino*, 26–7.
59. *Ibid.*, 20–1, 40–7. Five years later, Luzzatto wrote an article on Jewish lending to the public fisc in a small city-state in central Italy during the thirteenth century: Luzzatto, "I prestiti comunali."
60. Luzzatto's personal library preserves a copy of three studies that informed his 1914 survey: Büchele, *Geschichte des Welthandels*; Goldschmidt, *Universalgeschichte des Handelsrechts*; and Heyd, *Storia del commercio del Levante*.
61. Pirenne, "Les périodes de l'histoire sociale du capitalisme" (translated as "The Stages in the History of Capitalism"). Pirenne expounded his views on the subject in *Medieval Cities*, and

*Le mouvement économique et social au Moyen Âge* (translated as *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe*).

62. Luzzatto, *Storia del commercio*, 221.
63. In 1932 Luzzatto would introduce Anglophone readers to the remarkable contributions of both the Marxist Italian historians of the medieval communes and the Italian scholars of the legal institutions of medieval trade in an article translated by Edler de Roover: Luzzatto, "Study of Medieval Economic History."
64. We cite from the abridged translation of Roscher's article in English: Roscher, "The Status of the Jews," 16, 20 (orig. "Die Stellung der Juden im Mittelalter").
65. Kisch, "The Jews' Function." Born in Prague in 1889, Kisch fled Eastern Europe in 1935 and settled in New York, where he contributed to the establishment of the Leo Baeck Institute. He was the founder and editor of *Historia Judaica* from 1938 to 1961, when the journal was absorbed by the *Revue des études juives*. Note that in a scathing criticism of the publication of a new English edition of Sombart's *The Jews and Modern Capitalism*, in 1951 Kisch lamented Sombart's omission of any reference to Roscher's classic essay or its accompanying bibliography: Kisch, Review of *The Jews and Modern Capitalism* by Sombart, 158.
66. Oelsner, "William Roscher's Theory," 177. See also Oelsner, "The Place of the Jews." Neither piece makes any mention of Luzzatto, or any other Italian author, even in regard to the economic history of medieval Italian Jews. Both focus on German- and English-language literature, with an occasional mention of French work.
67. Michael Toch has been instrumental in contesting Roscher's thesis and illustrating the sources of its past legitimacy, but he does not engage with Luzzatto's work: Toch, *Economic History of European Jews*, "Jews and Commerce," and "Economic Activities." Julie Mell lists Luzzatto's *An Economic History of Italy* in a footnote (*Myth of the Medieval Jewish Moneylender*, 1: 141, n. 135) but focuses on US-based critics of Roscher and Sombart, and on German-speaking Jewish émigrés in particular. See also Mell, "Twentieth-Century Jewish Émigrés," esp. 578, n. 45.
68. Luzzatto, *Storia del commercio*, 166. See also *ibid.*, 4, 6–7.
69. *Ibid.*, 394.
70. *Ibid.*, 394.
71. *Ibid.*, 314. He devoted a few pages to the rapid rise of Livorno and the decisive contribution to this development made by Jewish merchants in his lecture notes: Luzzatto, *Lezioni di storia del commercio. Il commercio nell'età moderna*, 38–9.
72. Luzzatto, *An Economic History of Italy*, 134 (orig. *Breve storia economica d'Italia*, 257–8; the latter volume was re-issued with a slightly different title: *Breve storia economica dell'Italia medievale*, 171). Luzzatto had similarly downplayed Jews' role in the medieval economy in two earlier syntheses: Luzzatto, *Storia economica dell'età moderna e contemporanea*, 1: 69–70, 194, 230, 258–60, 374–5, and *Storia economica d'Italia*, vol. 1, *L'Antichità e il Medioevo*, 384–5 (a revised version of the latter appeared as *Storia economica d'Italia. Il Medioevo*, 293–5). Luzzatto's survey of Venice's economic history ends before Jews settled in the city in any significant number, but notes the role of those residing in Constantinople, where Venetian merchants commonly traded in the Middle Ages: Luzzatto, *Storia economica di Venezia dall'XI al XVI secolo*, 61, 174.
73. Luzzatto, "Il Mediterraneo nella seconda metà del Cinquecento," 497, 501.
74. *Ibid.*, 499.
75. *Ibid.*, 501.
76. Braudel, *La Méditerranée*, 275–6 (on Jews' role in the transfer of technical know-how), 357 (the expulsions of Jews from Iberia and Spanish Italy, with one chronological inaccuracy), 555 (on the manufacturing investments of the Jews of Salonica and Constantinople), 598 (on Jews' supposed attraction, "as by a necessary law, to new countries [...] where they are better valued, as the north of Europe, Asia, America, and Turkey"), 617–18 (on the predominance of Jews, Armenians, Greeks, and European residents among "the urban bourgeois" and "merchants" in the Ottoman Empire). We cite from the first French edition that Luzzatto read. Braudel would expand his treatment of Jewish merchants and bankers in the second edition of his work, which also exists in English translation: Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, 2: 814–26.
77. Roth's omission of these essays by Luzzatto in his "Economic History of the Jews," 131–5, has contributed to their obscurity among Anglophone scholars.

78. Luzzatto, “Sulla condizione economica degli ebrei veneziani.”
79. Ibid., 165. Although Jews in Venice were forbidden from trading in grain, for fear that they could starve the Christian population during one of the recurrent famines, Luzzatto uncovered evidence of their involvement in the procurement and commercialization of this strategic food staple.
80. Ibid., 170. Luzzatto gave a full account of the 1797 census of Venice Jews in his “Un’anagrafe degli Ebrei di Venezia,” 194–8.
81. Luzzatto, “Sulla condizione economica,” 172.
82. Luzzatto, “Armatori ebrei a Venezia,” 160–8.
83. Braudel had famously spoken of a “trahison de la bourgeoisie” in *La Méditerranée*, 619 (*The Mediterranean*, 725–6).
84. Luzzatto, *Discourse on the State of the Jews*.
85. Luzzatto to Lopez, Venice, April 16, 1940, cit. n. 33 earlier.
86. The 1593 decree granting the Massari jurisdiction on “all the disputes that may arise between one Jew and another” is reproduced in Toaff, *La Nazione Ebraica*, 426, 429.
87. Goitein called the Cairo Geniza fragments “the very opposite of an archive” because they only include what was not meant to be preserved for personal or legal purposes: Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, 1: 7. Goitein spoke often of a “Jewish-Arab symbiosis” with regard to medieval Spain and Egypt: e.g., Goitein, *Jews and Arabs*, 155–67 and *A Mediterranean Society*, 2: 289–99. See also Hoffman and Cole, *Sacred Trash*.
88. Ciasca, “Un anno con Luzzatto.”
89. Under extreme conditions, a few brave Jews hid traces of what was happening in the Nazi ghettos of Łódź, Warsaw, Riga, and Vilnius: Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness*, 1–55; Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History?*; Kuznitz, *Making of Modern Jewish Culture*, 181–9.
90. The census, titled *Relazione sui tesori bibliografici delle Comunità Israelitiche d’Italia*, was entrusted by the Federation of Italian Jewish Communities (Unione delle Comunità Israelitiche Italiane) to the bibliographer and palaeographer Isaia Sonne. Livorno is among the few cities that were not surveyed. The *Relazione* can now be consulted online on the website of the Fondazione Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea (CDEC): <https://www.cdec.it/progetti-editoriali/isaia-sonne-e-la-relazione-sul-patrimonio-bibliografico-e-archivistico-delle-comunita-israelitiche-italiane> (accessed July 8, 2022).
91. The most comprehensive inventory of the Livorno Jewish community archives is a typescript compiled in 1984 by Amanda Floridi, Gloria Mazzi, and Daniela Tazzi, available in hard copy at the Archivio storico della Comunità ebraica and the Archivio di Stato di Livorno. The registers of the Tribunal of the Massari, perhaps because of their binding, are not among the material that has been digitized and made available online at: <http://www.keidos.net/digitalib/archliv/index.php> (accessed July 8, 2022).
92. Oliel-Grausz, “‘Entre juif et juif?’”, Oliel-Grausz “The Court of the *Massari*”; Trivellato, “Sephardic Merchants between State and Rabbinic Courts.”
93. Lopez, “Uno scienziato e un’alta coscienza,” 149.
94. Luzzatto, “Il Mediterraneo nella seconda metà del Cinquecento,” 502.
95. Lopez, “Uno scienziato,” 149.
96. See also Trivellato, “An Economic Historian Reads Salo Baron.”

### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

### Notes on contributors

**Tommaso Munari** holds a PhD in History and Civilization from the European University Institute (Florence) and teaches the History of the Book at the University of Turin.

**Francesca Trivellato** is Andrew W. Mellon Professor of early modern European History at the Institute for Advanced Study, in Princeton, NJ. Her latest monograph is *The Promise and Peril of Credit: What a Forgotten Legend about Jews and Finance Tells us about the Making of European Commercial Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

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