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## The names of the Jews in Late Ancient Venosa: Latinization, rejudaization or rabbinzation?

### 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

There is a famous tale in *Megillat Aḥima‘aš* (11<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>2</sup> relating the visit of a Palestinian rabbi to Venosa in the 9<sup>th</sup> century:

And by the mercy of Him who created the earth with His power, He who forgives crime and pardons sin, I shall rehearse and recollect the incident which took place in Venosa. A man came from the Land of Israel, learned and knowledgeable in the Law of God, well versed in the enchanting pedagogy. And he remained there for days and weeks, and would deliver a homily every Sabbath, addressing the people of God in the synagogue—the scholar would lecture and R. Silano would translate. One day the men came in wagons from the villages into the town; then the men stirred up a fight between them and the women came out of their houses, and with long staves used for scraping the oven and charred by fire, with these the men and women did beat one another. Then R. Silano erred and made a mistake, he searched his soul and committed a fault. He took the *midrash* on the week’s portion of the Law which the scholar was to expound on the subsequent Sabbath and erased two lines from the letters which were inscribed there and in their place he wrote about the incident recorded above. And such was the text, that R. Silano set down: *The men came in a carriage, and the women came out from their ovens, and they struck the men with their forks.* When on the Sabbath the scholar came to these words, he held his tongue and ut-

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<sup>1</sup> I wish to thank Giancarlo Lacerenza and Constanza Cordoni for their help during the elaboration of this article.

<sup>2</sup> On the Chronicle, see C. Colafemmina (ed.), *Aḥima‘az ben Paltiel, Sefer Yuhasin. Libro delle discendenze: vicende di una famiglia ebraica di Oria nei secoli IX-XI*, Messaggi, Cassano delle Murge 2001; P. Skinner, “Conflicting Accounts: Negotiating a Jewish Space in Medieval Southern Italy, 800-1150 CE”, in M. Frassetto (ed.), *Christian Attitudes Towards the Jews in the Middle Ages*, Routledge, New York 2007, 1-15; R. Bonfil, *History and Folklore in a Medieval Jewish Chronicle: The Family Chronicle of Aḥima‘az ben Paltiel*, Brill, Leiden 2009.

tered not a word; he stared at the letters, trying to comprehend and understand, and perused them time and again, then innocently read them out, expounding the matter as he found it written. Then R. Silano laughing and mocking, all those assembled he addressed mirthfully: “Hear what the rabbi expounds to you concerning the fight that was stirred up yesterday among you, when the women struck the men with the oven staves and chased them away in all directions.” When the scholar saw and understood what had happened, his face fell and he turned pale. He went to the scholars engaged in study in the academy and told them of the unfortunate event which befell him, and what had occurred. Then they were all deeply saddened, painfully distressed and depressed, and placed a ban on the astute R. Silano.<sup>3</sup>

The text continues with Aḥima‘aš, who traveled to the Land of Israel many years after the incident. When he sang a hymn, the local rabbis enquired about its authorship. Aḥima‘aš told them that Silano was the composer and reminded them that he was banned. As a result, the rabbis lifted the ban.<sup>4</sup>

Silano’s tale shows – at least for the author of the chronicle – that 9<sup>th</sup> century Venosa was an important rabbinic center, surpassing even Palestine itself. The text also mentions the visit of Aharon of Bagdad, who was highly respected by the southern Italian communities.<sup>5</sup> It is not necessary to discuss

<sup>3</sup> *Megillat Aḥima‘aš*, 9; Bonfil, *History*, 256-258.

<sup>4</sup> «And he bore his ban for many days and years, until R. Aḥima‘az journeyed there [because of his] vows and sagaciously lifted the ban from him. Hear what he did in his wisdom. When he came it was during the Ten Days of Penitence. And the scholars and the Head of the Academy entreated him to stand before the podium and lovingly chant the prayers, before the Lord Who is greatly revered in the assembly of the saints. And so he did humbly, with fear and reverence of Heaven in his heart. He started with penitential hymns and pleas, until among the supplications he came to one composed by the faithful R. Silano, whose incipit is *Aloh ve-karesh ve-ratzoah ve-nahesh* and when he reached [the words] *Our ancestors were worthy* he replaced with *rabbis* and the *idolaters* caused he replaced with *heretics*. When he completed the prayer, they asked him whose were the revering lips that so cherished the rabbis, whose were the holy lips which prayed with such sanctity, who so loved and venerated the rabbis while distancing and despising the heretics. Then he replied to them: the revering lips are R. Silano’s, who to you is an abomination. At once they all rose to their feet and repealed the ban which they themselves had cast upon him and recited for him a great and lengthy benediction, well arranged and composed and they all responded in one voice: “Blessed be R. Silano for ever to come”». *Megillat Aḥima‘aš*, 9; Bonfil, *History*, 258-260.

<sup>5</sup> Regarding the dispute between the Palestinian and Babylonian rabbinic centers, see R. Bonfil, *History*, 83: «Be that as it may, the story of Silano fits very well into the overall

the historicity of these tales and characters, but it is clear that for the *Megillat Aḥima'as*, 9<sup>th</sup> century Venosan Jews were highly rabbinized.

The text of the chronicle was written in Hebrew. But it was not the only Jewish text produced in Hebrew in southern Italy during the period. Prior to this time – between the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 10<sup>th</sup> centuries – *Sefer Yosippon* was written.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, Shabbetai Donnolo, who lived between 913 and 982 in the region, wrote medical and astrological tractates in Hebrew.<sup>7</sup>

This so-called “Hebrew revival” and the rabbinization of the Jewish communities of the region can be observed even earlier, thanks to the epigraphical record.<sup>8</sup> Several Jewish Venosan tombstones – dated between 808 and 848 – that originated from an open-air cemetery were found in the city.<sup>9</sup>

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emerging picture, for its function is quite transparent: it evinces in a clear-cut manner to the people of Venosa the insufficient knowledge of the Palestinian sage. Following our hypothesis, the story must consequently be understood as part of the competition between the Palestinian Academy, whose relationship with the Jewish community of Venosa is well documented, and the newly established connection with the Babylonian center of Baghdad. It moreover quite efficiently substantiates that public mockery is the most powerful mean of socio-cultural critique, for it strikes directly at the basis of socio-cultural prominence: honor».

<sup>6</sup> R. Bonfil, “Tra due mondi. Prospettive di ricerca sulla storia culturale degli Ebrei dell’Italia meridionale nell’alto medioevo”, in *Italia Judaica*, Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, Rome 1983, 135-158; D. Flusser, “Josippon, a Medieval Hebrew Version of Josephus”, in L. Feldman, G. Hata (eds.), *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity*, Brill, Leiden 1987, 386-397; S. Dönitz, *Überlieferung und Rezeption des Sefer Yosippon*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2013; S. Bowman, “Sefer Yosippon: Reevaluations”, *Sefer Yuhasin* 7 (2019) 57-64.

<sup>7</sup> A. Sharf, *The Universe of Shabbetai Donnolo*, Ktav, New York 1976; Id., “Shabbetai Donnolo as a Byzantine Jewish Figure”, in *Jews and other Minorities in Bizantium*, Bar-Ilan UP, Jerusalem 1995, 160-177; G. Lacerenza (ed.), *Šabbetai Donnolo: Scienza e cultura ebraica nell’Italia del secolo X*, Università L’Orientale, Naples 2004; V. Putzu, *Shabbetai Donnolo. Un sapiente ebreo nella Puglia bizantina altomedievale*, Messaggi, Cassano delle Murge 2004; P. Skinner, “Conflicting Accounts”; P. Mancuso (ed.), *Shabbetai Donnolo’s Sefer Hakhmoni: Introduction, Critical Text, and Annotated English Translation*, Brill, Leiden 2010.

<sup>8</sup> A good summary of the period in G. Lacerenza, “Between Old and New Barbarians: The Jews of Southern Italy during the ‘Dark Ages’”, in Y. Hen, F. Noble (eds.), *Barbarians and Jews: Jews and Judaism in the Early Medieval West*, Brepols, Turnhout 2018, 69-93. See also R. Kraemer, *The Mediterranean Diaspora in Late Antiquity: What Christianity Cost the Jews?*, Oxford UP, Oxford 2020, 342 ff.

<sup>9</sup> On these inscriptions see U. Cassuto, ‘The Hebrew Inscriptions of the Ninth Century in Venosa’, *Kedem* 2 (1945) 99-120 (Hebrew). More recently, G. Lacerenza, “L’epigrafia ebraica in Basilicata e Puglia dal IV secolo all’alto Medioevo”, in M. Mascolo, M. Perani

They were entirely written in Hebrew, with a high proportion of biblical names (72.73%)<sup>10</sup> and even feature references to Talmudic texts and *piyyuṭim*.<sup>11</sup> Even if we imagine that other Jewish inscriptions without Hebrew, biblical names or Jewish symbols were not classified as Jewish by modern researchers because the stones were found outside a specific Jewish context, it is undeniable that none of the European epitaphs from the previous period present the characteristics that 9<sup>th</sup> century Jewish Venetan inscriptions have. The only possible exceptions are the bilingual (Hebrew-Latin) inscriptions at Taranto, which are usually dated between the 7<sup>th</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>12</sup> However, the dating of these inscriptions depends mainly on linguistic considerations because they are not explicitly dated.<sup>13</sup> We will return later to Taranto's epigraphical record.

Since the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, rabbinization was, generally speaking, considered to be a relatively swift process not only in Palestine but also in the Diaspora. However, during the 20<sup>th</sup> century this idea was frequently called into question. If indeed there was an early rabbinization – critics argued – why were there no references to rabbis or rabbinical texts in the Diaspora? The problem, of course, was (and still is) the almost total lack of texts written by Jews in the West between Josephus and Donnolo.<sup>14</sup>

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(eds.), *Ketav, sefer, miktav. La cultura ebraica scritta tra Basilicata e Puglia*, Edizioni di Pagina, Bari 2014, 189-252. Lacerenza is about to publish a definitive survey.

<sup>10</sup> This is my own calculation based on Lacerenza's catalogue. See Lacerenza, "L'epigrafia ebraica".

<sup>11</sup> See, among others, C. Colafemmina, "Hebrew Inscriptions of the Early Medieval Period in Southern Italy", in B. Garvin, B. Cooperman (eds.), *The Jews of Italy: Memory and Identity*, University Press of Maryland, Potomac 2008 (2000), 65-81; Lacerenza, "L'epigrafia ebraica".

<sup>12</sup> JIWE I 120-133; Lacerenza, "L'epigrafia ebraica", II.35-II.47; C. Colafemmina, "Gli ebrei a Taranto nella documentazione epigrafica (secc. IV-X)", in C.D. Fonseca (ed.), *La chiesa di Taranto*, Congedo, Galatina 1977, 109-127. I am not considering JIWE I 118-119 because they belong to an earlier period.

<sup>13</sup> Regarding these risks, de Lange asserted: «Frey, however, insists that this bilingual inscription must be dated earlier than the 8<sup>th</sup> century, because of the presence of Latin. In the present state of our evidence such a sweeping generalization, based on an unprovable negative proposition, must seem somewhat reckless». N. de Lange, "The Hebrew Language in the European Diaspora", in I. Oppenheimer, B. Isaac (eds.), *Studies on the Jewish Diaspora in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods*, Ramot, Tel Aviv 1996, 111-138: 128.

<sup>14</sup> I will not broach the controversies regarding the *Letter of Mordechai to Alexander*, the *Collatio legum Romanarum et Mosaicarum*, the *Epistola Anne ad Senecam*, and the *Liber Antiquita-*

In Italy, the area with one of the richest Jewish epigraphical records of the period, no clear signs of rabbinization were found. The inscriptions mention archisynagogues, archons, fathers and mothers of the synagogues, but almost no rabbis. Even the few rabbis found – two of them in Venosa, as we will see – were not considered, by a part of the historiography, as men associated with the rabbinic movement.<sup>15</sup> Neither do archeological findings such as the synagogue of Ostia and Bova Marina offer information about the kind of Judaism present in Italy before the 9<sup>th</sup> century. This is not surprising, because even for Palestine there is no historiographical consensus regarding the relationship between the synagogue and the rabbinic movement. Over all, our initial epigraphical image of the Jews in Italy comes from more than 600 inscriptions at the Jewish catacombs in Rome, in which Hebrew is almost non-existent, rabbis are not mentioned at all, and biblical names represent 13.5% of all names.<sup>16</sup> Our final picture comes from the totally Hebraized and rabbinized inscriptions of 9<sup>th</sup> century southern Italy, particularly Venosa. How can we compare these records?

As we will see, it is usually suggested that the 76 inscriptions found in the Jewish catacombs of Venosa and dated between the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> centuries can provide some clues in relation to the process of rabbinization in Italy. A slight growth in the use of Hebrew and the explicit mention of two rabbis and two *apostuli* were interpreted as a turning point in the development of rabbinism in the region. Names were also referred to as another sign of rabbinical influence because of the growth of the use of biblical names.

In this article I will focus on onomastic analysis as a tool to contribute to the understanding of the development of Jewish life in Venosa in particular,

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*tum Biblicarum*. Even if we accept Jewish authorship of all these texts, they do not at all support rabbinic influence in western Europe.

<sup>15</sup> S. Cohen, “Epigraphical Rabbis”, *Jewish Quarterly Review* 72 (1981) 1-17; H. Lapin, “Epigraphical Rabbis: A Reconsideration”, *Jewish Quarterly Review* 101 (2011) 311-346. References to rabbis in Italy were found also at Naples (JIWE I 36) and Brusciano (JIWE I 22). Even Lapin, sceptic like Cohen, accepts that the *duo rebbites* of Venosa (JIWE I 86) were probably two rabbis belonging to the rabbinic movement (p. 331). In contrast “rabbis” mentioned in Naples and Brusciano are not accepted as rabbis by Lapin. Nowadays Cohen’s position is not more hegemonic. See for example, C. Hezser, “Correlating Literary, Epigraphic, and Archaeological Sources”, in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Daily Life in Roman Palestine*, Oxford UP, Oxford 2010, 9-27: 23.

<sup>16</sup> These are Rutgers’ figures. See L.V. Rutgers, *The Jews in Late Ancient Rome: Evidence of Cultural Interaction in the Roman Diaspora*, Brill, Leiden 1995, 156. On the Jewish Roman catacombs see also S. Cappelletti, *The Jewish Community of Rome. From the Second Century B.C. to the Third Century C.E.*, Brill, Leiden 2006.

and southern Italy in general. Certainly, naming practices are only one part of identity and I will not offer a categorical answer to the question of the rabbinization process, but I am convinced that onomastics can shed light on the problem. However, before tackling the issue, it would be useful to examine some previous interpretations of the process of rabbinization outside Palestine.

## 2. *Rejudaization and/or rabbinization*

This is not the place to take a position on the controversy between “minimalists” and “maximalists” regarding the rabbinization of Palestine.<sup>17</sup> However, even without accepting the most radical position of the minimalists, it is important to recognize that they have contributed to problematizing the extent of rabbinic power in the first centuries after the fall of the Second Temple. One of the most important authors of that current, Seth Schwartz, considered that the Jewish response to Christianization was *rejudaization*:

The Jews had two possible ways of responding: continued integration at the cost of conversion to Christianity or continued adherence to Judaism (its component communities increasingly inward turning and possessing their own discrete social structures) at the cost of withdrawal.<sup>18</sup>

I find the concept of *rejudaization* useful because it highlights the moment in which a Jewish community decided to emphasize its own identity, increasing the visualization of the community, the use of its own institutions and the adoption of specific Jewish identity markers in order to differentiate from the surrounding non-Jewish society. The discussion around the Jewish catacombs in Venosa as a (possible) link between 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century Roman Jews

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<sup>17</sup> See, among others, Cohen, “Epigraphical Rabbis”; S. Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society: 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.*, Princeton UP, Princeton 2001; H. Lapin, *Rabbis as Romans: The Rabbinic Movement in Palestine, 100-400 CE*, Oxford UP, Oxford 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Schwartz, “Imperialism”, 179. The bibliography concerning the impact of Christianity on the configuration of Judaism is rich. See, among others, A. Segal, *Rebecca’s Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World*, Harvard UP, Cambridge 1986; I. Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perception of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, University of California Press, Berkeley 2006 (2000 in Hebrew); D. Boyarin, “The Christian Invention of Judaism: The Theodosian Empire and the Rabbinic Refusal of Religion”, *Representations* 85 (2004) 21-57; Id., *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*, Pennsylvania UP, Philadelphia 2004; L.V. Rutgers, *Making Myths: Jews in Early Christian Identity Formation*, Peeters, Leuven 2009. More recently, Kraemer, *The Mediterranean*.

and 9<sup>th</sup> century southern Italy is, in the final instance, a discussion about the growth of the use of Hebrew, Jewish iconography and biblical names. First, the researcher must prove that in fact there is an increase of those identity markers. Then, he/she needs to explain what that means. Since in 6<sup>th</sup> century rabbinization in Palestine was – even in the most minimalist analysis – a visible phenomenon, the temptation to associate the increase of Hebrew and biblical names with rabbinization is strong especially if an inscription states that *duo rebbitas*<sup>19</sup> were present at a funeral.

To provide an example, Anna Collar suggested that very early on – from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century onwards – Diaspora Jews were influenced by rabbinism. She considered «the use of Jewish names, terms, symbols and Hebrew» as a sign of a «doctrinal transmission of the rabbinic reforms to the ordinary people of the Diaspora».<sup>20</sup> But Jewish self-identification is not a synonym of rabbinization. In order to avoid that confusion, I find the concept of rejudaization valid. More *menoroth*, *etrogim* or Hebrew words do not automatically mean that rabbinic influence had reached Italy. The presence of these markers could just signify that the Jewish community was trying to make its identity more visible, at least epigraphically. A response to Christianization – returning to Schwartz – is a possible answer,<sup>21</sup> though, as we will see for the Venosan case (and even for Palestine, but this is not the place to discuss that) Christianization was also a slow process and we should not exaggerate its impact on the Jewish communities. I will return to this point later.

Nevertheless, *rejudaization* is itself problematic because the word suggests that there is a return to a certain nebulous origin. To speak about rejudaization means, in a way, to deny a Jewish identity to the Jews who did not write in Hebrew on their tombstones. When Gian Piero Bognetti, referring to Venosa, spoke about «la renaissance juive en Occident»<sup>22</sup> in relation to Jewish

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<sup>19</sup> JIWE I 86.

<sup>20</sup> A. Collar, *Religious Networks in the Roman Empire: The Spread of New Ideas*, Cambridge UP, Cambridge 2013, 195: «It is abundantly clear that the epigraphy undergoes a major change from the third century onwards, with an enormous increase in Jewish self-identification, manifest in the use of Jewish names, terms, symbols and Hebrew. This can only be adequately explained as the epigraphic reflection of the accurate, doctrinal transmission of the rabbinic reforms to the ordinary people of the Diaspora, as visual evidence for the gradual spread of universalizing *halakah*».

<sup>21</sup> Recently and following the same line, Kraemer, *The Mediterranean*.

<sup>22</sup> G.P. Bognetti, “Les inscriptions juives de Venosa et le problème des rapports entre les Lombards et l’Orient”, *Comptes-rendus des séances de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 98 (1954) 193-203: 193.

Italian life in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, he was implicitly suggesting that the Jews found in the catacombs of Venosa were not Jewish enough.

On the whole, I think that the development of the use of identity markers should be analyzed cautiously, taking into consideration possible internal and external causes. More space given to the Torah in Ostia's synagogue can be understood as an advance of the rabbinic movement, as an early answer to Christianity or just as an internal change. Not every Jewish transformation in late antiquity should lead us to rabbinization. Before examining the reasons for the shift, we need to discuss if there really was a change in relation to the Jewish Roman catacombs. But is important to first review some discussions about the influences between East and West in late antiquity.

### 3. *How many Judaisms?*

Even though there are hints of a continuous link,<sup>23</sup> scholars debate the degree and depth of contacts between Palestine, Babylon, and the western Diaspora. Moreover, the idea that a diasporic community could have resisted to changes proposed by the sages of Palestine is usually elided. In other words: the confirmation of a connection between Palestine and western regions does not necessarily confirm rabbinization. Silano's tale, while it is late and rabbinic, shows the pride and self-confidence of the local Venosan community. Unfortunately, to reiterate, we do not have Jewish texts with which to analyze that kind of reaction during late antiquity, and the epigraphical record does not assist us to discern clearly how external influences were received.

It is worth reviewing, albeit briefly, the development of studies concerning the idea of a non-rabbinic Diaspora. A good historiographical point of departure is Erwin Goodenough. Although his idea about a Hellenistic or mystical Judaism was swiftly refuted, he was one of the first researchers to emphasize the concept of a non-rabbinic Judaism.<sup>24</sup> Also, Vittore Colorni and

<sup>23</sup> Of course, the links are also debated but this is not the place to analyze them. Suffice to say that – even without accepting problematic rabbinic sources – certain mentions in Christian sources and, more importantly, the evidence of contacts in the epigraphical record, confirm that Jewish regions were connected, though we cannot specify with what frequency and intensity. See, among others, C. Hezser, *Jewish Travel in Antiquity*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2011 (particularly 433 ff.); Collar, *Religious Networks*, 164 ff.

<sup>24</sup> E.R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, Pantheon Books, New York 1953, 1: 22-23: «If we cannot here go into the problem of the attitude of the rabbis to images, let me beg the question for the moment and say that the art seems to me definitely a part of Judaism, but to have no real place in rabbinic Judaism. By that token it would



Harry Leon, who focused on the study of the epigraphical records of Rome and Venosa considered rabbinism to be an exogenous element.<sup>25</sup> It is no coincidence that these three authors based their studies on archaeological and epigraphical sources. Also based on epigraphy, Shaye Cohen insisted on the absence of rabbinic influence in the western Diaspora.<sup>26</sup>

Certainly, there was (and still is) no consensus about the period in which the western Diaspora was rabbinized. The traditional point of view that does not separate the rabbinic world from a (possible) non-rabbinic one, has continued to prevail in an important part of the historiography. Even scholars such as Leonard Rutgers, who takes a moderate position and employs archaeological and epigraphical materials in his studies, consider that affirming that the West and the East were unconnected, and that western communities could have resisted rabbinic influences, is an untenably exaggerated position.<sup>27</sup>

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fall into what is generally called Hellenistic Judaism. Hellenistic Judaism, if my hypothesis is right, is altogether too important a movement for us to scamp the slightest evidence which might illuminate it. Both the later mystic movements in Judaism, and the Hellenization of Christianity, seem to me to have flowed out from this largely hidden source»; Id., 12 (1965), 185: «... there is no evidence that Jews outside Palestine, or that any considerable proportion of the Jews even in Palestine itself, understood the Hebrew or Aramaic of the Schools, or that the Rabbis had any interest in making their Mishnah available to outsiders».

<sup>25</sup> H.J. Leon, *The Jews of Ancient Rome: The Social life of the Jews of Ancient Rome gleaned from the Catacomb Inscriptions*, Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia 1960, 226: «For my own part, I feel that to cite passages from the Talmud, as some scholars have done, can be of little value in helping us to a solution. The inscriptions have clearly demonstrated that there was little, if any, knowledge of Hebrew among the Jews of Imperial Rome, so that the opinions of the rabbis were probably quiet unknown to them». V. Colorni, *L'uso del greco nella liturgia del giudaismo ellenistico e la novella 146 di Giustiniano*, Giuffrè, Milan 1964, 12: «I confini dei due mondi peraltro, quello degli ebrei di lingua e cultura greca e quello degli ebrei di lingua e cultura aramaica, restavano di regola, ad onta di tali eccezionali intrecci, ben distinti e separati fra loro». Also, p.14: «Effettivamente, anche senza espressioni letterarie, il giudaismo ellenistico resta tale ancora per centinaia d'anni e soltanto con estrema gradualità si compiono il suo tramonto e la sua conquista da parte della tradizione del giudaismo aramaico».

<sup>26</sup> Cohen, "Epigraphical Rabbis".

<sup>27</sup> L.V. Rutgers, "Recent Trends in the Study of Ancient Diaspora Judaism", in Id., *The Hidden Heritage of Diaspora Judaism*, Peeters, Leuven 1998, 15-41: 27-28: «Still, the larger Jewish communities in the Diaspora must have been acutely aware of the developments in Roman Palestine. Even though we really do not know who are the rabbis referred to in

The idea of a divided Diaspora was revived by Arye Edrei and Doron Mendels but in a radical way.<sup>28</sup> They underestimate how widespread knowledge of Greek and Latin was in the East, and the (however limited) awareness of Hebrew in the West. More importantly, they neglect the evidence of connections between the regions. Moreover, they present a non-rabbinized western Diaspora but a very early rabbinized Palestine. However, it is worth noting that their proposition was supported by one of the most important epigraphists of late ancient Judaism: Pieter van der Horst.<sup>29</sup>

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several late antique inscriptions from the western Diaspora, Diaspora communities may very well have reacted congenially to these developments. Considering that these Diaspora communities had much in common when it came to upholding the Jewish tradition, it is conceivable that they welcomed rabbinic Judaism as a new yet genuine expression of Judaism, especially in a period when the original tension between the rabbis and the rest of the Jewish population had begun to give way to a more cordial and constructive relationship [...] In conclusion, it must be said that it would be absurd to argue that all the Jewish communities of the Mediterranean were completely identical in terms of practices and belief, or that these beliefs and local *minhagim* remained constant over time. I believe that a fresh look on archaeological and epigraphic materials suggests, however, that despite such local differences, Jews in many part of the ancient world may very well have agreed on a number of issues».

<sup>28</sup> A. Edrei, D. Mendels, “A Split Jewish Diaspora: Its Dramatic Consequences”, *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 16 (2007) 91-137: 91: «This article proposes that a language divide and two systems of communication have brought to a serious gap between the western Jewish Diaspora and the eastern one. Thus the western Greek-speaking Jews lost touch with the Halakhah and the Rabbis, a condition that had far-reaching consequences on Jewish history thereafter. The Rabbis paid a high price for keeping their Halakhah in oral form, losing in consequence half of their constituency. An oral law did not develop in the western diaspora, whereas the existing eastern one was not translated into Greek. Hence it is not surprising that western Jews contributed nothing to the development of the oral law in the east. The Jewish communities that were isolated from the Rabbinic network served as a receptive basis for the development of an alternative Christian network by Paul and the apostles, which enabled it to spread throughout the Mediterranean basin. The Jews that remained ‘biblical’ surfaced in Europe in the Middle Ages». I find the definition of western Jews as “biblical” to be really problematic, because that notion disregards (and ignores) the dynamism of the Jewish communities. See also A. Edrei, D Mendels, “A Split Jewish Diaspora: Its Dramatic Consequences, II”, *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 17 (2008) 163-187; Eid., *Zweierlei Diaspora. Zur Spaltung der antiken Jüdischen Welt*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 2010.

<sup>29</sup> P.W. van der Horst, *Saxa Judaica Loquuntur: Lessons from Early Jewish Inscriptions*, Brill, Leiden 2014, 65: «In this connection it is important, however, to stress the major difference

Some years after the publication of the first articles dealing with the split diaspora by Edrei and Mendels, Anna Collar published a study that is diametrically opposed to this approach. The author considered – based on epigraphical evidence – that the rabbinic movement reached the western Diaspora very early on (see above). For Collar, more *menoroth* are a clear sign of rabbinization. As mentioned above, I think that this is a clear confusion between rejudaization and rabbinization.

The controversy around the precise moment of rabbinization of the western Diaspora still rages on. It is true that in recent years authors such as Catherine Hezser have insisted on not overstating the differences between rabbinic and non-rabbinic groups.<sup>30</sup> I agree that occasionally scholars have hyperbolized the idea of a disconnected Diaspora. However, I think that while it is prudent to avoid extreme formulations, the idea of Jewish communities with their own identity – partly influenced by their non-Jewish local milieu – is still valid. The Jews of Italy during late antiquity showed they had the right to express their own – perhaps non-rabbinical – voice.

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between the eastern and western diasporas. The linguistic divide between the two (a Semitic speaking diaspora in the East, a Greek speaking one in the West) had dramatic consequences. It is not only the fact that the rabbis handed down their halakhah in an oral form for a long time but also and especially the fact that, once these traditions were finally written down, they never took the trouble to translate their Mishnah, their Talmudim, and their midrashim into Greek (let alone Latin) that prevented them from gaining influence in the western diaspora. The language gap was not bridged and the consequence was that the rabbis thus lost half of their constituency. Jewish communities in the West, isolated as they were from the rabbinic network, could not contribute anything to the development of halakhah in the East. This situation changed only in the Middle Ages when, around the ninth century, the rabbinic movement arrived in Greek and Latin Europe». After this statement, van der Horst refers to Edrei and Mendels' work quoted above. See also pp. 58-59: «Even if some of the very few 'rabbis' mentioned in diaspora Jewish inscriptions may perhaps have been rabbis in our sense of the word, it is clear that the term 'rabbinic Judaism' would be totally out of place as a characterization of the many Jewish communities in the western diaspora. These communities often flourished for centuries without any rabbis being around, let alone leading the communities that also explains why there are no inscriptions outside Palestine that reflect any specifically rabbinic ideas or practices».

<sup>30</sup> Hezser, "Correlating".

#### 4. *The context: Venosa Between the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 10<sup>th</sup> centuries*

It is worth dedicating a few words to the context of the Jewish catacomb and the events after its use. Venosa (*Venusia*, in Latin) was an important node in the Roman Empire. It was traversed by the *Via Appia* (or, at least, its trajectory came close to the city)<sup>31</sup> and was connected by the *Via Herculea* with the *Via Traiana*. As the Jewish inscriptions themselves show, the vitality of the Venosan city government seems to have lasted until the first part of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. However, the Gothic War and the conquest of the city by the Byzantines probably affected life in the city.<sup>32</sup> The situation changed again with the arrival of the Lombards after 568. No allusion to these events are found in the record of the catacomb. We have to wait until the 9<sup>th</sup> century to once again receive news about the Jews of Venosa.

It is interesting that we do not have any information about Christians in Venosa after the 6<sup>th</sup> century either. It is true that the archaeological remains of the local church provide evidence of the cult's continuity, but no literary mention of Christianity is found in the area until the second millennium.<sup>33</sup> In fact, according to Marchi and Salvatore there was a sharp population reduction in Venosa during the 7<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>34</sup> Regarding Christianity, it is also important to remember – as stated above – that we should not overestimate the

<sup>31</sup> D. Nuzzo (ed.), *Inscriptiones Christianae Italiae - Regio II. Apulia et Calabria*, Edipuglia, Bari 2011 (ICI XIII), 152. Regarding Venosa, see M.L. Marchi, G. Sabbatini, *Venusia*, Olschki, Florence 1996.

<sup>32</sup> According to Noy, «...the area of Venosa suffered heavily in the fighting between the Goths and Byzantines in the 540s and early 550s, and if the Jews of Venosa supported the Goths as the Jews of Naples did, they were probably in some trouble after the Byzantine victory in 553». D. Noy, "The Jewish Communities of Leontopolis and Venosa", in J. van Henten, P.W. van der Horst (eds.), *Studies in Early Jewish Epigraphy*, Brill, Leiden 1994, 162-182: 174.

<sup>33</sup> D. Nuzzo, P. De Santis, "La diffusione del Cristianesimo nella Puglia centrale: città e territorio", in R. Bonacasa Carra, E. Vitale (eds.), *La cristianizzazione in Italia tra tardoantico ed altomedioevo. Atti del IX congresso nazionale di archeologia cristiana. Agrigento 20-25 novembre 2004*, vol. 2, Saladino, Palermo 2007, 1201-1236: 1209: «L'interruzione dopo i primi anni del VI secolo delle attestazioni di vescovi di Trani, Egnazia e Venosa e la vacanza delle sedi di Canosa e di Brindisi al tempo del pontificato di Gregorio Magno delineano un quadro di generale regresso delle diocesi della Puglia centrale, regresso che non si risolse in tempi brevi dal momento che per nuove menzioni episcopali bisognerà attendere in diversi casi (come Canosa, Trani e Bari) il IX-X secolo».

<sup>34</sup> M.L. Marchi, M. Salvatore, *Venosa: forma e urbanistica*, L'Erma di Bretschneider, Rome 1997, 99.

extent of Christianization of the city. Indeed, Venosa was only mentioned at the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century and our earliest Christian epigraphical reference there dates from 503.<sup>35</sup> Certainly, the Christianization of Venosa developed before the first attestation.<sup>36</sup> However, as we will see later, only 10 Christian epigraphical records (including images and texts) were found in the city. This issue is important because the more recent tendencies that analyze Judaism in the light of Christianization make a valuable contribution, but sometimes overstate the expansion and visibility of Christianity in the first centuries of its development. When Jewish inscriptions reappeared in Venosa – in the first part of the 9<sup>th</sup> century – the city was still under Lombard rule, but was threatened by the Saracens, who took control between 851 and 866. After that, Byzantines conquered Venosa and it remained in their hands (with the exception of the Saracen sack of 926) until the arrival of the Normans in 1041. The last Jewish epitaph is from 848 and it is not easy to discern if that lack of evidence from the Jewish settlement after the last inscription was the result of Saracen, Lombard or Byzantine actions.

Neither do we know if Jews in the 9<sup>th</sup> century knew about the catacomb in the *Collina della Maddalena*. The only possible link is a fragment (Lacerenza, “L’epigrafia”, II.6) found in 1997 while works on the entrance of the catacomb were being performed. Even though it is not easy to reconstruct, Giancarlo Lacerenza suggests [פה הרגי]ע יהודה [בן] on one side, and פה קובר [] ח/ת on the other side. According to Cesare Colafemmina,<sup>37</sup> the fragment was written between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries and is the only evidence of the transition between catacomb’s inscriptions and the open-air ones from the 9<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>38</sup> Colafemmina’s theory is certainly suggestive. However, dating the piece to the 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries is speculative. Regarding the finding at the entrance of the catacomb, it is possible to imagine – as Colafemmina did – an open-air cemetery outside the catacomb,<sup>39</sup> but other alternatives cannot be discarded.

<sup>35</sup> ICI XIII, 75-81.

<sup>36</sup> ICI XIII, LIII-LXXVI. See also G. Otranto, “L’Italia tardoantica tra cristianizzazione e formazione delle diocesi”, in R. Bonacasa Carra, E. Vitale (eds.), *La cristianizzazione in Italia tra Tardoantico ed Altomedioevo. Atti del IX congresso nazionale di archeologia cristiana*, Saladino, Palermo 2007, 1-28; Id., *Per una storia dell’Italia tardoantica cristiana*, Edipuglia, Bari 2009; G. Volpe, “Città e campagna, strutture insediative e strutture ecclesiastiche dell’Italia Meridionale: il caso dell’Apulia”, in *Chiese locali e chiese regionali nell’alto Medioevo*, Centro Italiano di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo, Spoleto 2014, 1041-1068.

<sup>37</sup> Colafemmina, “Hebrew Inscriptions”.

<sup>38</sup> See also Lacerenza, “L’epigrafia”, 192, who also supports this idea.

<sup>39</sup> Colafemmina, “Hebrew Inscriptions”, 81: «The fragment is very important because it shows that in the seventh to eight centuries the Jews of Venosa already buried their

### 5. Interpretations of the Jewish epigraphical records of Venosa

There are references to the Venosan Jewish catacomb from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards.<sup>40</sup> However, the inscriptions were only published in 1880 by Graziadio Ascoli.<sup>41</sup> He suggested that the inscriptions from the Jewish catacomb of Venosa were a link between earlier inscriptions in the catacombs of Rome and the later medieval (Venosan and non-Venosan) inscriptions in Hebrew. His words, written in 1880, are still valuable:

Dicemmo più sopra, come l'epitafio ebreo delle catacombe di Venosa faccia famiglia con quello dei sepolcri a cielo aperto che ne' secoli successivi c'è mostrato da codeste regioni. Or se così abbiamo in questo ipogeo i prodromi naturali e genuini di quel che ci danno i più bassi tempi, resta che s'avverta, come per gli inizi della scritta ebraica, e per la ragione storica dell'epigrafe greco-latina, il gruppo dell'ipogeo di Venosa resulti il naturale e legittimo continuatore dell'antico gruppo giudaico degli ipogei di Roma.<sup>42</sup>

However, Jean-Baptiste Frey, the editor of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum*, took a different view. According to him, during the 8<sup>th</sup> century there was a substantial immigration to southern Italy that explains the growth of the use of Hebrew in the region.<sup>43</sup> Bognetti, in contrast, returned to Ascoli's idea.<sup>44</sup> Colorni endorsed the same point of view, pinpointing the 6<sup>th</sup> century as the beginning of the Hebraization (and rabbinization) processes.<sup>45</sup>

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dead in open areas near the ancient catacombs and, at the same time, they used tombstones with Hebrew epitaphs on the graves».

<sup>40</sup> G. Lacerenza, "Le antichità giudaiche di Venosa: storia e documenti", *Archivio Storico per le Province Napoletane* 116 (1998) 293-418. Also Lacerenza, "L'epigrafia ebraica".

<sup>41</sup> G.I. Ascoli, *Iscrizioni inedite o mal note greche, latine, ebraiche di antichi sepolcri giudaici del napoletano*, Loescher, Turin-Rome 1880, 51-64. See also U. Cassuto, "Nuove iscrizioni ebraiche di Venosa", *Archivio Storico per la Calabria e la Lucania* 4 (1934) 1-9 and Id., "Ancora nuove iscrizioni ebraiche di Venosa", *Archivio Storico per la Calabria e la Lucania* 5 (1935) 179-184.

<sup>42</sup> Ascoli, *Iscrizioni*, 48.

<sup>43</sup> J.-B. Frey, *Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum*, Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, Rome 1936, 453 (CIJ).

<sup>44</sup> Bognetti, "Les inscriptions", 193: « Le même phénomène [the presence of Hebrew] a lieu dans plusieurs inscriptions des catacombes juives de Venosa tandis qu'il manque dans les inscriptions juives de Rome à l'époque impériale, pourtant si nombreuses».

<sup>45</sup> Colorni, *L'uso del greco*, 22: «Il giudaismo ellenistico cioè non muore fisicamente ma tramonta a poco a poco, assorbito dall'altro giudaismo a base nazionale ebreo-aramaica

Not exclusively due to the Venosan inscriptions but mainly because of them, the 6<sup>th</sup> century was identified time and again as a watershed. Goodenough himself (who clearly influenced Colorni's work) asserted:

To this I must answer that from direct evidence we know nothing; but it would seem that the leaders of this Judaism from the sixth to the eight centuries had a great change of attitude. They learned Hebrew, after more than half a millenium when Hebrew had been a dead language for all but the learned even in Palestine. As they did so they could for the first time learn to pray in Hebrew, to read the scriptures in Hebrew, and to study the rabbinical writings.<sup>46</sup>

But the idea of the 6<sup>th</sup> century as a turning point was rejected, at least partially, by one of the most important epigraphists, David Noy. According to him:

It looks as if the exclusive use of the Hebrew language and the predominantly Hebrew naming system of the 9<sup>th</sup> century are something new, not a continuation of any 6<sup>th</sup> century development.<sup>47</sup>

However, some years later, Noy expressed a different idea:

It appears that in approximately the sixth century there was a change in southern Italy from using Hebrew as an auxiliary part of an epitaph to using it as the main language of commemoration. This was probably a prerequisite

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che, rimasto vivo in Palestina e in Babilonia, di qui si irradia in Europa a ondate successive, e più decisamente a partire già dal VI secolo, data in cui compaiono a Venosa le prime brevi epigrafi esclusivamente in ebraico». However, according to Colorni (pp. 49-50), definitive rabbinization is only visible from the 9<sup>th</sup> century onwards: «Le vicende di questa riebraizzazione delle comunità giudeo-ellenistiche, che seppellisce nell'oblio più completo tutti i testi greci o latini in precedenza in uso presso di esse e trasforma il giudaismo dell'Africa, dell'Asia Minore e dell'Europa, a partire almeno dal IX secolo, in semplici propaggini del giudaismo babilonese, ci sono ignote». See also L. Levi, "Ricerche di epigrafia ebraica nell'Italia meridionale", *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 28/3-4 (1962) 132-153.

<sup>46</sup> Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols*, 12, 198.

<sup>47</sup> Noy, "The Jewish Communities", 176. de Lange was also sceptical regarding the link between the Venosan catacomb inscriptions and Hebrew inscriptions from the 9<sup>th</sup> century. See de Lange, "The Hebrew Language", 128-132. See also D. Noy, "Writing in Tongues: The Use of Greek, Latin and Hebrew in Jewish Inscriptions from Roman Italy", *Journal of Jewish Studies* 48 (1997) 300-311.

for its use as a literary language from c. 800; therefore the reason for the rise of Hebrew should be sought in the sixth century rather than the eighth.<sup>48</sup>

Also, in 1999 Margaret Williams wrote about Venosa.<sup>49</sup> Her paper, while short, was really challenging. She concentrated her analysis not on the entire Jewish community of Venosa, but on a single family – the Family of Faustinus the father – that could be traced for seven generations. Williams formulated two important ideas. The first was that this family – probably the most powerful family documented in the catacomb’s inscriptions – behaved in a specific way associated with their political position not only inside the community but also outside it. The second was that Hebraization was not a linear process, at least in that family. So, Williams contributed two significant ideas: heterogeneity of a community and choice of language. This last issue is really important because it shows that Hebrew (or any other custom from Palestine) could have been known but not used because of a communal, family, or personal decision. Even though these ideas can be challenged,<sup>50</sup> I think we should bear them in mind for the purposes of this study.

Seth Schwartz also used the Venosan evidence (among other sources) to entitle his article “Rabbinization in the Sixth Century”.<sup>51</sup> I would like to highlight one idea that he presented clearly:

I think it worth suggesting that rabbinic norms have always been in tension with other norms, many of them marked as Jewish, and called in the Middle Ages *minhag*. Rather than looking for a rabbinic victory, it is this tension, caused by the introduction of rabbinic Judaism into the larger social system of Judaism, that we should be seeking.<sup>52</sup>

It is important to avoid ideas such as “conquest” or “imposition” to explain the way in which rabbinic Judaism reached Europe. Of course, that is

<sup>48</sup> D. Noy, “‘Peace upon Israel’: Hebrew Formulae and Names in Jewish Inscriptions from the Western Roman Empire”, in W. Horbury (ed.), *Hebrew Study from Ezra to Ben-Yehuda*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh 1999, 135-146: 145.

<sup>49</sup> M.H. Williams, “The Jews of Early Byzantine Venusia: The Family of Faustinus I, the Father”, *Journal of Jewish Studies* 50 (1999) 38-52.

<sup>50</sup> Also noted by de Lange, “The Hebrew Language”, 131: «Clearly, then, we cannot speak of a linear progression from one language to another, even within successive generations of a single family». Cfr. Kraemer, *The Mediterranean*, 375-377.

<sup>51</sup> S. Schwartz, “Rabbinization in the Sixth Century”, in P. Schäfer (ed.), *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture*, vol. 4, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2002, 55-69.

<sup>52</sup> Schwartz, “Rabbinization”, 55.



not to suggest an influence without tensions – the *Novella* 146 shows us the kind of tensions that could have existed<sup>53</sup> – but it is important to consider the possibility of a gradual influence that probably faced certain resistances but was also received without major conflicts.<sup>54</sup> In agreement with Schwartz, I consider the coexistence between different traditions to be possible (and also verifiable for later periods). This is not to openly criticize the idea of an imposition (sometimes I find myself thinking in those terms) but merely to suggest that the process could have been different.<sup>55</sup> Simonsohn considered – again, basically relying on Venosan epigraphy – the period between the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup> centuries to be transitional.<sup>56</sup> In his words:

However, the Palestinians won and imposed Hebrew on the Hellenists in Palestine and abroad. The *apostoli* reached Europe, and spread Hebrew language and Palestinian traditions from the sixth century on. By the eighth century Hebrew had won out also in Europe. Then Babylonia joined battle and gained the upper hand in some countries, especially in Spain. Babylonian influence became supreme practically everywhere in Halacha, while Palestinian traditions maintained themselves successfully among Italiani and Ashkenazim.<sup>57</sup>

Interestingly Colafemmina – in a side comment – considered the possibility that Carolingian cultural policy could have influenced the Hebrew renaissance inside Jewish communities. I think it is worth highlighting this comment because it gives the Jews of southern Italy the possibility of trigger-

<sup>53</sup> On the *Novella* 146, see, among others, Colorni, *L'uso del greco*; L.V. Rutgers, “Justinian’s *Novella* 146 between Jews and Christians”, in R. Kalmin, S. Schwartz (eds.), *Jewish Culture and Society under the Christian Roman Empire*, Peeters, Leuven 2003, 385-407. Recently, N. de Lange, “Hebraists and Hellenists in the Sixth-Century Synagogue: A New Reading of Justinian’s Novel 146”, in C. Cordoni, G. Langer (eds.), “*Let the Wise Listen and Add to Their Learning*” (*Prov 1:5*): *Festschrift for Günter Stemberger on the Occasion of his 75<sup>th</sup> Birthday*, de Gruyter, Berlin 2016, 217-226.

<sup>54</sup> de Lange, regarding Hebrew, spoke about «Pro-Hebrew pressure in Europe». de Lange, “The Hebrew Language”, 135.

<sup>55</sup> See above the quotation of Rutgers.

<sup>56</sup> S. Simonsohn, “The Hebrew Revival among Early Medieval European Jews”, in S. Lieberman, A. Hyman (eds.), *Salo Wittmayer Baron Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday*, Columbia UP, New York 1975, 831-885: 850: «The period of approximately two centuries, lasting from the sixth to the eighth century, is an age of cultural transition for the Jews of Europe».

<sup>57</sup> Simonsohn, “The Hebrew Revival”, 858.

ing the change without depending on eastern Jewish influence as the only motivation.<sup>58</sup>

We can conclude our brief survey with the words of Giancarlo Lacerenza, who represents – in my opinion – the most balanced point of view:

Not surprisingly, Judaism in the West maintained a degree of independence from Palestinian Judaism, with which it began to conform – although the trend was not uniform – only from the fifth century onward and mainly in reaction to the growing success of Christianity.<sup>59</sup>

As we have seen, there is no single answer to explain how the Jews of late ancient Venosa should be interpreted. It is not easy to confirm whether they represented a mere continuity with the Roman antecedent or a watershed that marked the beginning of a change that would culminate in 9<sup>th</sup> century southern Italy with the total Hebraization and rabbinization of the epigraphical record. If Venosa's Jewish catacomb is accepted as the point of departure of a major change, there are several questions we can pose: Was there a local rejudaization process – as a result of the Christianization process – that only later converged with rabbinic Judaism? Or do the inscriptions reveal the first steps of an unstoppable rabbinization process? If indeed there was rabbinization underway, was it aggressive? Gradual? Was there resistance?

All these questions are valuable, but the central proposal of this article is to take a step back from these concerns. Was there really a change? Names can provide us with some clues, despite not being clear-cut. And I think it is worth trying (again). But first let's take a look at some methodological problems with Venosan onomastics.

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<sup>58</sup> Colafemmina, "Hebrew Inscriptions", 79, n. 2: «The use of Hebrew alone in inscriptions dating from the end of the eight century to the beginning of the ninth, as well as the flourishing of literature in Hebrew, is to be attributed to the closer relation between southern Italian communities and those in Eretz Israel and in North Africa. However, the European cultural revival known as the "Carolingian Renaissance" probably also stimulated a return to roots».

<sup>59</sup> G. Lacerenza, "Judaism in Italy and the West", in M. Salzman, W. Adler (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Religions in the Ancient World*, II, Cambridge UP, Cambridge 2013, 398-420: 398. Also Id., "L'epigrafia", 194: «Il cambiamento culturale avvenuto agli ebrei di Venosa fra la metà del VI e l'inizio del IX secolo, può essere letto in vari modi. Tuttavia l'abbandono, nelle iscrizioni funerarie, del greco e del latino, mostra comunque che non si aveva più interesse, o necessità (o possibilità) di mostrarsi – almeno in questo tipo di manifestazioni esterne – in qualche modo integrati nella società circostante».

## 6. Methodological problems

Here I will briefly present some problems regarding detection, classification and dating of the names borne by Jews in Venosa.<sup>60</sup> Regarding detection, the existence of a catacomb (and a hypogeum because I am assuming that Lauridia is Jewish)<sup>61</sup> is a great advantage – unless there is a possibility that not only Jews were buried there, but that is not the case here – because we do not need specific identity markers to confirm the Jewishness of the person named in the epitaph.<sup>62</sup> However, we should be careful when comparing Venosan inscriptions with other Jewish inscriptions found outside their original context. As Tal Ilan suggested, biblical names can be overestimated in certain documents (papyri for example), giving the impression of a widespread use of biblical names because Jews using Egyptian names would fail to be recognized as Jewish by researchers.<sup>63</sup> In other cases, only inscriptions with *meno-*

<sup>60</sup> In general, regarding Jewish naming practices, see N. Cohen, “Jewish Names as Cultural Indicators in Antiquity”, *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 7 (1976) 97-128; G. Mussies, “Jewish Personal Names in Some Non-Literary Sources”, in *Studies in Early Jewish Epigraphy*, 242-251; S. Wilson, *The Means of Naming: A Social and Cultural History of Personal Naming in Western Europe*, UCL Press, London 1998, 143-147; R. Singerman, D. Gold (eds.), *Jewish Given Names and Family Name: A New Bibliography*, Brill, Leiden 2001.

<sup>61</sup> The Lauridia hypogeum was found at 100 meters from the Jewish catacomb in Venosa (it is now inaccessible). Among the 4 verified inscriptions, no specific Jewish identity marker was found except for the word “teuseves” (θεοσεβεῖς), which is always difficult to analyze. Even though there were (and there are) debates about the Jewish character of the hypogeum, the text, formulae, and names are consistent with the Jewish main catacomb. Regardless of this controversy, the 4 inscriptions found in Lauridia hypogeum are too few to alter the statistics.

<sup>62</sup> Regarding problems of detection, see P.W. van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs: An Introductory Survey of a Millennium of Jewish Funerary Epigraphy (300 BCE - 700 CE)*, Pharos, Kampen 1996, 11-21; B. De Vaate, J. van Henten, “Jewish or non-Jewish? Some Remarks on the Identification of Jewish Inscriptions from Asia Minor”, *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 53 (1996) 16-28. Specifically dedicated to Italy, A.E. Felle, “Judaism and Christianity in the Light of Epigraphic Evidence (3<sup>rd</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> cent. C.E.)”, *Henoch* 29 (2007) 354-377.

<sup>63</sup> T. Ilan, *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity*, vol. 3, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2008, 3: «I suspect that even so, biblical names are over-represented in this corpus because often they are the sole indicator of a person’s Jewishness. Thus, in many documents, when a person with a biblical name is mentioned, he is identified unequivocally as Jewish. Other persons mentioned in the same document may have been Jewish too, but this is not indicated. Other, similar documents, where no biblical names are mentioned, may also record Jews, but there is no way of knowing this».

*roth* or Hebrew letters would be recognized as Jewish. At the end of our timeline, the presence of epitaphs written entirely in Hebrew (again, if we accept that from the 9<sup>th</sup> century onward almost every European Jewish epitaph was written in Hebrew) reduces the possibility of not detecting a Jewish stone (and thus a non-biblical or Semitic name).

A second problem usually highlighted is that generally burials (or, at least, the better quality and more durable inscriptions) were built by the richest people of the community. Therefore, perhaps we are just seeing the wealthiest part of the community that had specific tendencies. Certainly, we cannot do anything to resolve this problem. In fact, the names of Jews that we find in non-Jewish literary sources of the period are usually those of community representatives or important individuals who had access to non-Jewish authorities.

Another difficulty is the classification of the names. Usually – and I will follow this taxonomy – names of the period are divided among biblical, Greek, Latin, Persian and Semitic. But that division is not as easy as it may seem. Again, a 19<sup>th</sup> century author – Ascoli – asked if the Ἀσθήρ found in Venosa had to be thought of as the biblical אַסְתֵּר or the Greek Ἀσθήρ.<sup>64</sup> In Ilan's *Lexicon* the Venosan Ἀσθήρ (JIWE I 47) is listed as a biblical name, while an Aster (written in Latin characters, JIWE I 130) found in Taranto is presented as a Greek name.<sup>65</sup> We will never know if the family of the Venosan Ἀσθήρ was thinking of the name Ἀσθήρ/Aster/Asteria used by non-Jewish people of the region<sup>66</sup> or in the wife of Ahasuerus. Similar doubts arise around Symonas (JIWE I 107): שמעון or Σίμων?

There is one more name that is also problematic: Maria (JIWE I 88 and 90). Ilan classified it under the entry of Mariam/Miriam,<sup>67</sup> the name of the sister of Moses. It is true that Christianization in the period was not well implanted. However, is it not possible to imagine that a Jew could have heard the name Maria in a Christian context and, when naming his daughter, chose that name? This is not to suggest that Maria's family was Christianized, simp-

<sup>64</sup> Ascoli, *Iscrizioni*, 21.

<sup>65</sup> Ilan, *Lexicon*, 175 (אַסְתֵּר, biblical name) and 407 (Ἀσθήρ, Greek female name). However, Ilan (*ibid.*, 7) was aware of the problem: «Scholars have identified certain Greek names as unequivocally Jewish, either because they translate a common Hebrew name (e.g. Eirene – שלום) or because they sound similar to a Hebrew name (e.g. Simon – שמעון; Aster – אַסְתֵּר), but identifying a person as Jewish merely because he bears such a name is a circular argument».

<sup>66</sup> See for example, Aster (male) in CIL IX 220 from Aeclanum (ca. 3<sup>rd</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> centuries).

<sup>67</sup> However, Ilan admits that the name could come from Maria, the feminine form of Marius. Ilan, *Lexicon*, 181.

ly that the name could have come from a Christian context. So, we would have a biblical name not from the Torah, but from the New Testament. That being the case, this biblical name would not be assumed to be a symptom of rejudaization (if we consider – of course – that biblical names are a signal of rejudaization).

The situation regarding Maria is even more striking: Maria married Joseph (Osses/Ioses). Joseph was – according to Ilan – the most common Jewish name in the western Diaspora during Late Antiquity. It is also the most common name in the Venosan catacomb. Of course, the marriage with Maria cannot be understood as a strange attempt to recreate the New Testament couple. But they had a girl named Agnella. We cannot say that it is not a mere coincidence, but Agnella is not found among Jews in any late ancient source and has certain Christian connotations (mainly in the masculine form, Agnellus). In fact, the name was borne by Christians and is found in literary sources during the 6<sup>th</sup> century in Rome and Naples<sup>68</sup> and to an even greater extent in Christian epigraphy, not only in Rome but also in other Italian cities.<sup>69</sup> Finally, Agnella married *Gesua*. Thus, Jesus became the son-in-law of Maria and Joseph. I wrote this last sentence in a provocative way, but I repeat that I am not suggesting that they were Christianized. I just want to highlight the coincidence and a possible influence, at least in onomastic terms, from the Christian milieu, and that behind the label “biblical” there is not always evidence of rejudaization. Or else this is just a coincidence and we have only Jewish biblical names: יהושע, יוסף, מרים.

Let’s continue with the problem of classification. In Venosa there was a man called Sebbetius (JIWE I 68 and 85). Another biblical name, found in *Ezra* 10:15, but also associated with the Sabbath. However, many years ago Tcherikover confirmed that Sabbatius was used early on by non-Jews, in Egypt and beyond, becoming a common name.<sup>70</sup> Christians also bore the name. Just to give an example, the name of Justinian’s father was Sabbatius. So, even though Sebbetius of Venosa contributes to the number of biblical names, it could have been chosen from a non-Jewish environment. It is not likely, but

<sup>68</sup> C. Pietri, L. Pietri (eds.), *Prosopographie chrétienne du Bas-Empire, 2. Italie (313-604)*, École française de Rome, Rome 1999, 58 (an Abbess from Naples, mentioned by Gregory the Great in 599).

<sup>69</sup> See for example ICUR VII 17690 (ca. 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries) and ICUR VII 17552 (424 AD).

<sup>70</sup> V.A. Tcherikover, A. Fuks, M. Stern, *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, vol. 3, Harvard UP, Cambridge 1964 (CPJ 3), 43-56. See also N. Cohen, “The Name ‘Shabtai’ in the Hellenistic Roman Period”, in A. Demsky *et al.* (eds.), *These are the Names: Studies in Jewish Onomastics*, Bar Ilan UP, Ramat Gan 1999, 11-29 (Hebrew).

neither is it impossible. It could even have been chosen because it was a “Jewish” name that was also used (and understood) by non-Jews.

There is another problem to address: names that, as Leon showed early on,<sup>71</sup> can be interpreted as translations. The common examples are Ιλάριος/ יצחק, *Justus*/ צדוק, etc. Here in Venosa, Colafemmina suggested that *Esperatus* (JIWE I 99) – a very unusual name in Italy – could be a translation of תקווה. Thus, a Latin name – that, again, supports the idea of integration – could have been chosen because of its Hebrew meaning. Also, the letters Λεο were found in JIWE I 104. *Leontius* or *Leontia* are common Greek names. In fact, the earliest Venosan Christian inscription, as we will see, was a *Leontia* found near the Jewish catacomb. But the Jew who chose *Leontius* could have been thinking of the symbol of Judah. Again, there is no simple resolution to these conundrums. A very striking case – though in 9<sup>th</sup> century Brindisi (Lacerenza, “L’epigrafia”, II.50) – is the name יפה מזל that is probably a strange translation of Εὐτυχος.<sup>72</sup>

The last inscription found in the catacomb was one Μερκώριος (SEG 54:977).<sup>73</sup> Theophoric names were common in antiquity. It is true that from the 4<sup>th</sup> century onward paganism was not as strong as in previous periods, but why did a Jew choose the name of a God? In the words of van der Horst:

Should we assume that the origin of these names was completely unknown to the Jews who gave their children such utterly pagan-sounding names? Or did they simply not care that their children bore a name with a pagan theophoric element? These are important questions that are, however, very difficult to answer, if answerable at all.<sup>74</sup>

There are other names that can also confound our statistics: names that are formed from the local language but are used exclusively by Jews. So, on the one hand, those names show a certain degree of integration but, on the other hand, they also suggest a strong sense of identity. Then, we have – to

<sup>71</sup> H.J. Leon, “The Name of the Jews of Ancient Rome”, *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 59 (1928) 205-224: 216ff.

<sup>72</sup> See Lacerenza, “L’epigrafia”, II.50.

<sup>73</sup> See M.L. Nava, “L’attività archeologica in Basilicata nel 2004”, in A. Stazio (ed.), *Tramonto della Magna Grecia. Atti del quarantaquattresimo Convegno di studi sulla Magna Grecia. Taranto 24-28 settembre 2004*, Istituto per la storia e l’archeologia della Magna Grecia, Taranto 2005, 313-386. Also G. Lacerenza, “Painted Inscriptions and Graffiti in the Jewish Catacombs of Venosa: An Annotated Inventory”, *Annali dell’Università degli studi di Napoli L’Orientale* 79 (2019) 275-305 (n. 61).

<sup>74</sup> van der Horst, *Saxa Judaica*, 49.

give an example – names in German that do not automatically imply integration.<sup>75</sup> In Venosa, however, no name of this type is found.<sup>76</sup>

There is also an indemonstrable possibility for this research. Namely, that the Jews of Venosa had two names, one in the local language and the other in Hebrew. This practice was common during the Middle Ages.<sup>77</sup> However, there is no evidence to support this practice in late ancient Venosa.<sup>78</sup>

What about the production of the epitaphs? How do we know if a name was misunderstood and misrecorded by the person who cut the stone? Again, it is impossible to know.<sup>79</sup> Fortunately, the problem is not as serious with

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<sup>75</sup> See L. Asaf, *Names, Identifications, and Social Change Naming Practices and the (Re-)Shaping of Identities and Relationships within German Jewish Communities in the Late Middle Ages*, Konstanz 2016 (Ph.D. Thesis) 65: «During the thirteenth century, we encounter female names like Geila, Jachenet, Hizlin, Gotrat, Mija, Fro[h]kint, Adelpkint, Seligkeit, Glück and Ella. While some of those names, such as Adelheit, Ella, Jutta and Guta had Christian counterparts, others such as Adelpkint, Fro[h]kint, Sussa, Vogel and Jachenet were distinctive for Jewish women». Also p. 67: «It was precisely names coined with borrowed tools that often distinguished Jews from their Christian surroundings. They served to mark Jews, but often in a language – in the wide sense of the term – which Christians could understand. This is an example of crossing boundaries and affirming them at the very same time. Jewish naming practices in the later medieval period are a significant and often unnoticed indicator of acculturation, suggesting that integration and distinction, identity construction and assimilation are often different aspects of the same process».

<sup>76</sup> The only possible exceptions are Casta, Pretiosa, and Rosa that are scarcely attested in non-Jewish contemporary environments. However, it is important to note that none of them are found in other Jewish context of the period. So we cannot affirm that they were common Jewish names. In addition, masculine versions – as Pretiosus or Castus – are found in non-Jewish contexts of the period.

<sup>77</sup> See for example A. Esposito, “Onomastica ebraica e storia degli ebrei: Roma tra XIV e XVI”, in E. Cafarelli, P. Pocetti (eds.), *L’onomastica di Roma. Ventotto secoli di nomi*, Società Editrice Romana, Rome 2009, 145-154.

<sup>78</sup> The phenomenon is registered – though only 15 times – in Rome. See for example, *JWE* II 338. It was also detected in other regions. Just to give an example, *IJO* I, Thr1. On double names, see M.H. Williams, “The Use of Alternative Names by Diaspora Jews in Graeco-Roman Antiquity”, *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 38 (2007) 307-327.

<sup>79</sup> In Adams words: «In the production of any inscription on stone (I am thinking particularly of epitaphs) there were potentially three main participants: 1) the person who commissioned the inscription; 2) the person who composed the text (a category which would include the author(s) of any exemplars used); and 3) the person who cut it into the stone. Some inscriptions may well have been the work of three different persons,

names (despite some limitations, we can reconstruct them by the sound) as it is for our desire to understand the extent of knowledge of a language in a community. However, returning to Maria, it is not absurd to imagine the stone-cutter hearing Miriam and writing Maria.

On our list of problems, geographical distribution is not a minor issue. We usually compare Jewish inscriptions from the catacombs of Rome with the Venosan record. As the Roman inscriptions are – almost certainly – older, we use Venosa to trace the development of Jewish settlements in Italy. However, Rome and Venosa were distinctive cities in different regions, and, for example, the importance of Greek in each city was not the same. Fortunately, the existence of Venosan material in the 9<sup>th</sup> century enables us to compare developments within the same city, but as we have explored above, the gap is not easy to explain. Again, inscriptions at Taranto (that are not explicitly dated) are employed to fill the gap but this leads us into same problematic method: using one city to explain another.<sup>80</sup>

Last but not least, the issue of dating. Thanks to Colafemmina, we know that at least one inscription from the catacomb was written in 521 (JIWE I 107). The problem is that this is the only dated inscription and was found in the arcosolium Q2, at the other end of the main group of inscriptions found around the Gallery D. Certainly, paleographical studies also help to pinpoint the date. However, sometimes linguistic and onomastic considerations are employed to estimate the date, with the risk of falling into circular reasoning. If the inscription is in Greek, it is usually considered to date from early on in the period; if in Latin, late.<sup>81</sup>

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but that was not necessarily the case». J. Adams, *Bilingualism and the Latin Language*, Cambridge UP, Cambridge 2004, 84.

<sup>80</sup> Regarding the process of Hebraization, de Lange warned: «We cannot assume, for example, that the situation prevailing in one place also prevailed elsewhere». de Lange, “The Hebrew Language”, 112. In fact, I agree with all his methodological principles.

<sup>81</sup> Just one example of this type of reasoning: «This epitaph is from the main gallery by the entrance of arcosolium D2, and probably refers to Faustinus pater whose Greek and Hebrew epitaph (no. 61) is in the arcosolium. As it is in Latin, it is probably later than most of the inscriptions inside the arcosolium» (JIWE I, p. 76). I am not rejecting Noy’s method. In fact, I will follow the dates he has provided. I am just trying to show that we are working from strong (although valid) ideas of language and onomastic evolution with the risk of accommodating our evidence to our idea of a revival of Hebrew (and biblical names) and the death of Greek in the catacomb, phenomena that are only seen in late Tarantine and Venosan inscriptions.



Beyond this debate, I will follow Noy's dating, while acknowledging that this is just a theory (albeit a good one).<sup>82</sup> However, I would assert that the only sure way of tracing transformations during the period is from the concatenation of generations, as Williams showed with the family of Faustinus the father.

### 7. *The names in the catacomb: An internal analysis*

As we discussed above, the most frequent methodology regarding Jewish onomastics is the division into categories. In the case of Venosa, the typical study classifies the names according to their origin: Latin, Greek or biblical. Ascoli, in 1880, saw no marked differences between the Venosan catacomb and those in the city of Rome.<sup>83</sup> In contrast, Leon highlighted the higher pro-

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<sup>82</sup> It is pertinent to remember Noy's words (JIWE I, pp. XIX-XX), because they show the complexity of dating the catacomb: «Dating is further complicated by the difficulties of putting the inscriptions in any relative chronological order. Most come from arcosolia around gallery D, and it is likely that the arcosolia nearer the entrance are the oldest ones, but it is not certain that the builders created arcosolia systematically as they extended the gallery: they *could* have built them on one side only at first, or have dug the whole gallery before making any arcosolia. It is also unknown how long any one arcosolium was in use: some contain up to fourteen burials, and if they were reserved for one family it might take many decades to use all the space. However, the lack of apparent relationship between many of the people buried next to each other suggests that arcosolia were available at least to extended family groups. It is also possible that some arcosolia were controlled by collegia, or by *fossore*s who sold off the spaces. Arcosolium D7 has 9 inscriptions with no Greek. Their style and (in most cases) paleography is close to Q2, which contains the inscription of 521. D7 and Q2 are near the end of their respective galleries, and it seems probable that they are roughly contemporary with each other and that they contain the latest inscriptions of the catacombs. No. 90 is shown by both position and content to be the latest inscription from D7. The area of Venosa was involved in the fighting and destruction of the 540s and early 550s while the Goths and Byzantines disputed control of southern Italy. The apparently prosperous condition of some of the Jewish families is unlikely to reflect either that period or the Byzantine rule which followed. The Jews may have prospered again after the Lombards took control in 570, but the civic titles are more appropriate to the earlier period. Most of the inscriptions of D7 are therefore probably from the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century».

<sup>83</sup> Ascoli, *Iscrizioni*, 45-46: «La differenza, che è tra queste epigrafi e le più antiche tra le medievali, in ordine alla qualità de' nomi propri, rimane poi non punto minore di quella che intercede tra le giudaiche di Roma e le medievali stesse. Scarsa cioè, non meno che nelle greco-latine di Roma, pur la suppellettile dei nomi ebraici che ci sien dati dalle e-

portion of Semitic (he used this category) names in Venosa in relation to Rome.<sup>84</sup> Colorni was closer to Ascoli and emphasized the continuing prevalence of Latin names in the southern city.<sup>85</sup> Noy (in 1994) also rejected the existence of transformations in naming practices and explicitly stated that 9<sup>th</sup> century situation was not the result of a 6<sup>th</sup> century development.<sup>86</sup> The pendulum swung back once again with Rutgers:

The “renaissance” of the Hebrew language in the inscriptions from Venosa is paralleled by an increase of names of Semitic origin. In Jewish Rome, Semitic names constitute no more than 13.5% of the entire onomasticon used by Jews, while 39.5% of the Jews there had Greek and 47% Latin names. In Venosa, the percentage of Latin names is still considerable. In fact, it is even higher than the percentage documented for Jewish Rome, namely 60.4%. Thus, while most inscriptions in Venosa are in Greek, most names are in Latin (a situation similar to that in Rome). On the other hand, and in contrast to

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pigrafi dell’ipogeo venosino, qual pur sia il linguaggio loro; laddove nelle medievali più non vedremo, se non com’eccezione, un nome che non sia ebreo».

<sup>84</sup> Leon, “The Jews of Venusia”, 279-280: «Of these some two-thirds are Latin names, one-fourth Semitic, and only one-tenth Greek, a notable variation from the proportions at Rome, where about half the names are Latin, over one-third Greek, and less than one-sixth Semitic».

<sup>85</sup> Colorni, *L’uso del greco*, 19: «A questo timido affacciarsi della lingua ebraica non si aggiunge però altro elemento: i nomi restano latini come sono nella maggior parte delle epigrafi di Roma (Faustino, Faustina, Vito, Secondino, Preziosa, etc.) e non vi è alcuna data né latina né ebraica».

<sup>86</sup> In Noy’s words: «The collection of dated 9<sup>th</sup>-century tombstones from Venosa is entirely in Hebrew, and commemorates people with mainly Hebrew names. The catacombs, however, show no real increase in the use of Hebrew over time. This is to some extent confirmed by naming practices. Latin names occur in 35 inscriptions, Hebrew names in 18 and Greek names in 9 (leaving out dubious cases). Many of the inscriptions provide the names of parents, and some mention grandparents and even great-grandparents. Where parents and children are both named, there are 12 cases of parents and children both with Latin names and 2 of both with Hebrew names. 7 parents with Latin names have children with Hebrew names, and 8 parents with Hebrew names have children with Latin names. There are at least 3 married couples where one spouse has a Hebrew name and the other has a Latin one. It looks as if the exclusive use of the Hebrew language and the predominantly Hebrew naming system of the 9<sup>th</sup> century are something new, not a continuation of any 6<sup>th</sup>-century development». We will return to this aspect of naming practices shortly. It is important to bear in mind, however, that Noy himself, in his 1999 work, presented a different point of view.

the Jewish onomastic data from Rome, the numerical relationship between Greek and Semitic names has now been reversed. In Venosa, Greek names occur in only 14.3% of the inscriptions, while Semitic names are attested in 25.3% of all epitaphs carrying identifiable names. Such percentages indicate that in comparison to an earlier period, the use of Semitic names was on the rise towards the end of antiquity in southern Italy. Yet, despite an increased preference for Semitic names in general, even in Venosa names of different linguistic origin continued to be used freely. One Isaac, for example, gave his son the Latin *Faustinos* rather than a Hebrew name. Similarly, another member of the Venosan Jewish community, a teacher by the name of Jacob, called his daughter *Severa*. Clearly, the Hebraization of the onomasticon used by Jews in southern Italy was a gradual process that took a number of generations to complete—just as the change from Greek and Latin to Hebrew in Jewish inscriptions was a very gradual process.<sup>87</sup>

In a recent study Kraemer considers that «the prosopography of Jews of Venosa does not suggest a resurgence of Hebrew names». However, she also asserts that there was «no discernible pattern of frequency or generational patterns» and, like Rutgers, shows examples of parents with Latin names choosing biblical names for their sons/daughters and vice versa.<sup>88</sup>

The numbers remain stable but the interpretation varies from author to author. They focus on the growth of the proportion of biblical names or on the consistent preponderance of Latin names. The link between the catacomb and 9<sup>th</sup> century Venosa was also constructed retrospectively. Colafemmina, for example, considered (regarding 9<sup>th</sup> century Jewish inscriptions) that

clearly the Jewish names are in the majority. But there are also Greek and Latin names, a fact that links the Jews of Longobard Venosa with those represented in the local Jewish catacombs of the fifth to the seventh centuries.<sup>89</sup>

Colafemmina's argument is valid but we could consider the possibility of a new (or renewed) community that adopted Greek and Latin names from its 9<sup>th</sup> century non-Jewish neighbors. Nevertheless, here we are not analyzing the late Venosan inscriptions, but it is useful to show how the link between Rome and the different time periods of Venosa was constructed.

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<sup>87</sup> Rutgers, *The Jews*, 156-157. See also L.V. Rutgers, "Interaction and its Limits: Some Notes on the Jews of Sicily in Late Antiquity", *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 115 (1997) 245-256, regarding the Jewish onomasticon of Sicily.

<sup>88</sup> Kraemer, *The Mediterranean*, 386.

<sup>89</sup> Colafemmina, "Hebrew Inscriptions", 66.

After classifying each name of people recorded (see appendix 1), I can present a statistical analysis of the catacombs. As only one more inscription with a name was found after Rutgers' book published in 1999, my figures are similar: 81 people of whom 59.26% bore Latin names; 25.93% biblical and 14.81% Greek, among whom we find a stock of 49 names with similar proportions (Latin: 59.18%; biblical: 22.45% and Greek 18.37%). 5 people (see appendix 1) bore names that are not possible to reconstruct accurately. However, none of all the possible reconstructions point to biblical names. Then, proportions would change to an even more Latinized onomasticon: 86 people of whom 75.58% bore Greek or Latin names. However, I will only use verified names. Thus, compared with Rome,<sup>90</sup> in Venosa we have 12.26% more Latin names and 12.43% more biblical names. The most visible phenomenon is the retreat of Greek names that decrease from 39.5% to 14.81%. But the general balance remains unchanged: in Rome almost 9 out of 10 people (86.5%) bore Graeco-Latin names, while in Venosa the proportion is not too different, almost 8 out of 10 (74.07%).

We can go even one step further. As the non-Jewish onomasticon of the period shows, Latin names were more common than Greek ones. In that sense, the ebbing away of Greek from the Jewish lexicon and the growth of Latin names could be read as a sign of a major integration into a non-Jewish milieu. Thus, concluding that there was a strong process of rejudaization – or rabbinization – on the basis of an 12.43% increase of biblical names is at least speculative.

This is not to dismiss the possibility of interpreting a certain degree of rejudaization or rabbinization in Venosa. A major presence of Hebrew (the scale of which is debatable), and Jewish symbols (also questionable in their significance) contribute to that interpretation. The *duo rebbites* of JIWE I 86 could also be associated with an incipient process of rabbinization. But these are only possibilities and I would argue that the vigour of Hebrew and the presence of biblical names in 9<sup>th</sup> century Venosa (and also Taranto's inscriptions, probably dating from a little earlier) are influencing our interpretation of the catacomb.

Furthermore, why should we expect the same proportions for two different cities? Certainly, Venosa and Rome were connected, but I wonder how the comparison would look if the Venosan and Roman Jewish epigraphical records were strictly contemporaneous. Leon attempted to differentiate the degree of Hebraization of each Roman catacomb. Even though his figures were refuted by Rutgers, I think that – beyond the precise numbers – it is almost to be expected that Jews, even within the same city, could have had dif-

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<sup>90</sup> I am utilizing Rutgers' figures here. See above.

ferent naming practices. This differentiation was probably more marked as geographical distance grew. Finally, we are comparing 81 people in Venosa with 581 in Rome. Even though 81 samples are not a negligible number, we should not dismiss the possibility of statistical deformation by coincidence. An 12.43% increase, I think, should not automatically lead us to conclude the existence of rejudaization or rabbinization.

We can now turn to the changes over the time *inside* the catacomb. The first way to do this is simply by analyzing the possible date of each inscription (without calculating the age of each buried person, information that is not very precise because the age at death was not usually recorded in the Jewish catacombs). However, information provided by this method is not very useful because, as mentioned above, the dating of the inscriptions is not very precise. It is more useful to obtain information from the names chosen by parents. Rutgers, as we have seen, commented that names were used freely and that the “Hebraization of the onomasticon” was a gradual process.

Noy, as we have already mentioned above, saw stability in the transmission of names, with parents bearing biblical names choosing Latin names for their offspring, and the same in reverse.<sup>91</sup> Kraemer discerns no clear pattern.<sup>92</sup> My statistical analysis looks quite different. I have registered 30 cases in which parents’ and children’s names are together (see appendix 2a and 2b). But the observed behavior is different:

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<sup>91</sup> Noy, “The Jewish Communities”, 176.

<sup>92</sup> Kraemer, *The Mediterranean*, 386: «These are scattered across epitaphs thought to date from the late fourth century through the early sixth, with no discernible pattern of frequency or generational patterns. A man named Isa (perhaps a biblical name) had a son named Faustinus; a man named Ioses had a son named Marcellus. A little girl named Sarra had a father named Vitus. Joseph the *archisynagōgos* had a father with the same name and title».

Name of the father/mother	Name of the son/daughter	Cases	% of total naming (same origin)	% of total naming
Latin	Latin	12	66.67	40
Latin	Biblical	5	27.78	16.67
Latin	Greek	1	5.56	3.33
Total Latin origin		18	100	60
Biblical	Biblical	1	10	3.33
Biblical	Latin	8	80	26.67
Biblical	Greek	1	10	3.33
Total biblical origin		10	100	33.33
Greek	Greek	0	0	0
Greek	Latin	1	50	3.33
Greek	Biblical	1	50	3.33
Total Greek origin		2	100	6.66

I find these figures really suggestive. Not only are Latin names the most important; they also grow in proportion from one generation to the other. Certainly, inscriptions are not synchronic. However, one fact is undeniable regarding the names registered inside the catacomb: parents named their children mainly with Latin names, even when they themselves bore biblical ones. So, if every father or mother recorded in Venosa had belonged to the same generation, the next generation would have had 16.67% more Latin names and 20% less biblical ones. Not only does this show a tendency toward a Latinization of the onomasticon, but also to a reduction of the use of biblical names. We can observe this from another point of view: from our 30 records of naming, 70% resulted in Latin names and only 23.33% in biblical ones.

I can also accept that we could be facing a coincidence, and that the parents on my list were also named by their parents, who chose a biblical name for them. It is true that the proportion of biblical names among the parents registered is high: 33.33%. However, the only corroborated practice of naming in the catacomb tends toward Latinization and “debiblicization”.

There is a possibility of tracing naming across more than one generation in the catacomb: the family of Faustinus the father (see appendix 2b). From Faustinus to Sarmata we have 7 generations and 18 parents who named children. If we isolate these figures, the results are similar:

Name of the father/mother	Name of the son/daughter	Cases	% of total naming (same origin)	% of total naming
Latin	Latin	10	66.67	55.56
Latin	Biblical	4	26.67	22.22
Latin	Greek	1	6.67	5.56
Total Latin origin		15	100	83.34
Biblical	Biblical	0	0	0
Biblical	Latin	3	100	16.67
Biblical	Greek	0	0	0
Total biblical origin		3	100	16.67
Greek	Greek	0	0	0
Greek	Latin	0	0	0
Greek	Biblical	0	0	0
Total Greek origin			0	0

So, over 7 generations and 18 verified parents choosing a name, the preponderance of the Latin name is clear. It is true that 4 parents who bore Latin names chose a biblical one for their children. However, these offspring, when they became parents in turn, named their children with Latin or Greek names. Again, no “biblicization” of the onomasticon can be observed in the naming practice recorded in the catacomb. The figures of the naming practices outside Faustinus’ family show more clearly a trend towards Latinization:

Name of the father/mother	Name of the son/daughter	Cases	% of total naming (same origin)	% of total naming
Latin	Latin	2	66.67	16.66
Latin	Biblical	1	33.33	8.33
Latin	Greek	0	0	0
Total Latin origin		3	100	25
Biblical	Biblical	1	14.29	8.33
Biblical	Latin	5	71.43	41.66
Biblical	Greek	1	14.29	8.33
Total biblical origin		7	100	58.32
Greek	Greek	0	0	0
Greek	Latin	1	50	8.33
Greek	Biblical	1	50	8.33
Total Greek origin		2	100	16.66

The Latinization of the onomasticon is also reinforced in cases for which we only have a grandson and his grandfather: Anicetus-Anicetus (JIWE I 50, Latin to Latin) and Benericianus-Benericianus (JIWE I 80, Greek to Greek). Also Augusta (JIWE I 107) had a grandfather called Simon.

The idea of a non-“biblicized” onomasticon can be strengthened if we consider that Ἀσθήρ is not the Greek equivalent of אֶסְתֵּר but simply the Greek name Ἀσθήρ. This can be said also for *Symonas-Simon* or *Sebbetei-Sabbatius*. Why not consider that Symonas was chosen because it sounded like Σίμων? Or Sebbetius because a non-Jewish neighbor was called Sabbatius?<sup>93</sup> It is also possible to wonder if Maria was chosen, not thinking of the sister of Moses, but rather the mother of Jesus. Naturally, these situations are impossible to prove. But I consider that even accepting these names as pure biblical-Jewish names, the figures I have presented are persuasive by themselves.

Another question is why more Jews, proportionally, bore biblical names in Venosa than in Rome. Here I would suggest that we are probably facing a

<sup>93</sup> Ilan considered, for example, that: «Jews in the Diaspora had a preference for names that sounded like similar Greek names». Ilan, *Lexicon*, 51.



specific regional trait.<sup>94</sup> In fact, if we follow Noy's dating, the quantity of biblical names in Venosa seems to be higher in the inscriptions dating from the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, a period relatively close to the Roman catacombs. Why could this be? Was there a stronger connection between Palestine and Venosa? Was the Venosan community smaller proportionately than the Roman and therefore the Jews there felt the need to intensify their identity markers? No clear answer is available, but I must repeat that in no period (again, according to Noy's dating), Latin names represented less than 50% of those recorded in Venosa.

Other analyses based on different characteristics can be performed but they do not alter the general picture. For example, if we link the name with the language of the inscriptions, the proportions remain almost the same.<sup>95</sup> Painted and engraved texts also present no important changes.<sup>96</sup> Inscriptions with Hebrew formulae show a very subtle proportional increase of the use of biblical names, but not a substantial enough increase to draw any conclusions.<sup>97</sup> Additionally, inscriptions that mention offices (religious and non-religious) show a proportionally larger use of biblical names.<sup>98</sup> More visible – although still marginal – is the change in the proportion of biblical names in inscriptions with Jewish symbols.<sup>99</sup> It is tempting to correlate these phenomena, but it is not easy to be sure whether the figures are a coincidence or not. Can we imagine that there were different Jewish groups in the community, some of them more Latinized and others more Hebraized/rabbinized?<sup>100</sup> It is possible, but I do not think that we have sufficient evidence to claim that.

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<sup>94</sup> Kraemer arrived to the same conclusion in relation to the use of Hebrew in 6<sup>th</sup> century Venosa: «Still, given how little Hebrew there is among inscriptions from elsewhere, and how much of that is limited to the word *shalom*, or to a very brief formulaic sentiment for the dead, it's difficult to argue that this points to a major resurgence of Hebrew in the diaspora more broadly. Rather, it suggests that we think first in terms of possible local explanations». Kraemer, *The Mediterranean*, 375.

<sup>95</sup> Latin names in: Greek inscriptions (56.52%); Latin inscriptions (61.76%).

<sup>96</sup> Latin names in: painted inscriptions (58.33%); engraved inscriptions (58.06%).

<sup>97</sup> Latin names in inscriptions with Hebrew: 56.1%; without Hebrew: 58.54%. Biblical names in inscriptions with Hebrew: 29.27%; without Hebrew: 21.95%.

<sup>98</sup> Latin names in inscriptions that mention offices: 55.56%; without mention: 62.62%. Biblical names in inscriptions that mention offices: 27.78%; without mention: 24.44%.

<sup>99</sup> Latin names in inscriptions with Jewish symbols: 56.67%; without symbols: 60.78%. Biblical names in inscriptions with Jewish symbols: 33.33%; without symbols: 21.56%.

<sup>100</sup> As already discussed, Williams considered that the Faustinus' family was particular. Collar affirmed – not only regarding Venosa – that inscriptions with Jewish symbols

One issue that attracted Leon's<sup>101</sup> (and Rutger's)<sup>102</sup> attention is that – in contrast with Roman catacombs and also medieval Jewish inscriptions<sup>103</sup> – the proportion of Latin, Greek and biblical names is similar for both men and women.<sup>104</sup> Again, does this mean that men and women held relatively equal positions? Regarding 9<sup>th</sup> century Venosa, only 5 women (in contrast with 28 men) are mentioned (compare these figures with 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century Venosa, where 25 women and 53 men are recorded). From those 5 women, 3 bore Latin names and 2 biblical, while 78.57% of the men had biblical names.<sup>105</sup> Can we make any inferences from this proportion of recorded women? Does the use of names such as Esther or Sarah instead of Bona or Donnola, reveal women fared better in the religious system of the 6<sup>th</sup> than of the 9<sup>th</sup> century?<sup>106</sup> Again, I would hesitate to make any claims about this.

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bore proportionally more biblical names, even though she just provided examples without figures. Collar, *Religious Networks*, 186.

<sup>101</sup> Leon, "The Jews of Venusia", 280: «A further examination by sex shows no significant difference with reference to the language of the name, whereas at Rome the females show a notably larger proportion of Latin names and a less general use of Greek names, as compared with the males». This issue was highlighted by Zunz in 1837. L. Zunz, *Namen der Juden. Eine geschichtliche Untersuchung*, L. Fort, Leipzig 1837, 70-71.

<sup>102</sup> Rutgers, *The Jews*, 166: «It is not correct to assume, however, that in the Diaspora the names of Jewish women always and by definition reflect the onomastic customs of non-Jewish society. In Venosa, for example, the percentage of Jewish females with Hebrew names is higher than that of Jewish males (32.2% versus 22.2%)». My figures look different (see note 104).

<sup>103</sup> See for example Esposito, "Onomastica ebraica", who highlighted that the most common names borne by Jews of the period were Allegra/Allegretta, Dolce, Fata, Frescarosa, Gemma, Gentilesca, Stella, etc. For other regions, see J. Shatzmiller, "Le monde juif", in M. Bourin, J. Menant, F. Menant (eds.), *L'anthroponymie document de l'histoire sociale des mondes méditerranéens médiévaux: actes du colloque international: "Genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne" (Rome, 6-8 octobre 1994)*, École française de Rome, Rome 1996, 87-96.

<sup>104</sup> Biblical names in men: 28.30%; in women: 20%. Greek names in men: 15.09%; in women: 12%.

<sup>105</sup> I base my analysis on the inscriptions compiled in Lacerenza, "L'epigrafia".

<sup>106</sup> As in Rome, Venosan women held offices: *pateressa* (JIWE I 63); *πρεσβιτέρες* (JIWE I 59, 62, 71); *μήτηρ* (JIWE I 116, Lauridia). Jewish women holding offices will not be seen in later periods. This is not the place to discuss if we are facing honorific titles or not. See the discussion, among others, in B. Broton, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue*, Scholars Press, Atlanta 1982; and L.I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years*, Yale UP, New Haven 2000, 499-518. A good summary in C. Duncan, *The Rhetoric of*

### 8. Venosan names compared with other Jewish communities

A comparison of the Jewish onomastics of Venosa with other areas can shed some light on the connections between different Jewish communities. The coincidence of names between geographically distant Jewish communities does not automatically indicate any influence or strong connection; nor do the differences prove absence of contact. However, the comparison allows us at least to formulate some hypotheses about rejudaization and rabbinization. It is important to remember also that comparisons are not easy. In fact, we are more likely to find concurrence of a Jewish Venosan name with Rome, Egypt or Palestine, because in Rome we have more than 600 Jewish inscriptions, in Palestine even more, and in Egypt several papyri give dozens of names. In contrast, verified names in southern Italy, excluding Venosa, are really scarce. It is also easier to find concurrences of biblical names because, as mentioned above, non-biblical names found in texts (epigraphical or not) out of specific Jewish contexts, are sometimes not detected as belonging to a Jew because of the absence of specific identity markers. For our comparisons, the *Lexicon of Jewish Names* written by Tal Ilan will be essential.

Let's begin with the names borne by Jews in the western Diaspora in general and Italy in particular. First, as Leon and Rutgers affirmed previously,<sup>107</sup> the Jews of Venosa bore single names, while the Roman Jews – not all but some of them – held *duo* and *tria nomina*. This fact was always seen as the result of a development in the surrounding non-Jewish society, and I consider that interpretation to be correct.

In relation to the 49 names borne by Jews in Venosa, only 44.9% are present in the Roman Jewish catacombs. Although the number can be interpreted as a high one, it is important to remember that we are comparing 76 inscriptions against more than 600 in the *urbs aeterna*. In fact, we would expect to find names in Rome that were absent in Venosa and not the reverse. Again, no simple answer to these figures can be given. Are we presented with Jewish communities that were dissimilar? Or is the passage of time the factor that explains the changes in the names found?

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*Participation: Gender and Representation in Ancient Synagogues*, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill 2012 (Ph.D Thesis).

<sup>107</sup> Leon, *The Jews of Venusia*, 279: «While nearly one-fifth of the Roman Jews bore double and triple names, those of Venusia had exclusively single names»; Rutgers, *The Jews*, 158.

From those 22 names found in Rome and Venosa, only 10 were relatively frequent in the Jewish catacombs of Rome (see appendix 1):<sup>108</sup> Anastasius, Aster/Esther, Faustina, Joseph, Marcus, Maria/Miriam, Sarah, Sabbatius, Severa, and Simon. It is worth noting that the proportion of biblical names in this list is high. We will return to this issue shortly.

The comparison with the rest of the Italian cities is tricky because, for the period prior to the 7<sup>th</sup> century and after excluding Rome and Venosa, our Jewish epigraphic corpus is exiguous (less than 70 inscriptions dispersed geographically, starting from the 1<sup>st</sup> century). Even if we add the names provided by Christian sources, we have scant material. Therefore, the results are not very useful. Only 7 out of our 49 Venosan names are found used by Jews in Italian cities outside Rome: Beronice, Bonus, Joseph, Leontius, Numerius, Samuel and Secundinus.<sup>109</sup> We cannot draw any conclusions from this comparison as the Italian (again, excluding Rome and Venosa) repertoire of names is even smaller than the Venosan.

The only Italian Jewish contemporary epigraphical record that allows for certain – although modest – comparisons comes from Naples, where 11 inscriptions dated between the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> century reveal 13 names (see appendix 3). It is true that from such a small sample it is not possible to derive strong conclusions. However, we can detect certain hints. We have 5 people bearing Latin names, 4 Greek, 1 biblical, 1 apparently Semitic, 1 Persian and 1 of unknown origin. So, almost 70% of the names are of Graeco-Latin origin. With regards to naming, only 4 inscriptions show parents and offspring and all of them (even the inscriptions of *Benus filia rabbi Abundantius*)<sup>110</sup> show the practice of naming their sons and daughters with Latin or Greek names. Hence, no “biblicization” of the onomasticon can be observed in 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century Naples either.

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<sup>108</sup> It is not easy to calibrate when a name is common or not in a particular place. As the corroborated number of women is lower than of men, to consider a male name popular we need more references. In the case of Rome I have considered a name to be common when it appears three or more times for men, while for women when it appears twice or more.

<sup>109</sup> Even those names appear only once in the entire Jewish Italian (non-Roman and non-Venosan) epigraphical record.

<sup>110</sup> We should remember that this “rabbi” was not considered to be a member of the rabbinic movement by Cohen and, more recently, by Lapin. I think we can accept that he was part of the movement without implying that the region was rabbinized early on.

The last – however modest – lexicon of Jewish names we can construct in late ancient Italy comes from Gregory the Great.<sup>111</sup> He gave the names of 12 Italian Jews (or former Jews) between 590 and 604. Some of them converted to Christianity and we do not know if they changed their names as is confirmed epigraphically in some places such as Grado.<sup>112</sup> Some names recorded by Gregory for Jews converted to Christianity – Redemptus for example – clearly show the practice of changing the name. However, even analyzing only the names of non-converts (or converts with names also found among non-converted Jews), only two bore biblical names: Joseph and Johanna (who had converted to Christianity). So, this extremely limited Jewish onomasticon provided by Gregory – and we are already at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century – also fails to show a “biblicization” of the names borne by Jews. The mention of one Joseph is interesting as it was the most popular name in Jewish late ancient Venosan epigraphy (8 men).

Although they date from a later period than the Venosan catacomb, let’s dedicate some lines to the 14 inscriptions found at Taranto.<sup>113</sup> They are usually dated between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, though no specific date is provided in the inscriptions. Almost all of them are bilingual Hebrew-Latin. Sometimes they have been interpreted as the link between the Roman catacombs, Venosan catacomb and the 9<sup>th</sup> century Venosan inscriptions because of their bilingual character representing a probable transition to exclusively Hebrew texts. I am not sure about our possibility of dating these inscriptions and employing them as one more link in the chain of the rabbinization process. I prefer to approach Taranto as a point where rabbinization was visible, in contrast with the Venosan catacomb. This is manifest in the full use of Hebrew as a language, but also in certain biblical quotations.<sup>114</sup> However, the small number of inscriptions and, again, their uncertain dating, requires that they be approached with caution. Regarding Taranto’s Jewish onomastics (see appendix 4), there are 14 people: 6 bore biblical names (42.86%); 4 Latin (28.57%), and 4 Greek (28.47%). Here we do have a significant increase of biblical names. There are only 5 verifiable naming practices; however, here biblical names are also preponderant. It is possible to assert that naming in Taranto does show a shift toward biblicization, but again I am cautious because

<sup>111</sup> See R. Laham Cohen, “Los judíos en el *Registrum epistularum* de Gregorio Magno y la epigrafía judía de los siglos VI y VII”, *Henocho* 35 (2013) 214-246: 233-235.

<sup>112</sup> JIWE I 8 (Grado, 5<sup>th</sup> century): «Hic requiescit Petrus qui Papario fil(ius) Olympii Iudaei, solusque ex gente sua ad Χρι(στου) meruit gratiam pervenire et in hanc s(an)c(t)am aulam digne sepultus est sub d(ie) pr(i)d(ie) Id(us) lul(ias) indi(ctione) quarta».

<sup>113</sup> See note 12.

<sup>114</sup> JIWE I 120.

of the problem of dating and also the problem of detection (what if there were inscriptions only in Latin and without any Jewish identity markers that were not classified as Jewish?).

Returning to our period, we can compare the Venosan names with the entire western Jewish Diaspora (of course, excluding Italy).<sup>115</sup> Employing Ilan's *Lexicon* we can observe that 51.02% of Venosan names are absent from the western Diaspora. Again, I suggest that this is an indication of the importance of local conditions to naming practices. Among the names that appear in Venosa, those that were relatively popular in the western Diaspora are Aster/Esther, Beronice, Joshua, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Maria/Miriam, Marcus, Samuel, Sarah, Sebbetius and Simon.

Let's go one step further. Which names are found in Rome, Venosa, other Italian cities and even in other places of the western Diaspora? Joseph and Samuel.<sup>116</sup> Names that we also find in 9<sup>th</sup> century Venosa<sup>117</sup> and everywhere during the Middle Ages.<sup>118</sup> These names – as Jacob or Isaac – were specifically Jewish. Very few Christians bore those names in late antiquity, and they were rare exceptions.<sup>119</sup> So, any Joseph living during late antiquity would almost certainly have been a Jew. And we can imagine that there were many Josephs and Samuels in the Jewish communities of the western Diaspora (and Palestine, as we will see). Even Gregory the Great spoke about a Jew called Joseph.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> In the volume dedicated to the western Diaspora, Ilan defined the area covered as: «These included practically the entire Mediterranean Basin, as well as some inroads into western and Eastern Europe, as far as the northern coast of the Black Sea in the east and Wales in the west». Ilan, *Lexicon*, 1.

<sup>116</sup> Probably also Leontius/a, but I am not considering the name here because we do not have the complete name.

<sup>117</sup> Lacerenza, "L'epigrafia", II.11; II.18 (Joseph); II.7; II.18 (Samuel).

<sup>118</sup> For example, Asaf affirmed that 93.5% of men's names from the memoirs of the martyrs of 1096 were biblical or Semitic. Out of 529 men, the most popular name was Samuel: appearing 71 times. Joseph is found 25 times. See Asaf, *Names, Identifications*, 60. For 14<sup>th</sup> century Rome, Esposito also lists Joseph and Samuel among the most popular names borne by Jews. See Esposito, "Onomastica ebraica".

<sup>119</sup> Just to give an example, both Pietri and Martindale registered the name Jacob among Christians. Pietri - Pietri, *Prosopographie*, 1020-1021; J.R. Martindale, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, vol. 2, Cambridge UP, Cambridge 1980 (PLRE II), 581-582.

<sup>120</sup> Gregory the Great, *Registrum Epistularum*, I, 34.

We can observe a similar situation in “Jewish” art.<sup>121</sup> Late ancient Jews incorporated regional non-Jewish art into their synagogues and burials. They probably employed the same artists and workshops as non-Jews. But they also had a specific Jewish repertoire: *menorah*, *lulav*, *etrog*, etc.<sup>122</sup> However, in spite of this specific set of icons, we should not lose sight of the main panorama: an overwhelming use of local art in Jewish compositions.

The names held by Jews in Venosa in particular and the western Diaspora in general would have followed a similar logic. Certainly, there were names only borne by Jews. But non-biblical (and non-Semitic) names were everywhere – before the 8<sup>th</sup> century – used by more than 70% of Jews for whom we have records, even in cities such as Venosa, usually seen as the point of departure in the Hebraization and rabbinization processes. Even when Jews conserved Greek as their own language (it is irrelevant for our hypothesis whether it was their daily language or a liturgical one) they adapted their names to their immediate context, and this can also explain regional differences even in cities that were not too distant from each other, and even actually connected such as Rome and Venosa.

What is the result if we compare with Palestine? Again, we have Ilan’s *Lexicon*.<sup>123</sup> The figures are similar to those produced by our comparison with the big corpora of Jewish inscriptions from Rome and the western Diaspora: 53.06% of Venosan names used by Jews are not found in Palestine. But which names are found with a certain regularity? As expected, we mainly find biblical names: Hannah, Esther, Joshua, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Leontius/a, Maria/Miriam, Samuel, Sarah, Sabbtai/Sabbatius and Shimon/Simon.

What was the proportion of names in late ancient Palestine between 200 and 650 AD? According to Ilan, biblical: 55%; Semitic: 24.3%; Greek: 13.3%; Latin: 6.9%; Persian: 0.5%.<sup>124</sup> Thus, we can detect a marked difference between the late ancient Italian epigraphy and the Land of Israel. In fact, in Palestine almost 8 out of 10 names were biblical or Semitic. So, 19.9% of Latin and Greek names in Palestine contrast with the 86.5% seen in Rome and 74.07% in Venosa. What does this mean? Let’s begin with the most obvious conclusion: even if we accept a strong influence from Palestine, the Jewish onomasticon

<sup>121</sup> Regarding the idea of Jewish art, see J. Elsner, “Archaeologies and Agendas: Reflections on Late Ancient Jewish Art and Early Christian Art”, *Journal of Roman Studies* 93 (2003) 115-128.

<sup>122</sup> A good summary on Late Ancient Jewish art in U. Leibner, C. Hezser (eds.), *Jewish Art in its Late Ancient Context*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2019.

<sup>123</sup> It is worth noting that new discoveries compiled in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae* (CIIP) did not alter substantially the proportions presented by Ilan.

<sup>124</sup> T. Ilan, *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity*, vol. 2, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2012, 46.

of Italy remained predominantly Graeco-Latin at least until the 9<sup>th</sup> century. Does this preclude the possibility of a gradual rabbinization of the area? No, but neither does it allow us to confirm even the early stages of rabbinization.

Again, it could be interpreted that the additional 12.43% of biblical names in Venosa in relation to Rome indicates a “biblicization” of the onomasticon, which along with the Hebraization of the language was the result of an increasing rabbinization of the entire community. But I would argue that position is teleological. It is clearly influenced by the known end of the story. In fact, the slight changes between Jewish communities in Rome and Venosa could be interpreted as a simple process of rejudaization, due to the growth of Christianization in the area and its impact on the development of Judaism itself. However, the Venosan Jewish community can be seen (and why not?) as a community similar to the Roman one, with an increased use of biblical names because of the particularities of the community that we are not able to detect due to a lack of sources.

#### 9. *The names of the Jews of Venosa compared with the non-Jewish onomasticon of Italy*

So far we have discussed the importance of local particularities. Now we can turn our focus to a comparative analysis of the Jewish onomasticon of late ancient Venosa as against the names of non-Jews of the area in particular and Italy in general. We have different tools at our disposal with which to conduct that comparison. Let’s begin with prosopography. We can utilize the works of Martindale and Pietri - Pietri that are, in a way, complementary.<sup>125</sup> Here we include people that were born, lived or died in Italy. If we begin with Pietri, who covers ecclesiastical people (and those linked even indirectly with the Church) in Italy between 303 and 604, we discover that 34 out of the 49 Jewish Venosan names can be found among Christians.<sup>126</sup> Regarding PLRE II (395-527), 27 out of 49 are found in Italy.<sup>127</sup> If we combine both prosopographies, just 14 out of the 49 Venosan names borne by Jews are not found in late ancient Italy: Benericianus, Beronice, Casta, Esperatus, Aster/Esther, Joshua, Mannine, Pretiosa, Rosa, Samuel, Sarah, Sebbatius, Syrianus and Simon. These names, however, should be examined in detail. First, some of them are very unusual and are probably erroneous reconstructions: Esperatus, Mannine and Syrianus (see appendix 1). Thus, we have 11 names: 3 Latin; 2 Greek and 6 biblical. Biblical names (from the Old Testament, obviously), as discussed in our comparison with the western Jewish onomasticon, were mainly

<sup>125</sup> It is important to note that these works are heavily biased towards male names.

<sup>126</sup> Pietri - Pietri, *Prosopographie*.

<sup>127</sup> Martindale, *The Prosopography*.



borne by Jews. They were a minority among the names borne by Jews, but they were clearly Jewish. Regarding the Greek names, it is tempting to suggest that Greek was also a particular Jewish identity marker in the period and therefore Greek names were as well. However, other Greek names were borne by non-Jews in Italy during the same period. Last but not least, the absence of Casta, Pretiosa and Rosa in the prosopographies is interesting. But the existence of the names Pretiosus, Castus, and variants of Rosa, does not allow us to speak about “Jewish” names made by vernacular elements in a way similar to second millennium Germany.<sup>128</sup>

The epigraphic record allows us to complete the panorama. Regarding CIL IX – that includes the *Regio II* – 44.9% of the names found in the Jewish catacomb of Venosa are also found. As could be expected, almost none of the biblical names are present. Regarding Venosa specifically, only 3 out of 49 names borne by Jews are found in the non-Jewish inscriptions of CIL IX.<sup>129</sup> The *Supplementa Italica*<sup>130</sup> only adds 2 names to our list.<sup>131</sup> The problem is that the non-Jewish epigraphical record of Venosa is not as extensive as one would expect: 587 inscriptions (including Jewish) and – even more important – the vast majority date from earlier than the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. Certainly, almost 600 inscriptions is not a small number, but in comparison with the 76 Jewish inscriptions belonging to a minority of the population, it represents a scant record.

The Christian epigraphical record in the city is even more limited. The volume of *Inscriptiones Christianae Italiae Septimo Saeculo Antiquiores* dedicated to *Regio II* (ICI XIII) includes Venosa. However, only 10 Christian records were found in the city (some of them without text). Only three names are recorded: Leontia (n.38),<sup>132</sup> Opilio (n.39) and Minius (n.40). The reference to Opilio is not a reference to the commemorated dead person (whose name is lost) but to the name of the Consul used to date the inscription. Even though it is impossible to go further with this fragmentary record, it is worth highlighting that a Leontius/a and an Opilio were also found in the Jewish catacombs.

<sup>128</sup> Interestingly, the most popular female name on the lists of martyrs of 1096 was Bella. See Asaf, *Names, Identifications*, 69.

<sup>129</sup> Beronice (CIL IX 3229), Faustinus (CIL IX 2998) and Secundinus (CIL IX 1441).

<sup>130</sup> M. Chelotti, *Supplementa Italica 20. Venusia*, Quasar, Rome 2003.

<sup>131</sup> Januarius (Supp. 20, 210; 221) and Severa (Supp. 20, 199).

<sup>132</sup> Dated to 503, near the Jewish catacomb. Colafemmina remarks that the formula *hic requiescit* found in the inscription was also common among Jews. See C. Colafemmina, “Un nuovo ipogeo cristiano a Venosa”, *Nicolaus* 3 (1975) 159-167.

The situation of the Christian epigraphical record in the entire region is not any better. ICI XIII recovers just 34 Christian names. So, the Jewish onomasticon of the area is richer than the Christian one, at least in epigraphical terms. Among the Christian names, we find correspondence just with Alexander (n. 10),<sup>133</sup> Justa (n. 28)<sup>134</sup> and Pretiosus (n. 48).<sup>135</sup> As Stephen Wilson affirmed, “Christian names” – mainly the names of saints or names taken from the New Testament – became more important from the 4<sup>th</sup> century onward. However, and in contrast with the Jewish case, Wilson points out that even though Christian names became the most popular option among the elites, they were only used by a minority of the common population even in the first centuries of the second millennium.<sup>136</sup>

In order to develop the most complete overview, we can go beyond the *Regio* II. The result is, as expected, that almost every name found in the Jewish catacomb of Venosa can be found in the epigraphical record of late ancient Italy.<sup>137</sup> As shown in appendix 1, there are only 10 names that are not found in the non-Jewish epigraphical record of Italy at the time where Venosan Jews were buried: Benericianus, Esperatus (but Speratus does appear), Joshua, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Mannine, Samuel, Sarah, and Syrianus.

Again, Mannine and Syrianus seems to be mistakes or erroneous readings, probably along with Benericianus. The rest of the names (except for Esperatus) are biblical names. These were the names that some (only some) Jews bore in Venosa. The rest, almost 8 out of 10, opted for some Greek, but mainly Latin names for their children; names that were common (and understandable) in the surrounding society. There were widespread names such as Marcellus, while others like Catella were not common. But Jews, as in the case with non-Jews, did not only choose the most popular names.

## 10. Conclusions

It is not the aim of this article to assert that 6<sup>th</sup> century Venosa was not subject to the rabbinization process. In fact, as JIWE I 86 confirms, there were

<sup>133</sup> Alexsanr(i)a, JIWE I 63.

<sup>134</sup> Justa, JIWE I 69.

<sup>135</sup> Pretiosa, JIWE I 66 and 84.

<sup>136</sup> Wilson, *The Means of Naming*, 86-114. In Rimini, for example, he detected only 20% biblical names among Christians between 700 and 950.

<sup>137</sup> I have looked for the names using diverse epigraphical compilations (CIL, SEG, ICI, etc.) and several databases (PHI-Searchable Greek Inscriptions, The Epigraphic Database Bari, Epigraphic Database Heidelberg, Epigraphik Datenbank Claus/Slaby, EAGLE Europeana, SEG online, CIL online, etc.). LPGN online is also useful.

(at least occasionally) rabbis present in the southern city. But I do want to suggest that the Jewish onomasticon of the Venosan catacombs does not provide proof of rabbinization or rejudaization. Certainly, names are not the only markers with which to confirm rabbinization, but they are frequently employed to assert that 6<sup>th</sup> century Venosa can be seen as one of the sites of the first stages of the process. We have seen that while it is true that Venosan Jews bore proportionally more biblical names than their Roman predecessors, a difference of 12.43% is not significant and may reveal more about a regional specificity than a development towards rabbinization. The difference probably does not reflect a rejudaization process either, due to a Christianization that, as we suggested, was not as visible as is usually thought.

It is tempting to employ the idea of a compensatory device suggested by Williams in relation to the growth (also debatable in its characteristics) of the use of Hebrew in the Catacomb of Venosa. She suggests that as Greek was dying, Jews needed to use Hebrew and Jewish symbols to replace a language that had been one of their most important identity markers. Is it possible to imagine that the slight increase of biblical names was also another compensatory device, unrelated to rejudaization or rabbinization? I would respond that it is possible, but I am convinced that the increase in the proportion of biblical names is not substantial enough to develop explanations of a “change”. In fact, we have seen that the most frequent generational shift inside the Jewish catacomb of Venosa was toward the Latinization of the onomasticon and not the “biblicization” of it. I think this is really important because it shows that there was no trend of giving children names that were popular among the rabbis of Palestine and Babylon. Even parents bearing biblical names decided to choose non-specific Jewish names for their offspring.

It could be argued that a greater proportion of Latin names does not necessarily imply the absence of rejudaization or rabbinization. But if we are discussing Palestinian (or Babylonian) influence in the area and in the Land of Israel the proportion of biblical names was about 79.23%, and in Venosa was 25.93%, we can cast doubt on the reach of rabbinic directives inside the Venosan communities. We should remember that beyond the references to the two rabbis and a slight growth of Hebrew (mainly as a formula, as in Rome), no clear signs of rabbinization were discovered in the southern city. Let me recall the words of Shaye Cohen: «The burden of proof is not upon Goodenough but upon those who assert that the Jews of the “Rabbinic period” followed Rabbinic norms».<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Cohen, “Epigraphical Rabbis”, 16.

I am convinced that viewing the Jewish catacomb of Venosa as a link between 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century Rome and the 9<sup>th</sup> century Jewish epigraphy of southern Italy is no more than a mirage produced because we know the rabbinical end of the story. Again, this is not to suggest that the rabbis attending Faustina's funeral were not trying to impose their ideas. Neither would I suggest that the local community was not willing to accept ideas from Palestine. I am just proposing that the epitaphs of the Jews of the period suggest that rabbis did not change the behavior of the Italian Jews. Neither did Christianization. Or rather, if Christianization influenced Jewish communal behavior, it may have influenced Roman and Venosan Jews in the same way.

I cannot deny that there is a probability that the *rebbites* of JIWE I 86 and other similar figures generated certain changes in the community towards rabbinization. It is also probable that news about Christianization or even the Christian presence in the city stimulated a certain degree of rejudaization. But these new trends cannot be observed in the epigraphical record of the catacomb. If they existed, they coexisted with the mainstream that, again, was not very different from the Roman one, at least in onomastic terms.

In contrast, the Jewish epigraphical record from Taranto does show a movement towards rabbinization. There, Hebrew (the entire language, not just formulae) is found in every inscription, biblical names represent 42.86% of the record, and, even more important, biblical quotations show possible traces of rabbinism. But we face certain problems: the sample is very small, it was found out of context, and no explicit date is provided. Why, then, should we assume a concatenation running from Rome to Venosa's catacomb, Taranto and back again to Venosa, instead of viewing Taranto as the first moment in which rabbinization seems to be effectively advancing? However, the absence of an explicit date in the epitaphs does not help us to go further. A 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century date, as is usually affirmed, is acceptable due to the continuity of the Latin and the preponderance (albeit reduced) of Graeco-Latin names. Nevertheless, we could again be dating according to our ideas about the development of the rabbinic process and ignoring the possibility of a local specificity.<sup>139</sup>

An undoubtable (and dated) rabbinization finally arises in in the epigraphy in 9<sup>th</sup> century Venosa. It arrives with the total imposition of Hebrew, a mainly biblical onomasticon and, more explicitly, quotes from the Talmud. Not only in Venosa, certainly, but also in Brindisi, Oria, Otranto, Lavello, etc., as Jewish communities were connected. Aḥima'aš and Donnolo reveal these

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<sup>139</sup> In a similar position, de Lange: «If only we could date the bilingual inscriptions of southern Italy more closely we would be able to tell a good deal more about the arrival of Hebrew in that corner of Europe». de Lange, "The Hebrew", 136.

connections. Moreover, it is possible to trace the links in the epigraphy. Just to provide one example, an epitaph from Brindisi quotes a composition of Amittai of Oria (Lacerenza, “L’epigrafia”, II.51).

Jews were also interconnected in the period of the Venosan catacomb. We can glimpse this in the Italian Jewish epigraphy,<sup>140</sup> and even in Venosa with the inscription of Augusta.<sup>141</sup> We can also prove this using Christian sources. Gregory the Great shows Jews traveling between Naples and Gaul; Jews of Terracina going to Rome; Jews of Rome defending the Jews of Palermo.<sup>142</sup> Gregory even imagines a Jew walking along the *Via Appia* (the same *Appia* that traversed Venosa) on his way to Rome and sleeping near Fondi.<sup>143</sup> Even with these communications, no Jewish community at the time of Venosa presents signs of rejudaization or rabbinization. Neither do biblical names reach a significant proportion in any area. We simply do not know whether rabbinization was occurring. Our picture is of a community similar to 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century Rome and very distant from the 9<sup>th</sup> century rabbinized Venosa. In other words: the Jewish Venosan catacomb does not anticipate nor explain the 9<sup>th</sup> century open-air cemetery.

When Silano humiliated the Palestinian scholar, he was not attacking rabbis. He was just expressing the fact that 9<sup>th</sup> century rabbinical Jews of Venosa felt self-confident in their traditions. When Aharon of Bagdad visited the region, Aḥima‘aš imagined southern Italian Jews of the 9<sup>th</sup> century admiring him, because the dispute was not between a rabbinic and a pre-rabbinic Judaism. It was between Palestinian and Babylonian rabbinic Judaisms. A rabbinic Judaism that was probably trying to gain a foothold in 6<sup>th</sup> century Venosa.

<sup>140</sup> Some contemporary examples in Naples. JIWE I 27 (Naples, ca. 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries): Cumanus from Venafro; JIWE I 28 (Naples, ca. 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries), Telesinus of Rome; JIWE I 31 (ca. 5<sup>th</sup> century) Gaudiosus from Mauretania.

<sup>141</sup> JIWE I 107 (521 AD): Isa from Anchiasmon; Symonas from *Lypias*. Colafemmina identified the cities as modern Saranda (Albania) and Lecce. I find a bit forced the reconstruction of Kraemer, who suggests that Isa moved from Saranda because the archaeological remains show that the local synagogue was transformed into a church before the end of the sixth century. Kraemer, *The Mediterranean Diaspora*, 42.

<sup>142</sup> This aspect was first emphasized by S. Boesch Gajano, “Per una storia degli ebrei in Occidente tra Antichità e Medioevo. La testimonianza di Gregorio Magno”, *Quaderni Medievali* 8 (1979) 12-43. See also R. Laham Cohen, *Judíos hermenéuticos y judíos históricos en tiempos de Gregorio Magno*, University of Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires 2013 (Ph.D Thesis). Recently, E. Savino, “Gli ebrei in Italia meridionale nell’epistolario di Gregorio Magno”, *Sefer yuḥasin* 7 (2019) 15-33.

<sup>143</sup> R. Laham Cohen, “*Vas uacuum et signatum*. La imagen del judío en los *Dialogi* y el problema de la autoría gregoriana”, *Revue des Études Juives* 174 (2015) 295-324.

Nevertheless, the onomastic record seems to show that the rabbinization of the area was far from successful at that time. What happened between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries, is, at the moment, impossible to say.

APPENDIX 1: NAMES IN THE JEWISH CATACOMB OF VENOSA<sup>A</sup>

N°	Name	Origin <sup>B</sup>	People <sup>C</sup>	Corpus <sup>D</sup>	Place <sup>E</sup>	Date <sup>F</sup>	Rome <sup>G</sup>	Italy <sup>H</sup>	Pal. <sup>I</sup>	Prosp. <sup>J</sup>	Non-Jewish epigraphical contemporary example (in Italy)
1	Aelianus	L	1	JWE I 77 (Ηλιανου)	D6	5 <sup>th</sup>	1	0	0	Y	ICI VI 107 (Gubbio, 4 <sup>th</sup> )
2	Agnella	L	1	JWE I 90 (Agnella)	D7	Early 6 <sup>th</sup>	0	0	0	Y	ICUR VII 17552 (Rome, 424)
3	Alexandra	G	1	JWE I 63 (Alexsaura)	D2	5 <sup>th</sup> – early 6 <sup>th</sup>	1	0	2	Y	ICUR VIII 22481 (Rome, 4 <sup>th</sup> )

<sup>A</sup> I include names found in the Lauridia hypogeum (see above). I did not include in the list (nor in my statistics) the names Primitivus (JWE I 100; Lacerenza, “Painted Inscriptions”, n. 60), Ερωλαος (JWE I 50), Asellinus (JWE I 64), Narius (JWE I 79) and Hintius (JWE I 89), because they are very controversial reconstructions. It is worth noting that these names are non-biblical ones, so the perspective of a Latinization of the onomasticon would be reinforced if we included these names.

<sup>B</sup> B = Biblical; G = Greek; L = Latin.

<sup>C</sup> People with this name in the Jewish catacomb of Venosa.

<sup>D</sup> In parenthesis the exact way in which the name appears in the inscription. Inscriptions highlighted with the same color belong to the same person.

<sup>E</sup> Place inside the catacomb according to Noy (Lau = Lauridia hypogeum).

<sup>F</sup> According to Noy, except indication.

<sup>G</sup> People with this name in the Jewish catacombs of Rome. Based on Ilan, *Lexicon*, 3. Only people of certain Jewish identity are considered.

<sup>H</sup> People with this name in the Jewish epigraphical record of Italy before 8<sup>th</sup> century (excluding Rome and Venosa). Based on Ilan, *Lexicon*, 3. Only people of certain Jewish identity are considered.

<sup>I</sup> People with this name in late ancient Palestine. Based on Ilan, *Lexicon*, 2. Only people of certain Jewish identity are considered.

<sup>J</sup> Does this name appear in PLRE II (only Italy) or Pietri’s prosopography? Only non-Jewish people.

4	Hannah <sup>κ</sup>	B	2	JIWE I 72 (Ανα <sup>λ</sup> )	D4	5 <sup>th</sup>	1	0	8	Y	ICUR IX 23794 (Rome, 4 <sup>th</sup> )
				JIWE I 90 (Annes)	D7	Late 6 <sup>th</sup>					
5	Anastasius	G	2	JIWE I 52 (Αναστασης)	D1	5 <sup>th</sup>	3	0	1	Y	SEG 44 804 (Ortobello, 6 <sup>th</sup> )
				JIWE I 65 (Ανασ...)	D2	5 <sup>th</sup> – early 6 <sup>th</sup>					
6	Andronicus	G	1	JIWE I 85 (Andronicus)	D2	Late 5 <sup>th</sup> – early 6 <sup>th</sup>	0	0	0	Y	IGUR IV 1593 (Rome, 4 <sup>th</sup> )
7	Anicetus	L	2	JIWE I 50 (Ανηκητος) (Ανηκητου)	D1	Early 5 <sup>th</sup>	0	0	0	Y	ICUR VIII 23335.2 (Rome, 4 <sup>th</sup> )
8	Asella	L	2	JIWE I 77 (Ασελλα)	D6	5 <sup>th</sup>	0	0	0	Y	SEG XXXVI 848 (Lipari, 369)
				JIWE I 89 (Asella)	D7	Early 6 <sup>th</sup>					
9	Asellus	L	1	JIWE I 86 (Acelli)	D7	Early 6 <sup>th</sup>	0	0	0	Y	ICUR X 27020 (Rome, 4 <sup>th</sup> )
10	Augusta	L	1	JIWE I 107 (ΑΥΓΟΥΣΤΑ)	Q2	521	0	0	0	Y	ICUR VII 17861 (Rome, 4 <sup>th</sup> )
11	Auxanius	G	1	JIWE I 115 (Αυξανειος)	Lau.	4 <sup>th</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup>	0	0	0	Y	IG XIV 78 (Αυξανωντος, Syracuse, 3 <sup>rd</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup> )
				JIWE I 116 (Αυξανιος)	Lau.	4 <sup>th</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup>					
12	Benericianus	G	2	JIWE I 80 (ΒΕΝΕΡΙΚΑΝΟΥΣ)	D7	Late 5 <sup>th</sup> – early 6 <sup>th</sup>	0	0	0	N	–

<sup>κ</sup> Although I take these names as the biblical Hannah, they could be also derivations of the Latin name Annia.

<sup>λ</sup> Ανασ... could be masculine or feminine. So, for the statistics, I take JIWE I 72 as a biblical name without gender.



13	Beronice		G	2									0	1	0	N		CIL IX 535 (Venosa, 2 <sup>nd</sup> -3 <sup>rd</sup> )
14	Bonus	L	L	2		JWE I 42 (Βερο... <sup>M</sup> )	D		Late 4 <sup>th</sup> - 5 <sup>th</sup>	0	1	0	Y				ICI VI 26 (Terni, 514)	
						JWE I 59 (Βερωνικηvic)	D2		5 <sup>th</sup>									
						JWE I 85 (Boni)	D7		Late 5 <sup>th</sup> - early 6 <sup>th</sup>									
15	Callistus	G	1	1		JWE I 88 (Bonimi)	D7		Early 6 <sup>th</sup>	0	0	0	Y				IG XIV 540 (Catania, 3 <sup>rd</sup> )	
						JWE I 107 (Boni)	Q2		521									
						JWE I 53 (Καλλιστου)	D1		5 <sup>th</sup>									
16	Casta	L	L	1		JWE I 46 (Καστα)	D		5 <sup>th</sup>	0	0	0	N				ICUR I 1151 (Rome 4 <sup>th</sup> )	
17	Catella	L	2	2		JWE I 68 (Catella)	D2		5 <sup>th</sup> - early 6 <sup>th</sup>	1	0	0	Y				CIL 10 4502 (Capua, 552)	
						JWE I 89 (c-a>telles)	D7		Early 6 <sup>th</sup>									
18	Esperatus	L	L	1		JWE I 99 (Εσπερατου)	L		5 <sup>th</sup> - early 6 <sup>th</sup>	0	0	0	N				-	
19	Esther/Aster	B	B	1		JWE I 47 (Ασθη) <sup>N</sup>	D1		Early 5 <sup>th</sup>	2	0	11	N				CIL IX 1191 (Aeclanum, 3 <sup>rd</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup> ) (Aster)	
20	Faustina	L	L	4		JWE I 65	D2		5 <sup>th</sup> - early 6 <sup>th</sup>	3	0	1	Y				CIL X 1524	

<sup>M</sup> Reconstructed as Beronice, but it could be also a different name, even a masculine one.

<sup>N</sup> Can be also read as the Greek name Ἀσθηρίη.

21	Faustinus	L	5	(Φαυστινός) JWE I 71 (Φαυστινός) JWE I 86 (Faustina, פאוסטינה) JWE I 116 (Φαυστεινὰ)	D4 D7 Lau.	5 <sup>th</sup> Early 6 <sup>th</sup> 4 <sup>th</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup>									(Naples, 4 <sup>th</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup> )
				I, JWE 56 (Faustinus)	D	5 <sup>th</sup> – early 6 <sup>th</sup>				2	0	0	Y		ICI VIII 21 (Benevento, 4 <sup>th</sup> -5 <sup>th</sup> )
				I, JWE 61 (Φαυστίνου)	D2	5 <sup>th</sup>									
				I, JWE 62 (Φαυστίνου)	D2	5 <sup>th</sup>									
				I, JWE 66 (Φαυστίνου...)	D2	5 <sup>th</sup> – early 6 <sup>th</sup>									
				I, JWE 82 (פאוסטינא) <sup>o</sup>	D7	Late 5 <sup>th</sup> – early 6 <sup>th</sup>									
				JWE I 86 (Faustini)	D7	Early 6 <sup>th</sup>									
				JWE I 87 (Fastini)	D7	Early 6 <sup>th</sup>									
				JWE I 78 (Φαυστινός)	D6	5 <sup>th</sup>									
				JWE I 86 (Faustini)	D7	Early 6 <sup>th</sup>									
				JWE I 87 (Faustinus)	D7	Early 6 <sup>th</sup>									

<sup>o</sup> Although with feminine ending, interpreted as Faustinus.

22	Joshua	B	1	JIWE I 111 (Φαυσστινός)	?	Late 4 <sup>th</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup>	0	0	32	N	–		
				JIWE I 76 (Φαυσστινός)	D6	5 <sup>th</sup>							
				JIWE I 77 (Φαυσστινός)	D6	5 <sup>th</sup>							
23	Isaac	B	2	JIWE I 90 (Gesua, Gesues)	D7	Early 6 <sup>th</sup>	0	0	32	N	–		
				JIWE I 107 (Isatis)	Q2	521	2	0	62	Y	–		
24	Jacob	B	1	JIWE I 76 (Ισαακ)	D6	5 <sup>th</sup>	1	0	61	Y	–		
				JIWE I 48 (Ιακωβ)	D1	Early 5 <sup>th</sup>							
25	Januarius	L	1	JIWE I 101 (Ιενουαριου)	O	Late 4 <sup>th</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup>	1	0	0	Y	ICI V 23 (Tropea, 5 <sup>th</sup> )		
				JIWE I 88 (Osses)	D7	Early 6 <sup>th</sup>	7	1	106	Y	–		
26	Joseph	B	8	JIWE I 90 (Iositis)	D7	Mid-late 6 <sup>th</sup>							
				JIWE I 43 (Eioss...)	D	Late 4 <sup>th</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup>							
				JIWE I 94 (Eiωσης)	M-N	4 <sup>th</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup>							
				JIWE I 103 (Ioset...)	Q1	5 <sup>th</sup>							
				JIWE I 79 (...ωσηφ)	D7	5 <sup>th</sup>							
JIWE I 59	D2	5 <sup>th</sup>											



34	Mercurius	L	1	SEG 54, 977 (Μερκωριος)	?	Late 4 <sup>th</sup> (SEG)	0	0	0	Y	AE 2016 132 (Rome, 5 <sup>th</sup> )
35	Numerius	L	1	JIWE I 95 (Νωμερειου)	N	4 <sup>th</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup>	0	1	0	Y	CIL IX 1638 (Benevento, 3 <sup>rd</sup> )
36	Opilio	L	1	JIWE I 89 (Opillionis)	D7	Early 6 <sup>th</sup>	0	0	0	Y	ICUR III 8434 (Rome, 418)
37	Pretiosa	L	2	JIWE I 66 (Πρετωσσα)	D2	5 <sup>th</sup> – early 6 <sup>th</sup>	0	0	0	N	CIL VI 16871 (Rome, 2 <sup>nd</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup> )
				JIWE I 84 (Pretiosa, פּרֵטִיּוֹסָה)	D7	Late 5 <sup>th</sup> – early 6 <sup>th</sup>					
38	Romulus	L	1	JIWE I 97 (Ρωμωλοσ)	N	4 <sup>th</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup>	0	0	0	Y	CIL IX 1302 (Aeclanum, 2 <sup>nd</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup> )
39	Rosa	L	1	JIWE I 85 (Rosa)	D7	Late 5 <sup>th</sup> – early 6 <sup>th</sup>	0	0	0	N	CIL VI 6512 (Rome, 1 <sup>st</sup> )
40	Samuel	B	1	JIWE I 69 (...αμουη...)	D3	5 <sup>th</sup>	2	1	61	N	–
41	Sarah	B	2	JIWE I 89 (Sarra)	D7	Early 6 <sup>th</sup>	7	0	12	N	–
				JIWE I 111 (Σαρρα)	?	Late 4 <sup>th</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup>					
42	Sarmata	L	2	JIWE I 88 (S<ar>ma<te>)	D7	Early 6 <sup>th</sup>	0	0	0	Y	CIL VI 2785 (Rome, 3 <sup>rd</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup> )
				JIWE I 90 (Sarmatanis)	D7	Mid-late 6 <sup>th</sup>					
43	Sebbetius/ Sabbatius/ Shabtai	B	1	JIWE I 68 (Sebbetei)	D2	5 <sup>th</sup> – Early 6 <sup>th</sup>	5	0	7	N	ICUR I 3767 (Rome, 4 <sup>th</sup> )
				JIWE I 85	D7	Late 5 <sup>th</sup> –					

					(Sebbetii)																	
44	Secundinus	L	1		JJWE I 75 (סֵקוּנִינּוּס, Secundinus)	D5		early 6 <sup>th</sup> 5 <sup>th</sup>	0	1	0	0	Y	CIL IX 1441 (Rome, 3 <sup>rd</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup> )								
45	Severa	L	1		JJWE I 48 (Σεβηρα)	D1		Early 5 <sup>th</sup>	2	0	1	0	Y	ICUR X 27166 (Rome, 5 <sup>th</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup> )								
46	Syrianus <sup>P</sup>	G	1		JJWE I 47 (Ζυριανου)	D1		Early 5 <sup>th</sup>	0	0	0	0	N	-								
47	Simon	B	1		JJWE I 107 (Symonatis)	Q2		521	3	0	75	0	N	CIL VI 38271 (Rome, 3 <sup>rd</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup> )								
48	Vincomalus	L	1		JJWE I 111 (Βιν[κ]ομαλο...)	?		Late 4 <sup>th</sup> - 5 <sup>th</sup>	0	0	0	0	Y	ICUR VII 19522 (Rome, 4 <sup>th</sup> -5 <sup>th</sup> )								
49	Vitus	L	2		JJWE I 82 (בִּיטוּ) <sup>Q</sup>	D7		Late 5 <sup>th</sup> - early 6 <sup>th</sup>	0	0	0	0	Y	ICI VIII 74 (Aeclanum, 4 <sup>th</sup> -5 <sup>th</sup> )								
					JJWE I 84 (בִּיטוּ, Biti)	D7		Late 5 <sup>th</sup> - early 6 <sup>th</sup>														
					JJWE I 85 (Viti)	D7		Late 5 <sup>th</sup> - early 6 <sup>th</sup>														
					JJWE I 86 (Biti)	D7		Early 6 <sup>th</sup>														
					JJWE I 87 (Viti)	D7		Early 6 <sup>th</sup>														
JJWE I 111 (Β[ι]του)	?		Late 4 <sup>th</sup> - 5 <sup>th</sup>																			

<sup>P</sup> Ascoli read Eurianus.

<sup>Q</sup> Although with feminine ending, interpreted as Vitus.

APPENDIX 2a: PARENTS AND CHILDREN (EXCLUDING FAUSTINUS' FAMILY)

CORPUS	FATHER/MOTHER	ORIGIN	SON/DAUGHTER	ORIGIN
JIWE I 47	Syrianus	G	Esther/Aster	B
JIWE I 48	Jacob	B	Severa	L
JIWE I 59	Joseph	B	Beronice	G
JIWE I 65	Anastasius	G	Faustina	L
JIWE I 69	Samuel	B	Justa	L
JIWE I 70	Joseph	B	Joseph	B
JIWE I 76	Isaac	B	Faustinus	L
JIWE I 77	Aelianus	L	Asella	L
JIWE I 103	Joseph	B	Marcellus	L
JIWE I 107	Isaac	B	Augusta	L
JIWE I 111	Vincomalus	L	Faustinus	L
JIWE I 111	Vitus	L	Sarah	B

APPENDIX 2b: PARENTS AND CHILDREN (FAUSTINUS' FAMILY)<sup>R</sup>

FATHER/MOTHER	ORIGIN	SON/DAUGHTER	ORIGIN
2 <sup>ND</sup> GENERATION			
Faustinus (I)	L	Longinus	L
Faustinus (I)	L	Vitus	L
Faustinus (I)	L	Pretiosa (I)	L
3 <sup>RD</sup> GENERATION			
Longinus	L	Mannine	L
Vitus / Asella (I)	L-L	Sebbetius	B
Vitus / Asella (I)	L-L	Pretiosa (II)	L
Vitus / Asella (I)	L-L	Faustinus (II)	L
4 <sup>TH</sup> GENERATION			
Sebbetius	B	Catella (I)	L
Sebbetius	B	Bonus	L
Faustinus (II)	L	Faustina	L
5 <sup>TH</sup> GENERATION			
Bonus	L	Andronicus	G
Bonus	L	Rosa	L
Bonus	L	Joseph	B
Bonus	L	Catella (II)	L
Sarmata	L	Maria	B
6 <sup>TH</sup> GENERATION			
Marcellus / Hannah <sup>S</sup>	L-B	Gesua	B
Joseph / Maria	B-B	Agnella	L
Opilio / Catella (II)	L-L	Sarah	B
Opilio / Catella (II)	L-L	Asella (II)	L

<sup>R</sup> The family tree presented by Williams in "The Jews", 43, is really useful. The last member of the family is Sarmata, but we only know that he was the grandson of Joseph and Maria.

<sup>S</sup> I did not take this couple into account for the statistics because the father bore a Latin name and the mother a biblical one.



APPENDIX 3: NAMES OF THE JEWS OF LATE ANCIENT NAPLES (4<sup>TH</sup>- 6<sup>TH</sup> centuries)

NAME	ORIGIN	CORPUS	FAMILY
Abundantius	Persian	JIWE I 36 (Abundanti)	Benus' father
Barbarus	G	JIWE I 27 (Barbarus)	Cumanus' son
Benjamin	B	JIWE I 30 (Βενιαμιν)	
Benus	L	JIWE I 36 (Benus)	Abundantius' daughter
Crescentia	L	JIWE I 35 (Criscentia)	Pascasus' daughter
Cumanus	L	JIWE I 27 (Cumani)	Barbarus' father
Eirena	G	JIWE I 32 (Erena)	
Eirene	G	JIWE I 28 (Hereni)	Telesinus' daughter
Flaes	?	JIWE I 37 (Flaes)	
Gaudiosus	L	JIWE I 31 (...diosus)	
Numerius	L	JIWE I 33 (Numerius)	
Pascasus	Semitic	JIWE I 34; JIWE I 35 (Pascasus, Pascasi)	Crescentia's father
Telesinus	G	JIWE I 28 (Thelesini)	Eirene's father

## APPENDIX 4: NAMES OF THE JEWS OF EARLY MEDIEVAL TARANTO

NAME	ORIGIN	CORPUS	FAMILY
Anatolius	G	JWE I 120 (אנתולי, Anatoli)	Justus' son
Esther/Aster	B	JWE I 130 (Aster)	–
David	B	JWE I 125 (דויד)	Leon's father
Domnolo	L	JWE I 128 (דומנו...)	Domnolo's father
Domnolo	L	JWE I 128 (דומנו...)	Domnolo's son
Erpidia	G	JWE I 127 (ארפידיא, Erpidia)	–
Ezechiel	B	JWE I 121 (יחזקאל, Ezih[ie!])	Silanus' brother
Jacob	B	JWE I 122 (יעקוב)	–
Justus	L	JWE I 120 (Iusti)	Anatolius' father
Leon	G	JWE I 125 (לאון)	David's son
Leon	G	JWE I 126 (לאון)	Sabatai's father
Samuel	B	JWE I 121 (שמאול, [S]amuel)	Silanus' son
Sabatai	B	JWE I 126 (שבתי, Sabatai)	Leon's son
Silanus	L	JWE I 121 (סילנו, Silani)	Samuel's father

