INTRODUCTION

The documents presented here in full or abridged deal with the history of the Jews of Umbria. They were culled from the public archives of the region.

The texts cover the period from the second half of the thirteenth century to 1569, i.e., from the first Jewish presence in Umbria to the expulsion decreed by Pius V. While these documents help us answer some questions, others are left unanswered. On one hand, the documents provide us with important elements for correctly framing the Jews’ economic role and their relationships with the political powers: the communes, the popes and the Mendicant Orders. Furthermore, they enlighten us on aspects of the Jews’ daily life and on their relationships with the Christian environment. On the other hand, the same documents leave the cultural production and the religious life of the Jewish communities mostly in the shade. Local councils, notaries and their clients did not deem it necessary to deal with such aspects, although they were important.

Despite such limitations, the archival documentation seems to us essential for picturing the historical presence of the Jews in Umbria. Jewish literary sources, whether published or not, enable us to complete such an outlook, providing us with elements critical to its comprehension. Therefore, we trust that our effort, even with its objective limitations, may be useful to people who devote themselves to the history of the Jews of Umbria and of Italy in general.

Umbria — Problems of Political Geography

It is difficult to give an accurate geographical definition of Umbria. During the Renaissance, in the footsteps of Flavio Biondo’s *Italia Illustrata* (Venezia 1474), Umbria was divided into two main regions: Tuscia and the Duchy of Spoleto. The former included the area situated on the right bank of the Tiber (mainly Perugia and its territory, excluding Orvieto and nearby areas considered part of the Patrimony of St. Peter). The Duchy of Spoleto included the large territory delimited by the Apennines and the Tiber and Aniene rivers. It ran along the Apennines, reaching the imaginary boundary which included (north to south) Scheggino, Gualdo Tadino, Nocera, Colfiorito, Sellano, Cerreto, Visso, Norcia, Cascia, Monteleone, Narni and Otricoli. Tuscia consisted of two sectors: 1) Città
di Castello and its surrounding areas, including Citera, Lippiano and Monte S. Maria; 2) Perugia and its territory, from Fratta to Deruta, Marsciano, Castiglion del Lago and Casa Castalda. The Duchy of Spoleto included Spoleto itself, Foligno, Assisi, Acquasparta, Spello and Montefalco. Northwards, it included Gualdo Tadino and Gubbio (until 1384, when Gubbio voluntarily decided to become part of the Duchy of Urbino). Southwards, this large territory included Terra Arnolfa, to which Todi, Narni, Terni and Amelia belonged.¹

In the second half of the fourteenth century and all during the fifteenth, all of the area under the name of Umbria was directly subject to the popes of Rome. Nevertheless, this area as well as Central and Northern Italy were characterised by the formation of Signorie and by attempts to change the type of government, from communes to wider regional states. Therefore, Umbria had its own rulers and tyrants: the Baglioni, the Fortebraccio, the Trinci, the Vitelli, the Malatesta and the Montefeltro. This trend was indirectly facilitated by the weakness of the popes, who were unable to exercise real control over the communes.² Primarily, the popes tried to make their influential presence felt, taking advantage of the rivalries that existed between local factions: the nobles, the middle class and the people, as well as of the internal power struggles going on among prominent local families. The popes’ policy of divide et impera and the substantial economic weakness of the Umbrian communes’ leadership prevented any group from effectively prevailing in the region; this assured a continuing fragmentation of the territory. The attempts of Braccio Fortebraccio and of the Baglioni to consolidate the supremacy of Perugia over the whole area were not successful. Similarly, the attempt of the Trinci of Foligno did not meet with success, although in 1421 they were able to extend their supremacy as far as Nocera, Montefalco, Giano, Gualdo, Bevagna, Bettona and Trevi. Equally unsuccessful were the attempts carried out by the Vitelli in Città di Castello.

The sixteenth century witnessed the final supremacy of papal power in Umbria. The year 1540 marked the end of the autonomist and hegemonic ambitions of Perugia. Henceforth, the political, economic and social history of Umbria became an integral part of the wider history of the Papal State.³

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1 See Renouard, Città italiane, II, pp. 307–308; Volpi, Le regioni introvabili, passim; Grohmann, L’Umbria, pp. 20–32.
2 See Maire Vigueur, Comuni e Signorie in Umbria, pp. 242–262.
3 See Grohmann, L’Umbria, passim.
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The Origins: Judei Mercatores Romanam Curiam Sequentes

After the second half of the thirteenth century, Jewish bankers (either as individuals or as companies) moved along the important consular routes from Rome to the towns of Central and Northern Italy. They were invited by the rulers of those communes to integrate into the local credit market, using their capital in cooperation with or instead of the great business houses of Tuscany and Lombardy. The migratory stream of Roman Jews significantly involved Umbria, establishing communities which, as time went by, became more numerous in an area where Jews had always been absent or where their presence had been transitory or sporadic.

In the twelfth century, the important towns of Todi, Narni, Terni and Amelia (in the Terra Arnulphorum) as well as Perugia and Assisi (in the Duchy of Spoleto) constituted themselves as communes. In the second half of the thirteenth century, the popes followed a policy of tightening the bonds of those towns with Rome. These bonds manifested themselves in formal recognition of papal authority and payment of annual taxes as well as different types of contributions. However, these ties were considered inadequate. In order to deepen its own intervention in the internal questions of the towns, keeping the cities' policy of alliance under control, Rome used Christian and generally Tuscan bankers and merchants Romanam curiam sequentes, striving to strengthen the economic dependence of the communes on them. It is within this political-economic situation, typical of almost all provinces of the Papal State, that we witness the appearance of the first loan companies of Jews from Rome (de Urbe) in the communes of Umbria. These companies turned up in the communes of Umbria as a new and active element in the financial market. Actually, one has the impression that the activity of Roman Jews in the credit market of Umbrian communes (from the second half of the thirteenth century until the beginning of the fourteenth century) did not compete with the Tuscan merchant companies tied to the Curia. It rather seems that it was planned in concordance with them and at the initiative of the popes themselves. Significantly, in some communes of Central Italy, these Roman Jews, known in documents as Romani, or Judei de Urbe, appear for the first time in association with Christian and Tuscan loan companies.

4 See Colorni, Prestito ebraico, pp. 1–55; Poliakov, Les banquiers juifs, pp. 308f.
5 See Dupré Theseider, Roma dal comune di popolo, pp. 21, 40–43; Renouard, Compagnies commerciales, passim; Id., Città italiane, II, pp. 307–308.
6 See Toaff, Ebrei romani, pp. 188–189; Poliakov, Les banquiers juifs, pp. 73–74.
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The documents concerning this political-economic trend in the communes of Umbria are relatively numerous. Roman Jews, represented by the company of Vitale, son of Genatano, appeared in Todi for the first time in January 1289, and made a contract (condotta) with the commune. Shortly after, in 1292 and in 1297, two more loan companies of Roman Jews followed suit (the latter with 21 partners). They began to engage in money trading, reaching official agreements with the commune which was their most favoured client. Nevertheless, even after the establishment in the city of Roman Jewish loan companies, Todi continued to turn for alternative financial aid to some Tuscan banking houses, thus contracting huge loans, sometimes for more than twenty thousand florins. The Tuscan banking houses were the Ricciardi of Lucca, the Chiarenti of Pistoia, the Bonsignori of Siena, the Pulci-Rimbertini and the Mozzi-Spini of Florence — who constituted the most important mercatores curiales, charged with the Pope's financial activities. Under the terms of the charter of privileges (condotta) stipulated in 1289 (the text of which reappears almost unaltered in the charters of 1292 and of 1297), Jewish bankers, inter alia, were protected against retaliation (rapresalia) by local people having pending matters with Roman citizens. Rapresalia was a widespread juridical institution in the Middle Ages. If communes or private citizens suffered financial damage or were deprived of goods in another commune, they had the right to seize the property of citizens of that commune in their territory until the damage was repaid or the stolen money was returned. This confirms that Jewish moneylenders operating in Todi enjoyed the status of Roman citizens and that, while trying to benefit from such advantages, they were also managing to protect themselves from any danger that might occur. The Todi charters of privileges stated that, should the commune break the agreement, half of the sizeable penalty had to be paid to the Roman Jews and half to the Curia of Rome. This provision is traceable to the text of other charters to Jewish bankers in the communes of Central Italy, thus confirming the close links that existed between the Roman Jewish companies and the Curia.

7 Docs. 27, 28, 36, 37, 38, 42. See Ceci, Todi nel Medio Evo, pp. 339-340; Leonij, Archivio Segreto di Todi, pp. 188f.; Rossi, Ebrei in Todi, pp. 31-71.
8 See Rossi, Ebrei in Todi, pp. 48f. On the Tuscan mercatores curiales see Renouard, Città italiane, II, pp. 101-102; Id., Compagnies commerciales, passim.
9 See Casanova-Del Vecchio, Le rappresaglie, passim.
10 This is the case of S. Gimignano in Tuscany. See Davidsohn, Florenz, II, pp. 328-329; Lewinsky, Ebrei in Italia, pp. 195-197; Fiumi, S. Gimignano, pp. 184-185; Poliakov, Les banquiers juifs, p. 54.
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During the years 1296–1299, a Jewish partnership led by Manuele, son of Magister Matassia de Urbe, operated in Terni; seven of its partners were lending the commune sizeable amounts of money. Roman Jews appeared in the money market when the commune was facing expensive urban expansion and hence was looking for funds, at the same time that the Holy See was trying to control the policy of local rulers more rigidly. It is not by chance that the commune, owing Jews money, indirectly subjected itself to the jurisdiction of the Apostolic Chamber’s Auditor, binding the guarantors’ personal properties and estates.

The records of the Minor Council of the People of Perugia in the years 1275–1277 detail underhand political manoeuvres which led to connections between the rulers of the commune and the Roman Jewish companies. Since most of the active bankers were the same people who were active in Todi and Terni (and presumably in other centers of Umbria), as well as Matelica and S. Severino (in the Marca of Ancona), it is important to reveal the powers operating behind the scenes and the interests they were pursuing. The bankers’ arrival in Perugia was prepared by a resolution of the Minor Council of the People in the summer of 1262. According to this resolution, only citizens of Perugia could lend money in town; Roman Jews were the only exception, and were explicitly allowed to dwell freely in Perugia and to operate in the financial market at will. It was precisely this that noticeably increased the Jewish presence in Perugia, which until then had been rather discontinuous and sporadic. In the years immediately following, a large company of Jewish bankers (de Urbe), led by Angelo, son of Beniamino, moved to Perugia and bound itself to the commune by means of large amounts of privileged loans. These were granted with the personal guarantee of the wealthiest and most influential citizens, who were themselves often members of the families of the commune rulers. This was a period of great urban expansion in Perugia, so the Jews in the local money market played an indispensable role. Later, in the winter of 1275, for reasons unknown to us, the commune decided to rescind its links with the Roman Jewish bankers; it applied the 1262 resolution prohibiting moneylending by non-citizens. This presented the commune with a two-sided problem, the solution of which immediately appeared arduous indeed. The first difficulty was to expel the Jews (who had been notified at

12 See Angeloni, Storia di Terni, pp. 159–161; Ottaviani, Cronistoria, pp. 35–41.
13 On the activity of Jewish bankers in Matelica and S. Severino during the 13th century see Luzatto, Ebrei a Matelica, pp. 249–272; Colorni, Prestito ebraico, p. 29.
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the last minute and were expected to leave quickly) before they could retrieve their credits, which had been guaranteed by the city’s notables (boni viri) and amounted to a sizeable sum. The second was the unilateral annulment of the financial agreements with the Jews, which was probably inserted in a charter of privileges whose has been lost. Such an annulment would have inevitably caused an open confrontation with the powers supporting the Jews. The documents made no secret of who the powers were. As a matter of fact, the rulers of the commune sent a delegation to Rome to find out whether Pope Gregorius X intended to oppose their resolution and how determined he was. Meanwhile, the expulsion of the Jews was suspended donec ambaxatores qui ire debent ad dominum papam reddierunt et scire poterit quod de ipso negotio poterit adimpleri. The answer of the Curia was obvious; upon the ambassadors’ return from Rome in January 1276, the rulers of the commune, in spite of their own stand, decided to suspend the decree and to tolerate the presence of Jews in Perugia. All these steps were motivated by “the love of cardinals, of the commune and the people of Rome”. During the meeting of January 6, 1276, Petruccio Andrei, one of the most influential members of the commune General Council, following the protests of some of his colleagues, obviously unaware of the underhanded intrigues, revealed that Roman Jewish bankers had been introduced to the commune by the Curia or, as he himself said, “quod cardinalis judeos recommendavit Communi Perusii.” The case of Perugia in the years 1275–1276 clearly confirms that the Jewish bankers from Rome, mentioned in the documents as Judei de Urbe or, better yet as Romani, had been introduced into the communes of Umbria and more generally into the Papal State, by the cardinals of the Roman Curia, directly or through the great Tuscan business houses, Romanam curiam sequentes, which were active in those areas and with which the Jews were sometimes associated. Be that as it may, on January 1, 1277, the Capitano del Popolo expelled the Jews from Perugia without specifying whether the commune had returned the money to the Jews. However, ten years later, the bonds tying

16 Docs. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15. See Toaff, Ebrei a Perugia, pp. 14–15.
17 See Toaff, Ebrei romani, pp. 194–196. It must be noted that already in 1255, Pope Alexander IV, while granting extensive privileges to two different trading companies of Jewish businessmen from Rome, called them mercatores curiam nostram sequentes (see Simonsohn, Apostolic See, p. 211 n. 205).
18 Docs. 16, 17. See Toaff, Ebrei a Perugia, pp. 15–16.
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Rome to Jewish bankers operating in Umbria appear to be even more explicit. In February 1287, the Savelli family (to whom Pope Onorius IV belonged), as well as the Consuls of the Mercanzia of Rome, firmly requested the commune of Perugia to grant a charter of privileges, under very favourable terms, to a large partnership of Roman Jewish bankers. This company, led by Bonaventura, son of Beniamino, had already been operating, albeit unofficially, in Perugia at least since 1284. Under the pressure of Pandolfo Savelli, the Pope’s brother and at that time senator of Rome, the rulers of the city granted the Jews a privileged status (which foreigners did not enjoy). They were granted equal legal standing with the Perugian citizens under civil and criminal law. In exchange for these privileges, the Jews committed themselves to grant the commune a loan of almost 4,000 pounds free of interest.\textsuperscript{19} We witness here further convincing evidence of the strong ties which linked the Roman Jewish bankers to the Holy See. Such ties should be viewed within the framework of the Holy See’s general policy which aimed at controlling the economy and maintaining a tighter grip on the communes of the Papal State.

As could be foreseen, the communes appear to be the privileged clients of these first loan companies of Roman Jews. The communes drew money rather heavily from them for budgetary needs, the salaries of several officials, military expenses, import of foodstuffs, urban development and the construction of public buildings. The amounts of money were relevant, as proved by the fact that in 1335, the commune of Perugia owed the Jews approximately 8,500 florins, a sum it was totally unable to pay back.\textsuperscript{20} At the same time, moneylenders also dealt with local clientele, including the whole social spectrum, and the particularly large rural population. Here, most of the loans granted were for small consumption credit.

Documents reveal that during this period, Jewish bankers granted loans called \textit{de duplo}. These loans caused frequent polemics, since they were considered immoral.\textsuperscript{21} Contracts were written for double the sum actually loaned as a guarantee for the creditor. Once half of the apparent debt had been materially reimbursed with the agreed interest, the creditor gave up the second half of the apparent debt, as if in an act of generosity. However, in case of partial or total insolvency, the debt collection demanded was double of the loan actually granted. It was a legal action against the property of the debtor and against his freedom, while guaranteeing

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{19} Doc. 28. See Mira, \textit{Attivita creditizia}, pp. 95–97.
\item \textsuperscript{20} See Mira, \textit{Attivita creditizia}, pp. 107–108.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Docs. 94, 95, 147. See Toaff, \textit{Ebrei a Terni}, pp. 250–251.
\end{itemize}
payment of legal expenses. When a commune contacted Jews for a loan, it was generally represented in the contracts by a group of fidejussors, prominent and wealthy citizens who personally guaranteed reimbursement of the sums, thus binding their own properties and estates. In such cases Jews often wrote, in Hebrew on the back of the parchment of the notary’s contract, the names of the guarantors, the amount of the loans, the date (Gregorian month and Hebrew year), specifying, in order to avoid misunderstandings, that it was a loan to the commune. We possess such examples of registrations in Hebrew for Perugia, Terni and Deruta. Archival documents supply us with evidence of a Jewish presence at the beginning of the fourteenth century in almost all communes of Umbria, such as Assisi, Montefalco, Gubbio, Cascia, Cannara, Deruta, Gualdo Cattaneo, Giano, Visso, Bevagna, Foligno, Amelia, Trevi, Spoleto and La Fratta (Umbertide). In most of these towns, the first groups of Roman Jews (in all cases we deal with de Urbe Jews) appeared for the first time as early as the end of the thirteenth century, leaving no trace of their presence in documents discovered until now.

Perugia had been the most important commune of Umbria, so it is no wonder if it attracted, from its very beginning, the largest and financially more consistent Jewish nucleus. We are able to enumerate seventeen Jewish bankers in 1344, spread out in different local quarters, paying the commune their yearly money-lending tax — which means that the Jewish community numbered more than one hundred people. In Assisi, where Jewish bankers had been particularly active since the beginning of the century, eleven Jewish money-lenders appeared in 1341. The Jewish community of Perugia was recognised officially as Universitas Judeorum around 1390, but it acted as and was legally considered a collective body from the beginning of the century. In 1310 Jews, as individuals, were exempted from declaring their own personal property to the real estate register (catasto). Instead, they were registered collectively and were taxed 3,000 pounds. Later the tax was raised to 4,000 pounds. During the years 1335–1342, some of the better-off Jews were registered as individuals, although the Jews of Perugia continued to be taxed collectively. In confirmation of this, the jurist Bartolo of Sassoferrato (1313–1357),
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professor at the University of Perugia, recognised the legality of bequests in favour of the Jewish community, as if individual Jews were their beneficiaries (legatum factum Judeis de Perusio, videtur factum ut singulis, non collegio, valet).26

The Jewish communities of the Spoleto Duchy collectively paid a tax to the Apostolic Chamber to obtain the privilege of residing and operating in all communes of the region. The Latin text speaks of licentia et securitas (...) standi et morandi in quibuscumque terris et loci ducatus, ac eundi et transeundi per totam dictam provinciam libere et secure in personis et rebus. We have several examples of such payments. In 1324, Consiglio of Bevagna, acting pro se et aliis judaeis commorantibus in ducatu Spoleti, paid the Apostolic Chamber 160 florins. In 1338, Angelo of Musetto of Cannara, treasurer of the Jews of the Duchy, succeeded in getting the tax reduced by 50% (the tax had been previously raised to 200 florins). In 1350, Guglielmo, son of Angelo, and Aron, son of Aleuccio, acting pro omnibus Judaeis habitantibus in provincia Spoletani ducatus, were fined 100 florins, paid to the Apostolic Chamber, on “both men and women, to obtain indemnity for known and unknown violations of the law.” Obviously, we are dealing here with a stereotyped formula, used to justify collective Jewish taxation.27

Bankers and their entourage usually enjoyed the rights of temporary citizenship which was linked to the validity of the charters; it was thus renewable but not permanent. Nevertheless, during this period, i.e., the end of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the following one, we frequently witness the communes granting citizenship (this time not pro tempore, i.e., limited in time) to their more prominent Jews. This is the case of bankers and doctors, who were awarded the dignity of cives, extendible to their families, for services rendered to the Christian collectivity. As citizens, they took upon themselves the obligation to build their homes within the city walls, as a guarantee of their intention to make their residence in town permanent and final. This, for instance, was the case of the bankers Mele, son of Magister Salomone and Leone, son of Salomone in Assisi in 1309; Vitale, son of Mele, in the same town in 1331; and the physician Leone in Todi in 1322.28 Hence, it is no wonder that the

26 Bartolo da Sassoferrato, Opera, t. IV, f. 101r; Sheedy, Bartolus, pp. 78–82; Toaff, Ebrei a Perugia, pp. 21–24.
27 Docs. 108, 129, 187. See Fumi, Ducato di Spoletto, pp. 51, 163; Raydellet-Guttinger, Administration Pontificale, p. 73.
28 Docs. 77, 78, 79, 80, 100, 119. See Toaff, Jews in Medieval Assisi, pp. 10–12, 116–120, 122; Cenci, Vita Assisiana, I, pp. 53–55.
communes themselves had no difficulty in appointing these Jews as their official representatives in political or economic negotiations. This is exactly what happened in 1322 in Giano, where the local commune appointed a Jew, Consiglio of Bevagna, as its representative charged with all dealings with the Apostolic Chamber. The same occurred in Assisi during a financial controversy with the bankers of Perugia and Foligno in 1343. In this case, the commune of Assisi decided to be represented by Sabato, son of Abramo, the most prominent Jewish banker of Perugia, stipulanti et recipienti pro Comuni, hominibus et universitate civitatis Assisii. Legislation recalled (albeit often only formally) the traditional discriminatory provisions against the Jews. The 1342 Statuti of Perugia, for example, forbade sexual intercourse between Christians and Jews, comparing it to that between Christians and lepers. So it is no wonder that in 1348–50, the Black Death passed through the towns of Umbria without Jews being blamed for causing it. Beyond the Alps and throughout the Franco-German region, there were mass murders of Jews accused of poisoning the wells and drinkable water; here in Umbria, Jews were merely requested to help by rebuilding the economy in the stricken areas. In 1350, the rulers of Assisi asked Jewish bankers not to claim more than a third of the value of their credits during the next year. They were also requested to reduce the interest rate on loans in order to mitigate the critical economic situation caused by the plague.

Flourishing in the Fourteenth Century
The second half of the fourteenth century represented the period of maximum development, both economic and demographic, of the Jewish community in Umbria. During this period the Jews enjoyed the greatest economic benefits, since they were granted a monopoly on authorised moneylending. In Perugia, which was the major center of the region and seat of the papal legate, the Jewish community enjoyed official recognition by the authorities and already appeared organised in its traditional structures. Its expansion was constant, both under Cardinal Albornoz and under the Baglioni rulers at the end of the century. Extensive privileges were granted to Jews (more than thirty bankers resided and operated in
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the city) in an exceptionally favourable condotta in December 1381, which was renewed in May 1385. The commune turned to them rather frequently for loans of sizeable sums at low rates of interest. These sums varied from 500 to 1,000 florins and were used for financing military expenses, as well as for purchasing food-stuffs and honouring popes, political leaders and high-ranking Church prelates. Repayment of the money (if it occurred at all) was always delayed; local tolls were transferred to the Jews. The situation in Assisi was similar, although to a lesser extent. Jews were collectively taxed in dativa fumi, the family tax, and in 1363 paid 1,500 pounds, one of the town's highest contributions. During the same period, Jews were asked to loan the commune considerable sums for the military defence of Assisi. In 1385, as security for a 1,200-florin loan to the commune, Jews were given part of the treasure of the Church of S. Francesco, including precious silverware and religious works of art. In some communes of Umbria, the Jewish presence consolidated during the Trecento. The local financial market continued to attract many Jewish bankers from Rome. They joined with or substituted for the Jewish bankers who had been operating for more than half a century in such communes as Spoleto, Trevi, Amelia, Spello and Gubbio (especially after its submission to the Montefeltro, dukes of Urbino in 1384). In Foligno, under the benevolent rule of the Trinci (1305–1439), the family of Salomone, son of Mele of Rome, protected by Pope Boniface IX, began to emerge due to its initiative in money trading. The loans given by his bank to the people during 1380–1412 varied between 1,000 and 1,600 florins annually. These amounts involved only loans or mortgage loans which were notified in notarial deeds. Loans to the commune and loans upon pledge, which were quite likely the most common operations of the bank, are not mentioned. We can thus reasonably assume that Salomone in partnership with his brother Bonaventura, invested at least 5,000 florins yearly — a rather considerable amount of capital — in money trading in

35 Docs. 308, 311, 502, 585.
Foligno and its countryside. Other towns attracted Jewish financiers only toward the end of the fourteenth century. The most important of these was Città di Castello, located in the high valley of the Tiber. It was here in 1390 that Jewish bankers from Perugia settled and signed an official agreement with the commune. Later on, Città di Castello, thanks to its strategic position bordering Tuscany, became one of the largest and wealthiest Jewish communities in the region, surpassing even Perugia.

Throughout the fourteenth century, the practice of granting full citizenship to influential Jews and their families spread throughout the communes of Umbria. This dignity was granted mainly to bankers who were constantly being addressed by the communes with their pressing needs, and to physicians, who were increasingly entrusted with public health services. In 1365, the Priors of Assisi praised its Guelph citizens and granted them the right to bear arms. In the list of prominent citizens officially adprobati pro veris Guelphis, we find the physician Sabato, son of Manuele, and the banker Vitale, son of Salomone. Granting the dignity of civis to the Jews — albeit to only a very limited elite of them — characterised the Duecento and Trecento. These two centuries witnessed the expansion of banking at authorized interest, a sector in which Jews practically enjoyed a monopoly.

At the same time, the communal Statuti were very conservative, expressing discriminatory and restrictive attitudes toward the Jews. In the Statuti of Narni dated 1371, Jews were forbidden to live near the aqueduct and the city fountains, thus supporting the classical bias against the Jews as potential poisoners of wells and drinkable water. Nevertheless, we should not exaggerate by viewing laws as practices, or by stressing some stereotypes which were quite often only verbally effective.

Jewish banks in Umbria and elsewhere in Italy became successful because not only Jews deposited their capital there, but also Christians. Merchants and businessmen who were forbidden by canon law to lend money at interest found appropriate coverage in these banks, which offered the communes and the local rulers investment opportunities as well as financial

41 Docs. 194, 208, 210, 620, 626, 641.
42 Doc. 219. See Toaff, Jews in Medieval Assisi, pp. 18–19.
43 Doc. 238. See Statuta illustrissimae civitatis Narniae, Narni 1716; Bigotti, Narni, p. 34.
support. This was the context at the end of the century for the massive transfer of the main Jewish banks in Umbria, first to the area of the Po River and then to Tuscany. In those areas at that time, the political-economic trend offered new and profitable investment possibilities for Jewish capital in the authorized moneylending sector. The most resourceful bankers of Perugia, Foligno and Assisi, had no intention of missing such opportunities.44

In the second half of the fourteenth century, the family of Matassia, son of Sabatuccio of Rome, formed the most important moneylending partnership in Perugia. Matassia's name is at the top of the list of 28 bankers who were granted the charter of privileges on December 26, 1381. At his death in the summer of 1383, the Priors allowed his son Salomone and other members of the family to wear mourning for the funeral.45 At that time, this was a rather unusual privilege for a Jew. It was granted in consideration of the deceased's important service to the commune of Perugia, whose needs he constantly met with loyalty. A similar privilege was granted in 1422 in Città di Castello to the physician and banker Salomone, son of Bonaventura from Perugia, a familiar of Pope Martin V, on the occasion of his father's funeral.46 The Priors of Perugia praised the qualities of Matassia in supporting the town opera et sermone, financing its political operations, advising its rulers on their political decisions, and flanking them in their fight against the rebellious factions. The solemn funeral procession of Matassia moved from the sumptuous towered palazzo owned by the family in the district of Porta Sole, along the street leading to the Church of S. Lucia, eventually reaching the Church of S. Trinita and the monastery of S. Tommaso, which bordered on the Jewish cemetery.

Matassia and his father Sabatuccio had been the most prominent bankers in Assisi around the middle of the century. They owned a house in the district of Porta S. Chiara and were the most heavily taxed Jews (almost 520 pounds in 1368, compared to a total of 1,500 pounds paid by the other Jews living in town). In February 1381, after his father's death, the rulers of Assisi signed a condotta with Matassia granting him a very favourable

44 See Toaff, Convergenza, pp. 595–613.

[xxi]
position in the town’s financial market. Matassia, although a citizen of Assisi, preferred to reside in Perugia and entrusted one of his partners, Dattilo, son of Abramo of Norcia, with the administration of his Assisi bank business, a policy which he continued at least until 1385. Later on, in 1401, after Assisi’s fall under the Visconti rule, Salomone, son of Matassia and heir to his father’s properties, decided to transfer the condotta and entrusted his cousin Abramo, son of Musetto of Camerino, with the management of his father’s bank.47

Meanwhile, Salomone had reached a very prominent position in the financial market of Perugia. His name (Salomon Mattasie Sabbatutii Salamonis) topped a list of 32 Jewish bankers who were granted a charter for moneylending on May 10, 1385. He ran a particularly important business with a large staff; the list (in the only such case recorded) explicitly mentions “members and entrustees of the business of Salomone, son of Matassia of Sabatuccio.” On July 29, 1389, Salomone, son of Matassia, still residing in the district of Porta Sole, in the parish of S. Lucia, was among the six most prominent bankers of Perugia whom the Priors had requested to provide a forced loan of 700 florins in order to guarantee the wheat supply to the city.48 In 1392, Pope Boniface IX named Salomone his protegé, granting him the status of member of the papal household.49 Previously, Salomone associated himself with an important partnership of bankers from Umbria and La Marca who were operating as far as southern Veneto. In the autumn of 1383, Salomone was granted a charter to open a bank in Montagnana and invested 3,800 ducats in it. His successful investments in the Po valley enabled Salomone to leave Perugia and move to Bologna, where it was easier for him to look after his new business. For the time being, however, he did not drop his prosperous activities in Perugia and Assisi, which constituted security in case of a financial collapse of his new undertakings in the northern part of the peninsula. His fears were unfounded, and in 1390 Salomone appeared among the partners of the Padua bank of S. Lucia, together with other financiers from Perugia, Tuscany and La Marca. Afterward, on January 20, 1392, most of the partners in the banks of Montagnana and Padua S. Lucia, including Salomone, were granted a charter by Marquis Alberto d’Este, to open a bank in Modena. During that period, Salomone, still

48 Docs. 392, 503. See Toaff, Il vino e la carne, p. 296.
living in Bologna, also seemed to be associated with the banks of Siena, Arezzo, Pisa and Prato. Afterward he seems to have moved to Ferrara with his family.\(^{50}\)

By November 14, 1437, Salomone must have died; at that time, his heirs transferred their shares in the Umbrian banks and sold their high-class Perugian residence to the banker Consiglio, son of Abramo of Gubbio, for the large sum of 800 gold florins.\(^{51}\) His heirs were his sons Giacobbe and David and his grandson Issacco, representing his other son Samuele, who had prematurely passed away. In the same year 1437, his first two sons, still living in Ferrara, appeared among the owners of the first Jewish bank in Florence. Its founder was the well-known Abramo of San Miniato, grandson of Matassia Scola of Perugia. In 1450, Giacobbe, David and Issacco were also associated with the bank of Borgo di S. Sepolcro. Giacobbe, Salomone’s first son, also was one of the owners of the Jewish bank of Fano, founded in 1439 with a capital of 3,000 ducats. Among his partners were Jewish bankers from Ancona, Arezzo, Montalcino and the Finzi family from Vicenza.\(^{52}\)

The important bank of Perugia belonging to Salomone, son of Matassia, was taken over by Consiglio, son of Abramo. In the beginning of the fifteenth century, he moved to Perugia from Gubbio (where his family had been active in moneylending since 1383).\(^{53}\) Consiglio was the typical \textit{nouveau riche} among the Jewish bankers in Umbria. After entrusting his son Samuele and his brother Elia with running the bank in Gubbio where the family’s fortunes originated and which no longer sufficed him, Consiglio hastened to fill the vacuum left in Perugia by Matassia, son of Sabatuccio, and his sons. He acquired their real estate, including the expensive towered palazzo situated in Porta Sole. At the same time, he made his way up through the leadership of the \textit{Universitas Judeorum} of Perugia, assuring for himself a representative and prestigious position with a highly accelerated \textit{cursus honorum}. On November 4, 1420, Consiglio was granted a charter to open a bank in Todi; and he appointed as manager


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Salomone, son of Consiglio of Viterbo. In 1436, together with a group of rich and influential Jews, among them the well-known physician Elia Beer and the banker Isacco of Pisa, Consiglio of Gubbio was allowed by Pope Eugenius IV to visit the Holy Land with his household. We know little about his family. While his son Guglielmo drew attention to himself as a debauchee, leading a dissolute life with numerous family mishaps, his grandson Lazzaro started his banking activity in the important town of Città di Castello. Meanwhile, his nephew Consiglio, son of his brother Elia, tried his luck as many others did in the Po valley and settled down in Quistello near Mantua.

Another important Jewish banker operating in Perugia was Leone, son of Consiglio. His name figured in the charter that the commune stipulated with the Jews in 1381 and 1385. Leone had arrived in the Umbrian city in the summer of 1378, coming from Camerino. He rented a large house in the district of Porta S. Angelo, not far from the church of S. Fortunato. On July 29, 1389, he was among the Jewish financiers asked by the Priors to grant a loan for the city’s wheat supply. On January 17, 1392, the commune requested Leone and five other Jewish bankers for a loan to pay for the services of the mercenary Biordo Michelotti and his troops. He appeared on the restricted list of Jewish bankers who loaned the commune 500 florins on September 13, 1392 and 400 florins on August 27, 1393. In 1401, the scribe Consiglio, son of Vitale (Jechiel b. Jequiel), completed for Leone (listed in the colophon with his Jewish name of Jehuda b. Jequiel) a formulary of prayers for the Jewish religious holidays according to the Roman rite. Besides his financial activities in Perugia, Leone invested his capital with Jewish partners in loan banks in Padova, Rovigo, Lonigo in the Vicenza area, S. Andrea and Ascoli.

The most significant personality among the Jewish bankers emerging in Umbria toward the end of the Trecento was Matassia, son of Sabato Scola (or Bethel). He founded the family da Pisa, generally viewed as the most powerful and influential Jewish family of the Italian Renaissance. Matassia, already strong on the financial markets of Perugia, Gubbio and other Umbrian towns in association with his sons Vitale, Dattilo, Sabato and

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54 Docs. 928, 755. See Leonij, Archivio Segreto, pp. 183–188.
56 See Toaff, Ebrei a Gubbio, p. 162.
57 Docs. 503, 527, 535, 547. See Toaff, Il vino e la carne, pp. 298–299.
58 See Freimann, Jewish Scribes, p. 273, n. 193/e.
59 See Colorni, Prestito ebraico, p. 38; Cassuto, Ebrei a Firenze, p. 261; Ciscato, Ebrei in Padova, pp. 18–19; Carpi, Jews of Padua, passim.
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Consiglio, was granted a *condotta* for moneymaking by the commune of San Miniato in 1393. Other banking agreements followed with the important commune of Prato, Pescia and Colle val d’Elsa. Consequently, the partnership of Mataßia Scola succeeded in reaching the territory of Florence. Later on, his son Vitale settled down in Pisa as the owner of the Jewish bank of the city. Matassia Scola, who resided in Perugia in the district of Porta Eburnea, appeared among the most influential bankers of Perugia on the lists compiled by the Priors in 1381, 1385 and 1389. During these years, his partners were members of the da Montalcino family, certainly related to him through family ties. From their toponym we may assume that they had been living for some time in the Siena republic, considered to be one of the Italian homelands of moneymaking.

The Fifteenth Century and the Rise of the Monti di Pieta’

The gradual disengagement of the main Jewish banking companies from moneymaking in Perugia and other Umbrian centers and their partial or total transfer to the cities of the Po valley and of Tuscany was a prominent attribute of the last years of the fourteenth century. This transfer came in the context of the migration to northern Italy of many “foreign” Christian merchants who had been residing and operating in the Umbrian towns for quite some time. “In the Trecento, these foreigners who settled in Perugia, buying shops and houses, generally used the city as if it were a colonial market. They took advantage of its fortunate geographical position in order to stock up on raw material and finished products, but were ready to leave the city at the first signs of economic crisis when they could find more favourable conditions in other areas.”

The main consequences for the Jewish communities in Umbria were a drop in population and diminished economic power. Although medieval demographic data are difficult to interpret, in the fourteenth century the Jews of Perugia numbered approximately 220–250 people (in 1385, 38 families, *fuochi*, of bankers were counted). The Jews represented 0.6–0.8% of the population, which numbered about 35,000 *cives* and foreigners. Around the middle of the fifteenth century, following the general demographic trend in Italy, the urban population of Perugia dropped to

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28,000 inhabitants. At that time the Jewish population hardly reached 25 families (120–150 people), accounting for 0.4–0.5% of the population. The total of loans requested by the commune dropped as well. At the end of the fourteenth century the loans varied between 500 and 1,200 florins; in the fifteenth century they dropped to between 300 and 600 florins. The taxes paid to the commune by the Jews amounted approximately to 2.5% of the total during the Quattrocento, well above the Jews’ proportion of the population. When Braccio Fortebraccia, Lord of Perugia, taxed his citizens for a loan of 12,000 florins for military expenses in 1423, Jews were taxed 250 florins. In 1428, the commune exacted an extraordinary tax of 20,000 florins, of which 500 florins were paid by the Jews. When we compare these data with those of the fourteenth century, when the Jews paid 5–10% of the total income taxes imposed on the citizens, the difference in the impact of the Jews on the finances of Perugia in the Trecento and the Quattrocento becomes immediately self-evident. All this notwithstanding, Jews were sometimes called upon for more substantial contributions in the fifteenth century. In 1402, the Jews were still creditors of the commune for 1,000 florins, asking for repayment from Gian Galeazzo Visconti, Duke of Milan, who had taken over Perugia two years earlier. Particularly important were the interventions of Jews to support and develop the wool guild of the city (Arte della lana). Beyond any doubt, they proved that the Jewish banks dealt not only with so-called consumption credit, unproductive by definition, but also with investment credit, which was therefore not the exclusive right of Christian merchants. In 1435, after years of hostility, Perugia again joined forces with the republic of Florence. Florentine craftsmen were called back to Perugia in order to revive the wool guild. The initial expenses for purchasing equipment and importing raw materials were met by the commune through heavy Jewish loans. On that occasion, the Jews were invited to pay a noticeably large amount of money, between 1,000 and 1,500 florins. During the same period, Jewish banks made similar loans to the wool guilds in Amelia and Gubbio as well.
Simultaneously with the reduction in the Jews' economic power in Perugia (as well as in other Umbrian towns such as Spello, Spoleto, Gubbio, Assisi, Norcia etc., where simple loans by Jewish banks rarely exceeded 300 florins), there was an ever-growing economic influence by the recent Jewish settlement in Città di Castello. Local Jews were asked by the commune for extraordinary contributions, often exceeding 500 florins. In June 1402 and July 1404, Jews loaned local rulers the sum of 800 florins on the occasion of the signing of the peace with Pope Boniface IX, whom the city had revolted against. The Jewish settlement in Città di Castello was part of the general trend of Jewish bankers from Perugia, Assisi and Foligno to the territories of Tuscany and Veneto. Its economic success and long-range development were achieved thanks to the strategic geographical location of the city in the north of the region.

An important turning-point in the conditions of the Jews in Umbria occurred towards 1425, when the Franciscan polemic against usury and particularly against Jewish moneylending became more virulent. In August 1425, Bernardino of Siena — principe dei predicatori francescani according to his admiring disciple, friar Roberto Caracciolo of Lecce — came to Assisi. In his sermons delivered in the city square before a multitude of people, he touched on the question of usury, which he considered to be one of the gravest vices of society and a dangerous source of corruption. In Perugia, where Bernardino went immediately afterwards, his preaching was the basis for the so-called Statuti di S. Bernardino, drawn up on November 4, 1425. In this summary of the fiery Perugian sermons preached by the zealous friar, in addition to other matters, the leaders of the commune were ordered to punish Jewish moneylenders severely and to expel them immediately from the city. Inter alia, Bernardino did not hesitate to request the amputation of the right foot of those Jews caught practising usury. In Amelia, the preaching of the Franciscan friar continued to choose Jewish moneylending as its favourite target. In Assisi and Perugia, he told local rulers to take drastic steps to limit or annul the money-trading activity of the Jews.

Initially, the Franciscan polemic against Jewish usury could not bring permanent results. The total lack of an alternative to Jewish moneylending as a solution to the communes' economic problems caused the friar's
preaching against usury to be fruitless; the Jewish monopoly in lending at
authorised interest rates suffered no relevant blow at this point. However,
the communes were forced to take measures aimed at lowering the agreed­
upon interest rate and forbidding the export of pledges and other abuses.
The increasing number of moneylending charters signed in Umbria in the
middle of the fifteenth century leaves no doubt that the task of Jewish
banks was still considered essential by the communes. Amongst other
things, it was considered as an instrument of support of the needy classes.
The success of Benardino da Siena and other Franciscan preachers who
followed, from Roberto da Lecce to Cherubino da Spoleto, was thus
limited in their struggle against Jewish moneylending. The same cannot
be said of their other objective — destabilizing the relatively tolerant
relationship between the Jews and the Christian environment. The anti­
Jewish regulations which followed in almost all of the communes of
Umbria, from Perugia to Todi, Terni, Trevi, Assisi, Amelia, Spoleto and
Norcia for some thirty years, undoubtedly bear the imprint of the
preaching of Benardino da Siena and his followers.73 These anti-Jewish
measures included the obligation to wear the distinctive badge, prohibition
of synagogues, harsh limitations on the consumption and sale of kosher
meat and wine, and a ban on physicians treating Christian patients. Jews
were considered untouchables like lepers and prostitutes, and were
forbidden to touch edible products such as fruit and vegetables displayed
on the market stalls. The polemic against kosher meat and wine was
justified as a necessity in order to safeguard the Christian population from
food contamination caused by its contact with Jewish hands and feet.74
The real crisis for the Jews in Perugia was triggered by the founding of the
Monte di Pietà of Perugia in 1462. The pious institution, which was to
spread all over Italy like an oil stain, was fostered by the Franciscan friars
to substitute for the Jews in lending money to the needy classes. In
Perugia, traditionally regarded as the birthplace of the first Monte di
Pietà, the founding of the institution is attributed to the preaching of the
Observant Michele Carcano of Milan, one of the most zealous disciples of
Benardino da Siena.75

73 Docs. 840, 841, 903, 910, 935, 939, 941, 1007, 1008, 1012, 1052, 1053, 1164, 1170, 1221,
1226, 1304. See Fabretti, Ebrei in Perugia, pp. 28–35; Majarelli-Nicolini, Monte dei

74 See Toaff, La carne e il vino, pp. 81–108.

75 Docs. 1333, 1334, 1335, 1349, 1359. See Fabretti, Ebrei in Perugia, pp. 50f.; Scalvanti,
Mons Piaetatis di Perugia; Majarelli-Nicolini, Monte dei Poveri, passim; Toaff, Ebrei a
Perugia, pp. 69f.
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The long-term economic success of the Monti di Pietà seems to have been very limited, as is clearly evidenced by their frequent bankruptcies in the following years. Similarly, it does not seem that Jewish moneylending, which turned to a different clientele and was not limited to small consumption credit, was excessively damaged by the new institution. But in Perugia as elsewhere, the founding of the Monte di Pietà was followed by the annulment of the charter authorizing the Jews to lend money. Jews who pursued their banking activities had to do so outside the official framework, exposing themselves to the risks of denunciation. Their legal rights were no longer assured by the commune. Sometimes Jewish bankers tried to invest their capital in moneylending in other places. Toward the end of the Quattrocento, Ventura, son of Abramo of Bettona, while still residing in Perugia, invested more than 5,000 florins in banking partnerships in Foligno, Bevagna, Città di Castello, Montefalco, Norcia and Montone, all located in Umbria, as well as elsewhere in Fondi, Urbino, Borgo S. Donnino, S. Severino Marche, Fossmombrone, Castelnuovo di Parma and S. Elpidio a Mare.76 However, these were exceptions, because the general climate of distrust in the future caused an ever-growing number of Jews to abandon their traditional economic activity. Now they preferred to turn to other outlets which were economically less rewarding but certainly less perilous.

During the months following the founding of the Monti di Pietà, many Jews of Perugia were arrested and fined (600 gold ducats in May 1463) for violating the ban on lending money at interest in the city.77 The message was clear. Those willing to pursue their banking activity had to obtain a special privilege from the Pope, agreeing to operate in the territory of Perugia and not in the city. Such was the case for a group of bankers who continued to lend money in Deruta until 1473 with the authorization of Pope Pius II.78 The founding of the Monte di Pietà and the anti-Jewish preaching of the Mendicant Orders caused the relationship between the Christian population and the Jews to deteriorate further. Jews were charged with Marranism, heresy and witchcraft, but all of these indictments proved to be groundless.79 Paradoxically, the Jews of Perugia were summoned to support the newly-

77 Docs. 1351, 1360, 1367, 1389, 1523.
79 Docs. 1315, 1319, 1350. See Toaff, La carne e il vino, pp. 151–159.
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born Monte di Pietà with a forced contribution. The tax was originally fixed at 3,000 florins, then at 2,000 florins, and eventually, when the Jews were unable to find even this amount, at 1,200 florins. The now limited means of local Jewish bankers, which has been noted since the beginning of the century, was quite evident. The Jews of Perugia needed almost eight months (from July 1462 to March 1463) to raise the money. Finally, they had to turn for aid to the Jews of Florence, to whom they were connected by economic and family ties. The loan to the commune meant the confirmation of the privileges the Jews of Perugia had been previously granted, obviously without being authorised to lend money any more. These privileges were officially ratified by the papal legate, and later by Pope Pius II himself. 80

Many Jewish banks, especially in the minor towns of Umbria, were forced to cease their activity. This phenomenon is often undervalued by those who prefer to stress the continuation of Jewish moneylending in many towns even after the foundation of a Monte di Pietà. However, it is a fact that the closure of the Jewish banks, preceded and followed by the zealous and aggressive anti-Jewish preaching of the Franciscans and the Augustinians (often with active missionary connotations), caused the forced extinction of many Jewish communities in Umbria whose members opted for exile or conversion. Above all, the visits of Bernardino da Feltre to the towns of Umbria on several occasions in 1485 and in 1486 gave rise to a wave of conversions among the frightened Jews who were by then incapable of reacting. Usually, when the relationship between the Christian society and the Jews worsened due to the aggressive action of the Franciscans, the Augustinians with their solid spiritual and intellectual preparation exploited the crisis of the Jewish community for missionary purposes. Since the middle of the fifteenth century, the most successful campaign for the conversion of Jews to Christianity, in the communes of Umbria, seemed to be linked to the vigorous preaching of the Augustinian Friars such as Alessandro da Sassoferrato, Michele da Perugia, Alessandro da Ancona in Perugia, Giovanni da Pontremoli in Spoleto. Their missionary policy was more constant and doubtlessly more efficient than that of the Franciscan friars. 81 In 1469 in Spello, where the Monte di Pietà brought about the closure of the moneylending banks in one go, the

81 See Toaff, Conversioni, pp. 105–112.
Jewish presence was practically extinguished within a year. The last documents concerning the city’s Jews, reported by communal registers, refer to the baptism of entire families to whom the rulers granted alms and citizenship.\(^{82}\) In the summer of 1468, the Monte di Pietà was established in Assisi. There followed a period of great tension between the Christian population and the local Jews, influenced by the preaching of the Franciscans and the visit of Bernardino da Feltre in 1485. Bernardino’s preaching was indeed very successful, if it is true (as he maintained) that two of his sermons were sufficient to induce the Assisi rulers to expel all the Jews from the town.\(^{83}\) In this case, as well, the final documents in communal books referring to the Jews in Assisi report the baptism of many of them and the alms they had been granted.\(^{84}\) In 1485, the preaching of Bernardino da Feltre in Gubbio caused the annulment of the charter with the Jews and their expulsion from the town.\(^{85}\) In Foligno, the dreadful intervention of the fiery friar caused the revocation of the charter allowing Jewish moneylending.\(^{86}\) The rulers of Spoleto, maintaining that the Monte di Pietà eliminated the need for Jews, requested the Apostolic Governor Giovanni Borgia to enclose all of them in an ante litteram ghetto.\(^{87}\) Charges of ritual murder, which troubled the lives and jeopardised the safety of the Jews in Bevagna, were made during this period.\(^{88}\) In Perugia, conversions to Christianity seemed to be concentrated during the years immediately preceding and following the preaching of Bernardino da Feltre. He visited the city on several occasions in 1485 and during the next three years.\(^{89}\) In those years, approximately one-third of the Jews chose to convert, while many others resolved to emigrate. The hiatus in the history of the Jews of Perugia was so evident and noticeable that in the documents following the year 1485 they were often referred to as the “survivors of the Jewish community” (superstites

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82 Docs. 1503, 1505, 1506, 1511, 1518, 1555, 1556, 1557, 1561. See Fabbri, Monte della Pietà, pp. 190f.


84 Docs. 1672, 1673, 1674, 1675, 1677, 1678. See Toaff, Jews in Medieval Assisi, pp. 69f.

85 Docs. 1883, 1884, 1888.

86 Docs. 1921, 1922.


89 Doc. 1906. See Toaff, Ebrei a Perugia, pp. 80–82.
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*aliorum ebreorum existentium et commorantium in civitate Perusii*. Such
definition, by its transparent implications, confirms to us the gravity of
the crisis which had decimated the Jewish population of the city.
The popes, though obviously satisfied with the gratifying results of the
efforts to convert the Jews, tried to repress the abuses perpetrated against
them at the Observant preachers’ instigation. The popes’ intervention
often aimed at preventing the unilateral revocation of loan charters with
the Jews and somehow allowing the Jews to continue their economic
activity. Clear evidence of this can be found in Trevi and Assisi in 1464 and
1469. The Apostolic Chamber wanted above all to increase the fiscal
burden on the Jews; the Jews’ drastic impoverishment was contrary to the
popes’ interest. In the sixties of the fifteenth century, together with the
founding of the first Monti di Pietà, the Apostolic Chamber made never­
ending efforts to supplement papal revenues by imposing on the Jews of
the Papal State a tax to finance the crusade against the Turks, the so-called
*vigesima*. Actually, this was a permanent tax actually negotiated by the
collectors of the Apostolic Chamber (sometimes by converted Jews such
as the well-known Feliciano Francesco Sisti of Foligno) with the
representatives of the Jewish communities of Umbria or with individual
bankers. We have numerous examples from 1461 onwards of these
negotiations with their dragging out of appeals, injunctions and
compromises. Another extremely unpopular levy was the one known as
*Agone e Testaccio* games tax, a compulsory contribution to the expenses
of the Carnival in Rome. This tax was initially forced upon the Jews of the
capital, and then was successively imposed on all Jews living throughout
the Papal State, including Umbria. The protests of Umbrian Jews, who as
early as the beginning of the sixteenth century had asked to be exempted
from the tax, were fruitless. The Jews stressed that they had always been
requested by local rulers to pay large sums of money in order to support
the local *Palli*, and that it was therefore absurd to be compelled to pay for
the Carnival of Rome, a city in which they did not even reside. The
Apostolic Chamber turned a deaf ear. It was generally ready to support
the Jews when their physical existence was in danger and to help them
operating in the financial market. But at the same time, it was greedy,

92 Docs. 1311, 1314, 1317, 1381, 1382, 1509, 1604, 1606 etc. See Stow, *Taxation*, passim;
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intransigent and had quite a good appetite when it came to squeezing them through taxation aimed at bringing the largest revenues into its coffers.

Crisis and Decadence in the Sixteenth Century

The sixteenth century opened onto a panorama of Jewish communities in Umbria which appeared economically impoverished and numerically reduced. The impoverishment was only partially ascribable to the rise and spreading of the Monti di Pietà; it depended largely on the political situation in the region, which was steadily subject to the direct power of Rome. This was particularly true after 1540 and the so-called “salt war” which Perugia lost. The general crisis of the market, which by now had become unappealing to merchants and businessmen, was responsible for this shrinking. The popes’ fiscal policy, which heavily burdened local finances, discouraged private initiative and public welfare projects. The sizeable reduction of Umbrian Jewry (in the middle of the sixteenth century it hardly reached 500 individuals) was caused by the emigration of many members of the community (due to the economic depression) and the high number of conversions. The zealous action of the Mendicant Orders brought about a climate of demoralization and despair in the Jewish communities, which helped the friars’ missionary efforts. The anti-Jewish policy gave no indication of lessening, and was the source of recurrent discriminatory measures against the Jews; they had no choice but exodus or conversion. We find significant examples in Perugia in 1519, in Spoleto in 1543 and in Terni in 1546.94 In 1513, Assisi witnessed an attempt by the local rulers to recall the Jews and renew their loan charter. However, this attempt failed miserably because of the immediate intervention of the Observant friars.95

The bankers’ positions in particular had noticeably worsened. Some of them succeeded somehow in continuing their activity, but they were requested to provide themselves with special privileges (tolerantiae) bought from the popes at a very high price. Moreover, these moneylenders operating in a scantily profitable market were subjected to all kinds of limitations. They were forced to deal only with so-called small consumption credit for the needy classes — as an official document of Spoleto in 1539 clearly states, pro commoditate pauperum in hiis temporibus.

94 Docs. 2325, 2441, 2455.
95 Doc. 2257. See Toaff, Jews in Medieval Assisi, p. 71.
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penuriosis.96 Their banks were usually not authorised to be located in the main towns; for reasons of convenience and moral aesthetics, they were allowed to operate only in the minor centers of the territory. For example, Jews were allowed to open their banks in Deruta and later in Casa Castalda in the territory of Perugia, in Acquasparta and later in Montesanto in the territory of Spoleto, and in the castle of Chiavano in the territory of Cascia.

The Jewish community of Città di Castello — the most flourishing Universitas Judeorum in Umbria — was also in full decline. During the last period of the fifteenth century, Città di Castello was still without a Monte di Pietà and its corollary of anti-Jewish preaching by the Franciscans. The city, located in the high valley of the Tiber River, hosted a Jewish community of sizeable dimensions, and it further expanded thanks to a migratory stream coming from Tuscany. Families of Jewish moneylenders damaged by the forced interruption of their activity in Florence in 1495, and by the foundation of the local Monte di Pietà, immigrated to Città di Castello.97 In 1485, 17 Jewish bankers made a contract with the commune. In the beginning of the sixteenth century, their number rose to 31, of whom at least a quarter had come from Tuscany. Along with this growth, the Observants’ anti-Jewish propaganda became ever more persistent and treacherous, reaching its peak with the preaching of Cherubino da Spoleto in 1507. Under its impact, the Jewish community of Città di Castello was subject to more restrictive legislation. The impact on the demographic and social-economic structure of the Jewish community was very serious. At the beginning of the Cinquecento, the Jewish banks had a minimum capital of 3,000 florins invested in moneylending; with the charter of 1510, the bankers reduced this sum by a third, bringing it to only 2,000 florins. By then, the trend was continuous and relentless. In 1545 all banks could collectively invest barely 600 florins in their activity.98 Despite all this, the Jewish community was still the most numerous and relatively the wealthiest in Umbria.

The aggressive policy of the Church of the Counter-Reformation toward the Jews fully expressed itself in a region such as Umbria, which by then was totally deprived of any autonomy. Many towns showed significant evidence of the phenomenon that characterized the middle of the sixteenth

96 Doc. 2421.
97 See Cassuto, Ebrei a Firenze; Toaff, Ebrei a Città di Castello, pp. 22f.; Rosini, Monte di Pietà di Città di Castello, pp. 10–21.
98 Docs. 1885, 2101, 2181, 2227, 2453.

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century, from the censorship of Hebrew books in Spoleto to the burning of the *Talmud* in Gubbio. Hananel of Foligno, a notorious Italian apostate who played (among other things) a highly important role in the burning of the *Talmud* in Italy, lived in Spoleto. In the documents, he appears under the name of Graziaido, nicknamed Nello (Hananello). Between 1530 and 1542, prior to his conversion to Christianity and before assuming the name of Alessandro Franceschi, he was a moneylender in Foligno and Spoleto. Finally, in 1542, his bank went bankrupt and he converted.

The activity of Jewish bankers in the money market and their chances of success were becoming more and more difficult and uncertain. The restrictions imposed on them were quite effective years before the publication of the *Cum nimis absurdum* bull of Pope Paul IV in 1555. A clear example of this was the general opposition to the traditional registration of pledges in Hebrew. In 1553 — two years before the bull of Pope Carafa — the authorities of Spoleto decided to impose on the bankers the use of Latin or the vernacular in their books. After 1555, there were only three Jewish moneylenders of importance still operating in Umbria, with special papal *tolerantiae*. Leone dell’Aquila in Spoleto, Angelo of Camerino in Trevi, and Giuseppe of Montagnana in Perugia were certainly unlucky. Leone went bankrupt and wound up his business in the fall of 1558. Angelo converted in Rome after a long and exhausting controversy with the commune of Trevi which began in 1564. He transferred all of his properties (including his disputed credit) to the *Casa dei Catecumeni* of Rome. Giuseppe of Montagnana, charged with fraud and embezzlement both by the Jewish community of Perugia and the Apostolic Chamber, ended up in prison in Rome. Hence the worries of Cardinal Vitelli in 1566 were more than justified. He urged the Governor of Perugia to keep an eye on the Jews so as to prevent them from secretly leaving the city, taking along pawns and money. In 1560 Francesco Maria Cortese, the papal envoy to Città di Castello, had similar anxieties. His task in town was to verify if local Jews had complied with the

99 Docs. 2567, 2660.
101 Docs. 2552, 2554, 2556, 2559.
102 Docs. 2593, 2605, 2629.

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Restrictive norms issued by Pope Paul IV and confirmed by Pope Pius V. In particular, the prelate wanted to know if Jews had already sold all their properties and if they had stopped trading in foodstuffs. In Gubbio as well, the aggressive policy of the Church left its greedy imprint. By then, there was little left to squeeze. The Jews of Umbria were under the burden of heavy taxation: from the contribution to the vigesima, to the tax of Agone and Testaccio and the Casa dei Catecumeni in Rome. In 1564 their debt to the Apostolic Chamber amounted to 2,500 florins, a huge amount of money, especially if we consider their pitiful economic condition. This was a credit which the papal collector would have never been able to cash in, despite his relentless efforts. In order to pay their share of the common debt, the Jews of Perugia were forced to sell the synagogue silverware, part of the cemetery’s land, and eventually even the building of the synagogue itself.

In 1569, with his bull Hebreorum gens, Pope Pius V decreed the expulsion of the Jews from Umbria. However, this edict applied only to a limited number of Jews still living in the main centers of the region, such as Perugia, Spoleto, Terni, Foligno and Città di Castello. In other towns, local governments had anticipated the popes and banned the Jews years earlier. This is what happened in Cascia in 1555, in Amelia in 1556, and a little later in Trevi where the unilateral abrogation of loan charters coincided with the expulsion of the Jews. Following the expulsion, quite a relevant number of Jews from Umbria sought shelter in the semi-independent feuds of S. Fiora, Castro, Pitigliano and Monte S. Maria, along the northern borders of the region, coming from Perugia, Città di Castello, Foligno and Spoleto. The most resourceful of these Jews who still had some capital left renewed their moneylending activities there. Their clients were, as before, among the less-wealthy population of northern Umbria. The exiles were still hoping to go back someday to their native land, and as a matter of fact, this return, though not a massive one, was allowed by Pope Sixtus V. In November 1585, a group of Jews asked and obtained from the rulers of Spoleto authorisation to settle again in the town. Similar concessions were granted to Jews in Città di
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Castello, Foligno, and Terni. In January 1587, a scant community of Jews from the ghetto of Rome reconstituted itself in Perugia, where they bought back their cemetery. Local officials assigned them some peripheral streets as a living quarter, to make sure they would live apart from the rest of the population. A small number of moneylenders resumed their activity, though with limited capital. In the same years, some resourceful partnerships of hide merchants from Ancona and other towns of La Marca were active on the local market. For a while, these companies succeeded in monopolizing the trade in tanned hides (particularly cordovano) in the main centers of Umbria. In Perugia, a Jew from Rome operated in the market as the agent of Meir Magino, the eccentric and talented Venitian inventor. He was provided with a special papal licence enjoying the exclusive right to manufacture and market tavern bottles and other glass and crystal products. However, this time the Jewish residence in the towns of Umbria proved to be very short. At the beginning of 1592, Clemens VIII rose to the papacy and reinforced all the anti-Jewish measures of his predecessors. Finally, on February 25, 1593, the Pope issued the bull Caeca et obdurata and forced the Jews to leave the Papal State within three months, with the exception of the cities of Rome and Ancona. This time, the exodus was final for the Jews of Umbria. In the following two centuries, several towns in Umbria made several attempts to recall the Jews, since many of the Monti di Pietà in the region had gone broke. However, the return of the Jews always met unsurmountable hindrance from the Inquisition, which had no intention whatsoever of allowing their return to the regions they had been banned from. Consequently, Umbria could rely only on the scant and temporary presence of Jewish pedlars who were periodically present in the numerous fairs of the region, trading in low-priced clothes and knicknacks.

Craftsmen and Merchants

Jewish participation in the economic life of Umbrian cities in the late Middle Ages was varied, and did not restrict itself to the privileged activity of bankers and moneylenders. There is strong evidence of the presence of craftsmen and professionals in a multiplicity of fields. We find innkeepers and publicans in Perugia, tailors and barbers in Spoleto and Perugia, stationers and booksellers in Città di Castello and Perugia, pharmacists in Spoleto and Perugia, blacksmiths in Assisi, mattress-makers...

110 Docs. 2744, 2750, 2751, 2761, 2762, 2768. See Fabretti, Ebrei in Perugia, pp. 81–82.
111 Doc. 2758.
in Assisi and Perugia, carters in Perugia, Assisi and Spoleto, makers of pack saddles in Spoleto, shoemakers, tanners and dealers in leather and hides in Perugia. In 1366, Dattilo di Benedetto, goldsmith in Perugia in the district of Porta Eburnea, had a workshop in the market square and his name appeared in the local register of real estate owners. In Città di Castello in 1431, a Jew named Musetto produced gunpowder for the artillery of the commune. In 1434, a Jew of Gubbio was among the suppliers of arms to the local troops. In 1471, Deodato, son of Mosè, was a dancing master in Perugia; one century later in the same city, there was another Jewish dancer who was known by the name of Maestro Leone. Merchants dealing with a variety of products and handicrafts were particularly numerous. In the eighties of the fifteenth century, one of the most resourceful merchants was Sabato da Nerola, who was fairly active in the wheat trade. Between the end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth, the general trend of Jewish banks in Umbria was to give money for wheat. Bankers accepted and often urged the delivery of wheat in bulk as reimbursement for loans or as pledges. If the pledge was not redeemed, the bankers turned themselves into wheat merchants or exporters. Such activity increased their earnings in times of frequent and heavy famine. At the beginning of the sixteenth century in Spoleto, Jewish bankers used to loan money at an interest rate of 7% and asked for their reimbursement in grain. Between 1513–1522, they stored more than 200 some of grain in their warehouses (approximately 350 hectoliters) with a total value of more than 800 florins. Between the end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth, the Jews of Cascia were active in marketing saffron, one of the most expensive and highly valued spices. For more than two centuries (from the Trecento to the beginning of the Cinquecento), Jewish merchants traded above all in clothes and fabrics, making their presence noticeably felt in all the centers of Umbria. In 1383, the Jews of Perugia were registered in the cotton guild and the second-hand clothing guild.

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115 Docs. 1867, 1868, 1870.
116 Docs. 2260, 2279, 2315, 2330, 2340, 2341.

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and were closely involved with the wool guild. Significant examples in Foligno and Trevi show that Jewish merchants had founded partnerships with Christian dealers from Milan, Bergamo and other cities of Lombardy, and invested their capital in trading wool, linen and cotton fabrics.\textsuperscript{118} The communes quite often turned to the Jews for important urban construction projects which required readily available cash. In 1440, a Jewish fabric dealer by the name of Giacobbe, son of Isacco, received a contract for repairing the walls of Todi. In 1491, Raffaele, son of Isacco, a trader in woolen clothing, took care of the paving of piazza S. Maria in Spoleto, the main square.\textsuperscript{119} Around the end of the fourteenth century, Jewish traders of Urbino dealt in cotton wool and imported cotton veils to Gubbio and its territory. During that period, the cities of Umbria and particularly Perugia were important centers for producing cotton veils. This was an article of clothing which was very much in demand, though rather inexpensive, whereas cotton wool usually came from Ancona where it was one of the major items imported from Levant.\textsuperscript{120} In the suburbs and the major urban centers, Jewish dealers selling fabrics and cloth had workrooms and shops where they received their urban and rural clientele. They supplied themselves with merchandise bought in the most important local fairs, such as Perugia, Foligno, Spoleto, Recanati, Macerata and Senigallia. They would also push on as far as Rome, Florence and Ancona to get their supply. These merchants established partnerships among themselves for weaving linen, wool and cotton fabrics. They not only stored and sold these fabrics, but quite often undertook their production as well. In Perugia, they were members of the second-hand clothing guild after having signed the guild ordinances. Local authorities fully trusted their bookkeeping. In 1470, the guild treasurer stated that “these Jewish merchants of clothes are not requested to prove their sales by bringing witnesses, because we usually fully trust them and their activity; as a matter of fact, in Perugia we are in the habit of referring to them as second-hand clothes merchants; the guild ordinances expect their bookkeeping which records the sale of fabrics to be fully trusted.”\textsuperscript{121} These local traders were intensely active not only in the major Umbrian center of Perugia, but also in Città di Castello, Foligno, Spoleto, Todi, Norcia and Cascia during the years 1430–1480. All social strata of the population,

\textsuperscript{118} Docs. 320, 1821, 2277.
\textsuperscript{119} Docs. 977, 1984.
\textsuperscript{120} See Toaff, \textit{Ebrei a Gubbio}, pp. 159–160.
\textsuperscript{121} Doc. 1565.
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particularly rural nobles and farmers, bought goods from them. Thus, their shops were important distribution centers in the suburbs, villages and castles. They sold cloth and fabrics produced in town or imported through national and international trade.

Unlike these urban traders, wandering dealers attended fairs and local markets during patronal festivals or markets days, which were frequent in Umbria in all seasons but especially during the summer months. The massive participation of Jews in the fairs of Perugia (Ognissanti), Città di Castello (S. Florido), Assisi, Foligno and Spoleto is richly documented. The local fairs were an important meeting point for local and foreign traders, an exchange market for national and international goods, and the essential outlet for agricultural products, livestock and raw materials from the countryside and from the handicraft production of the city. Many Jewish traders attended every fair and market in Umbria and Marche, meeting at one fair or another, buying goods at the Perugia Ognissanti fair and paying for them at the Recanati fair. They rented fair workshops, wooden huts for the seasonal sale of goods, in Foligno, Spoleto and Senigallia, and, if necessary, making them available one to another. Their participation in some fairs was so massive that the communes granted them permission to transform one of these huts into a temporary synagogue on Saturdays and other holidays.¹²² Most of the them were pedlars, with limited activity; they mainly served a rural clientele with restricted needs, and operated on the periphery of urban life and big commercial trade. They owned houses in towns such as Perugia, Spoleto, Città di Castello and Terni, where they stored their goods. They travelled for long periods each year, taking their semi-nomadic businesses from fair to fair, from village to village, and to farmers’ houses and castles as well.

During the second half of the fifteenth century in the cities of Umbria, the Monti di Pietà multiplied, the preaching of the Franciscan Friars became more and more oppressive, and the local charters of the Jews were systematically revoked. As a result, many Jews who had been small moneylenders were forced into professional transformation. Increasingly frequently, they opened workshops in town, became second-hand clothes dealers, tailors, weavers of wool and linen. They bought some of their goods at public auctions of pledges not redeemed at the Monti di Pietà. Many Jewish craftsmen registered with the guilds of mattress-makers, tavern owners, tanners and leather-and-hide merchants. Some people

¹²² Docs. 2685, 2708, 2721, 2785, 2804, 2805. See Iacobilli, Discorso, pp. 7–8; Grohmann, Fiera dei morti, pp. 61–74; Toaff, Il vino e la carne, pp. 246–247.
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lived by manufacturing gambling cards and dice. In 1515 in Perugia, there was an attempt (probably unsuccessful) to establish a Jewish press. In the winter of that year, Giacobbe son of Vitale, a bookseller and binder by profession, bought printing types and hand presses from a craftsman from Verona, who had opened a well known press in Perugia. However, he does not appear to have actually practiced his new profession. 123

After the founding of the Monti di Pietà, numerous Jews became pedlars, rag and junk dealers, quite often holding condotta with the communes like the special agreements which previously were the appanage of rich Jewish bankers and physicians. From 1475 to 1561, before their final exodus from the city, Jews in Trevi obtained monopolies for the sale of sifts. Sometimes they also held the contract for the sale of dregs, which were highly valued in the tannery industry for their high tartaric and tannic content. Other Jews held the monopoly for the sale of rags in Cascia (from 1473 to 1536), in Spoleto (from 1471 to 1551), and in Perugia (from 1549 to 1560). In 1475, the commune of Trevi granted a rag-selling monopoly to Abramo of Camerino, who paid 28 florins for it. He was granted the exclusive right to collect and buying rags in town and in the countryside, and to open his street stall in the market of S. Maria delle Lacrime on the first Sunday of each month without being molested by communal officials. 124 Sometimes Jews formed partnerships of old-clothes dealers with a capital of hundreds of florins, extending their activity to a wide territory that included numerous towns and rural centers. One of these singular financial trusts was founded in Spoleto around the middle of the sixteenth century, with deeds drawn up by Christian notaries in Latin and by the rabbinical authorities in Hebrew. Their company included ten partners, all of them rag dealers and pedlars, operating in Spoleto, Narni, Castel del Lago, Aquila and Ascoli. With his registration in the company, each partner was asked to invest in the business a sum varying from 50 to 60 florins. Thus the capital administered by these Umbrian rag dealers was anything but limited and expected to exceed 500 florins. 125

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Umbrian Jews were active at different levels in the trading and manufacturing of leather and hides. 126 In Perugia in 1514, Abramo, son of Ventura, and Vitale, son of Mosè, formed

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123 Doc. 2293.
124 Doc. 1696.
125 Doc. 2519.
126 On Jewish partnerships for leather-working and trade see Toaff, Il vino e la carne, pp. 249–254.
a partnership to tan leather. In 1552, another Jew by the name of Vitale, son of Simone from Valentano in the province of Viterbo, opened a tanning workshop in the same city, and his activity was recorded for a couple of years. He was registered in the shoemakers’ guild of Perugia; his activity seemed to be of limited importance, dealing mainly with the local market. In the forties of the sixteenth century, the leather market in Perugia and other Umbrian centers (particularly Spoleto) was supplied by Ancona. In particular, *cordovano*, a special type of leather tanned according to the tradition of Andalusia, was imported from Levant and reached the Umbrian craftsmen through Jewish dealers from Ancona and other towns of the Marche, such as Pesaro, Osimo, Matelica, Fermo, Iesi, Cagli and Camerino. Between 1540 and 1570, an important Jewish firm was active in the leather market of Umbria. Its partners included several members of the Stella, the Romano and Tedeschi families of Ancona, the Moscato family of Osimo, and other merchants from Pesaro and Matelica who supplied the shoemakers of Perugia and Spoleto with noticeable quantities of the Andalusian *cordovano* leather. From 1570 until the end of the century, the sales of hides and leathers by Jewish merchants (especially in Perugia) showed a remarkable increase, and it is believed that they succeeded in monopolizing the market — just as Jewish traders did at the fairs of Marche and Abruzzo in the sixteenth century.

**Synagogues and Rabbis**
In every town where Jews settled, they asked the communal and ecclesiastic authorities for permission to have a synagogue where they could gather in prayer and hold their religious ceremonies. They were usually guaranteed such a right by the Priors and the Bishop. In the clauses of the charters offered to the Jews, the Priors and the Bishop granted them the right to “establish the synagogue” — i.e., to choose a house in which to celebrate their services and gather in prayer whenever it best suited them. This concession to “establish the synagogue” appeared in almost all of the charters granted to the Jews in Umbria, from Perugia to Città di Castello, Foligno, Terni, Spoleto, Todi, Assisi and Norcia.127 From the will of Mosè of Terni (Spoleto 1461), we are acquainted with the map of the synagogues of Umbria in the middle of the fifteenth century, starting from Perugia, including the towns of Spoleto, Todi, Terni and Foligno.128 Thanks to other documents, we know of the existence of other

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128 Doc. 1327.
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synagogues in Città di Castello, Norcia and Assisi. The Jews in Perugia worshipped in at least two synagogues. In 1569, on the eve of the expulsion, seven towns in Umbria had synagogues and paid a tax to the Casa dei Catecumeni of Rome. They were located in Città di Castello, Foligno, Orvieto, Perugia, Spoleto, Trevi and Terni. Città di Castello had two synagogues, a public one and a private one. The eight Umbrian synagogues paid the modest sum of 96 scudi of the 1,380-scudo levy imposed on the 115 synagogues of the Papal State.129

The members of the Jewish community gathered in the synagogue to examine their problems as an organised minority, to take “political” decisions, to assign the members’ shares in the communal taxes, and to elect their representatives. On October 28, 1457, the Jewish community of Perugia gathered in the synagogue in via Vecchia, in the presence of the Bishop’s representative, in order to tax its members. On April 18, 1458, a general assembly of the Universitas was held in the same synagogue to elect representatives for the charter negotiations with the commune of Perugia. In the winter of 1461, in those premises, the leaders of the community discussed the petitions of Jews who refused to pay their quotas in the general taxation. In April 1567, the Jews of Perugia held another general assembly in the synagogue, this time to deliberate the sale of their cemetery to the nuns of the convent of Beata Colomba.130 Both the arbitrator and the rabbinic courts of the Jewish community had their permanent seat on the premises of the synagogue. In that venue, the court was called to settle disputes among community members from time to time. The rabbinic court of Perugia seemed to have had jurisdiction on Jews residing in other centers of Umbria, whereas the appointment of its judges necessitated the ratification of the papal legate. In the middle of the fifteenth century, the three members of the rabbinic court of Perugia were referred to in the documents as “judges of the synagogue of Perugia Jews, by virtue of the decree of the Governor of Umbria, the court having its seat in the synagogue.” The court was presided by Rabbi Meshullam mi-Ferrara (Bonaventura of Ferrara, magister scolarum).131 In 1459, for example, Assisan physician and banker Bonaiuto of Tivoli threatened to turn to the magistrates in Perugia and Assisi if the rabbinic court did not satisfy him in a suit against a Jew who owed him some money and who hid himself from justice. The physician also threatened to have the Jew

129 See Stern, Urkundliche, pp. 144–145.
130 Docs. 1256, 1275, 1311, 1314, 2675, 2676.
131 Docs. 1281, 1293. See Toaff, Ebrei a Perugia, pp. 100, 280–281; Id., Jews in Medieval Assisi, p. 75; Id., Il vino e la carne, pp. 119–120.

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arrested. This delicate dispute was submitted to the rabbinic court of Perugia for arbitration. The court sentenced two Assisan Jews to give personal guarantees for the reimbursement of the debt owed to Magister Bonaiuto; he, in turn, had to withdraw his complaint, thus allowing the debtor to come back to town.

The inner conflicts of the Jewish community sometimes exploded in the synagogue with surprising violence. These conflicts were often sharpened by the oligarchic structure of the community. Its life depended on the charter of the bankers who enjoyed a privileged position relative to other Jews, and its social structure gave rise very often to quarrels of an economic or personal nature. It appears quite clearly that the Jewish community was homogenous only as far as its relationship with the surrounding society was concerned. At times, the synagogues were theaters for outbreaks of violence. Two of the three homicides perpetrated by Jews during this period took place inside the synagogue. In 1508, the Jewish community of Spoleto was upset by the death of Eve, a young woman who was killed by her husband in the synagogue. After the murder of the woman, who left an underage daughter, the Jews held many meetings in the synagogue and in the residence of the De Pomis bankers to settle the matter.132 In 1487, one of the wealthiest Jews of Perugia — Angelo, son of Guglielmo — was murdered in the local synagogue by Deodato, son of Mosè, a dance master by profession. The murderer was arrested and banned from the city, after having paid a sizeable fine. Two years later, Deodato came back to Perugia and asked the forgiveness of Frescarosa, the victim’s daughter, who meanwhile had moved to Fermo. He was pardoned by the young woman, but at a very high price. In addition, he was perpetually excommunicated by the Jewish community of Perugia.133 The leaders of the synagogues did not refrain from imposing bans for minor crimes. In 1508, officials of the Jewish community of Perugia charged Dattilo, son of Salomone, the keeper of the Jewish cemetery, with stealing produce grown in the community’s fields adjacent to the cemetery. The rabbinic court sentenced the keeper to distribute a certain quantity of wheat among the Jewish poor of the city. At the same time, Giacobbe, son of Vitale (magister scolarum) assured Dattilo that “he never imposed a ban on him or other Jews forbidding them to participate in religious services at the synagogue.”134

132 Docs. 2204, 2219, 2291, 2301.
133 Doc. 1947.
134 Docs. 2202, 2205.
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The documents we present here enlighten us on the life and activity of the cultural and religious leaders in the Jewish communities of Umbria. Such records enable us to add important details to their biographies, giving new evidence or changing assumptions. Such is the case of Magister Servadio, son of Abramo of Bertinoro, the famous exegete of the Mishnah, known by the Jewish name of R. Obadiah mi- Bertinoro. We knew from his Hebrew letters that he served as a rabbi in Città di Castello around 1485, when he began his journey to the Land of Israel. In the documentation we find evidence of his presence in some centers of Northern Umbria (such as Città di Castello and perhaps Gubbio) and of his role as spiritual leader during the last years of the fifteenth century. We also learn that his main activity was moneylending, and that he operated in Città di Castello where he enjoyed a prestigious reputation. In the loan charter of the town dated 1485, his name tops a long list of Jewish bankers.\(^{135}\) Copious documentation refers to the vicissitudes of Rabbi Mosè of Rieti, a physician and man of letters, and his family. He was the author of Mikdash Meat, a well-known imitation of Dante’s Commedia, and appears to us as a member of the rabbinic court of Perugia and a scribe of Jewish manuscripts. He also made his influence felt in other towns such as Terni, Narni, Amelia and the towns along the borders of Umbria and the Patrimony. Here he was active directly, both as a physician and a rabbi, or through his sons, who were also physicians. After his death, his sons inherited his important professional library.\(^{136}\) We have evidence of the presence in Perugia in 1516 of Rabbi Israel Ashkenazi (Magister Israel Vitalis Theotonicus), who, after leaving Italy, was appointed head of the Ashkenazi Yeshivah in Jerusalem. In his letters from the Promised Land, Rabbi Israel recalled with nostalgia the period spent in Italy, supplying us with interesting information concerning the life of the Jewish community of Perugia.\(^{137}\)

Around the middle of the sixteenth century, among the most prominent Jews were Laudadio (Yehuda) de Blanis in Perugia, and Vitale (Yehiel) Alatino and David de Pomis in Spoleto. All three were famous physicians and men of letters. The documentation, mainly the one concerning the first two men, is particularly rich and enables us to accurately reconstruct

135 Docs. 1885, 1908. See Toaff, Ebrei a Città di Castello, pp. 18–19.
136 Docs. 835, 1063, 1068, 1450. See Roth, Jews in the Renaissance, pp. 103–105; Toaff, Ebrei a Perugia, pp. 82f.
their biographies and their economic and professional activities.\textsuperscript{138} We have evidence of the activity in Perugia of two rabbis, Aharon and Moshe of Nola, during the second half of the century, on the eve of the expulsion in 1569. They are mentioned both as scribes of Jewish manuscripts and as participants in the important community assemblies where the fate of Umbrian Jewry was decided.\textsuperscript{139}

\textsuperscript{139} Docs. 2514, 2641, 2675, 2676, 2678.