

Jews in the Iberian Peninsula in Roman times¹

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Roman Spain does not figure among those locations in the Mediterranean diaspora which have enough literary, archaeological and epigraphic evidence for us to reconstruct a coherent account of the history of its Jewish communities. What we actually have is tiny fragments of information leaving us with an all too deficient patchwork portrait. No wonder, then, that in studies of the Mediterranean Diaspora the Iberian Peninsula used to go almost unnoticed.²

Since the days of Luis García Iglesias, who in 1973 published his fundamental synthesis on the Jews in Roman Spain,³ the available material has not become more plentiful. David Noy's recent re-edition of the Jewish inscriptions⁴ does not go beyond the stock on which the Spanish scholar had already based his study. There are, however, a few items of new evidence (both archaeological and epigraphic) that either contribute or may contribute to our limited knowledge. To link these items to the well-known primary evidence, to add some considerations with respect to the latter and to present an up-to-date assessment of controversially discussed material, thus providing a fresh survey of Jewish presence in Roman Spain, are the aims of this article.

Until the first century, Jews left hardly any traces on the Peninsula,⁵ and it is not until the fourth century that their traces take some real shape. The existence of Jewish communities is inferred from Paul's intended missionary voyage to Spain.⁶ Yet, apart from the summary allusions to Jewish presence ἐπὶ τῆς οἰκουμένης, none of which explicitly mentions Spain,⁷ the extremely poor literary and epigraphic evidence only introduces us to individual persons or points to trade relations between the coastline, including the offshore islands, and Judaea. An isolated piece of evidence — an amphora, tentatively

¹ Earlier versions of this article were read at Heidelberg and Barcelona. I am indebted to a number of colleagues at both universities who offered helpful encouragement and advice. Of course, all errors in content remain my own.

² See, e.g., Smallwood 1976, where no more than a single sentence touches the Jews of Roman Spain. For an inspiring recent survey on Jews and Jewish communities in the Roman Empire, see Williams 2000.

³ García Iglesias 1973. For a recent article on the situation of the Jews in Roman Spain, see Rabello 1996.

⁴ Noy 1993:177-88 and 222-24 (three texts not considered Jewish). If not indicated otherwise, references are always to his numbering of inscriptions.

⁵ On the biblical texts and much later legends and traditions alluding to an early Jewish presence, see García Iglesias 1973:331-37; Koch 1977.

⁶ Rom. 15:24, 28; cf. 1 Clem. 5:7 and Kanon Muratori 38f.; cf. Bowers 1975 and Pilhofer 2002:164f. That Paul ever realized his plan is nowadays widely denied; see, however, Testón Turiel 2000:639f.

⁷ Jos. BJ 2,398; Ap. 2,282; AJ 14,115; Philo leg. 281f.

dated to the first century CE, found at San Agustí on Ibiza,⁸ with two apparently Hebrew letters of unclear significance also known from four Hebrew storehouse labels at Masada⁹ — appears to reflect commercial links with the eastern Mediterranean in the first century CE. The historical context of the 21 Judaeae coins discovered in north-eastern Spain at Emporiae, Iluro and Ilerda (most of them issued between 13/14 and 16/17 CE)¹⁰ is not clear at all: they might substantiate these commercial relations or point to early Jewish settlements, or they may have been left by soldiers transferred from Judaea to Spain, or they may be attributed to Jewish immigrants who had fled from Judaea in order to evade taxes. If the last hypothesis is correct, the coins could in fact establish a *terminus ante quem* for (at least temporary) Jewish settlements in the north-east of the peninsula.

Epigraphy has but a single testimony (or so it seems) speaking in favour of an early presence of Jews in Roman Spain: the epitaph of a freedman of probably Jewish origin once preserved in a private house at Villamesías to the north of Mérida. The Latin inscription, edited by A. Beltrán from its unique manuscript tradition,¹¹ adopted by all later editions, runs as follows: *Alucius (?) / Roscius C(ai) l(ibertus) / h(ic) s(itus) e(st) / Iud(a)eus / ACOLI C S*. Quite obviously, it confronts us with a number of problems and questions. First, the name of the deceased: *Alucius* is, as has been previously noted, a *nomen gentile* not otherwise known, a fact which led Noy to suggest the conjecture *A. Lucius Roscius*¹² — which would, however, leave us with the onomastic peculiarity of a person bearing two gentile names. Secondly, the unusual position of the status designation, *C(ai) l(ibertus)*: Noy offers some Republican parallels for the designation following the *cognomen*; at the same time, he suggests that the name should eventually read [*C.*] *Roscius C. l. [---]*, the man's *cognomen* being lost, 'with l. 1 referring to someone else'. The last assumption does, however, not seem reconcilable with the formula *h(ic) s(itus) e(st)* in the third line: if the letters were read correctly from the stone, it is impossible to think of *two* deceased persons referred to in the first two lines.

What are we to make of the last line? Should we understand *ACOLI C S* as the name and the status of the dedicant who took care of the epitaph, reading *Acolius(us) C(ai) s(ervus)*?¹³ Or do we have to think of *Acholius*, a name figuring among the names of the 68 Jews, three proselytes, and 54 *theosebeis* listed in the Aphrodisian donor inscriptions and so far not attested before at least one generation after the *Constitutio Antoniniana*?¹⁴ The epithet *Iud(a)eus*¹⁵ does, in spite of its unusual position,¹⁶ certainly refer to the deceased, thus being a valid indicator of the person's Jewishness in a non-Jewish

⁸ Noy 1993:178 with further bibliography.

⁹ Yadin — Naveh 1989:13.

¹⁰ For a compilation of the material and the different interpretations, see Kindler 1996.

¹¹ HAE 4-5, 1953-1954, 23 n. 752 (= Noy 1993:188).

¹² *Lucius* as a gentile name: Solin — Salomies ²1994:107.

¹³ The inscription is listed as the only example of the *nomen* *Acolius* by Solin — Salomies ²1994:5. Solin did not include it in his handbook on slave names.

¹⁴ I owe this suggestion to A. Chanotis. On the name, see Chanotis 2002:218, 233 with references. For Christian namesakes, cf. Kajanto 1963:86.

¹⁵ On its meaning and function, see now Williams 1997 with a list of extant inscriptions (not including the Hispanic example in question).

¹⁶ The term usually follows the name; see the catalogue drawn up by Williams 1997:258-62.

context.¹⁷ A similar spacing separates the name and the epithet in another epitaph from Spain, this one from Abdera, set up for [*An?*]nia Salo[mo]nula an(no) I mens(ibus) IIII die I Iudaea.¹⁸

Anyway, we have every reason to believe that the inscription was not copied correctly, that part of it was misunderstood by its copier Rodríguez Moñino and/or that the stone, said to have been irregularly shaped with a rounded top, and its inscription were already incomplete by his time. This being so, its peculiarities and problems can hardly be resolved, so it is difficult to propose a date. With respect to the onomastic practice, the status indication and the abbreviated formula, Noy suggested a relatively early date between the first and the third centuries.¹⁹ Most epitaphs containing the words *Ioudaios/Ioudaia* or their Latin counterparts date to the late second century or even later,²⁰ but there are, of course, earlier surviving inscriptions.²¹ It is primarily for onomastic reasons — the name of the deceased (problematic though it is) appears in the nominative, and the familiar *tria nomina* expanded by filiation or pseudo-filiation went out of use after the *Constitutio Antoniniana*²² — that an early date seems to be plausible.

Epigraphic evidence for a Jewish presence in the first three centuries CE

The epigraphic evidence for a Jewish presence on the Peninsula before late antiquity is extremely scanty — a fact which may of course be due to the well-known, delicate problem of how to tell a Jewish inscription from a non-Jewish one. Beyond all doubt, it is extremely hazardous (if not absolutely impossible) to include gnostic and magical texts with Jewish elements on *tabellae defixionum*, amulets or gems, some of which have been recently brought up for discussion or reconsidered.²³ Onomastics, however, is a serious (if difficult) business. In his article on the early diaspora, Michael Koch drew up a list of names in Hispanic inscriptions²⁴ whose bearers could be taken for Jews, such as a *Thaddaius* from Cordoba²⁵ or some of the *Musaei*²⁶ who may have chosen their name

¹⁷ Cf. Van der Horst ²1996:17; Williams 1997:253.

¹⁸ CIJ 665 = Noy 1993:179; cf. Williams 1997:260 n. 35.

¹⁹ Noy 1993:188.

²⁰ Williams 1997:249.

²¹ See Williams 1997:258-60 n. 10f. and esp. 24 = CIJ² 643 = Noy 1993:7 (from Aquileia), tentatively dated to the first century: *L. Aiadius P. l. Dama Iudaeus portor v. s. f.*

²² On its onomastic impact, see Salway 1994:133-6.

²³ See Perea 1998:127-42 for a reappraisal of a magical gem from Almeida, Gascó et al. 1993:327-35 for the preliminary edition of a gold foil, said to have been found at Jerez de la Frontera on the south coast of Spain, the Greek inscription of which, following Genesis 19:13, addresses the destroyer of Sodom and Gomorra and a series of angels engaged in fighting against an obviously evil spirit (*pneuma*). From this, the authors inferred the presence of 'hellenized Jewish elements' on the Peninsula, and a mistake of the writer led them to speculate about his being a native Hebrew speaker. For a criticism of these untenable claims see I. Velázquez, HAE 5, 1995, 944; cf. Paz de Hoz 1997:73f. n. 21.1. On Jewish elements in gnosticism and magic, see, e.g., Alexander 1999:1052-78, and Lapin 1998:9-17.

²⁴ Koch 1977:249f., note 59; cf. García Iglesias 1973:349f.

²⁵ CIL II² 7, 246 = II 2232 = ILS 5740, dated to Augustan times by Hübner. On the spread of the name in Palestine from the Hellenistic conquest until the early Roman empire, see now Ilan 2002:283f.

because of the phonetic resemblance between Mousaios (or *Musaeus*, respectively) and the Hebrew *Moses*.²⁷ The latter is, however, one of the highly instructive names that were simultaneously used by Christians and Jews,²⁸ thus reminding us of the difficult problem of identifying ancient Jews by their names *only*.²⁹ As has recently been confirmed by Van der Horst,³⁰ methodological strictness rather requires us to regard an inscription as Jewish only when a *number of criteria* — (a) the epithets *Ioudaios* or *Hebraios* or their Latin counterparts, referring to deceased persons or dedicator(s) of epitaphs; (b) technical terms indicative of Jewishness; (c) exclusively Jewish places of finding; (d) typically Jewish names — *combine* to establish a solid case.

Keeping on this strict side, David Noy decided to separate three Hispanic inscriptions from the stock considered to be Jewish. In the Greek epitaph of Νεκτάρης from Tarraco³¹ neither the rare name³² nor the formula is typically (much less exclusively) Jewish. Valid indicators for the epitaph to be regarded as certainly (or almost certainly) Jewish are also lacking in the funerary inscription of the Roman citizen *Iustinus Menandri filius Ter(etina) Flavius Neapolitanus* buried at Augusta Emerita.³³ Neither his place of origin, the Samaritan centre Sichem refounded by Vespasian under the name *Neapolis*,³⁴ nor his or his dependants' nomenclature³⁵ speaks conclusively in favour of a Samaritan ethnicity. It is true that *Iustus* and its derivative *Iustinus*, 'which could translate Zadok etc. or serve for Joseph',³⁶ seem to have been favourite names of Diaspora Jews.³⁷ *Menander*, on the contrary, is an onomastic rarity in Jewish inscriptions.³⁸ Justin does, however, know about a Samaritan magician of exactly that name — a pupil of Simon, his compatriot and brother in faith said to have been a notorious magician at Rome under Claudius³⁹ — who was practising his art at Antioch.⁴⁰

²⁶ See Lozano Velilla 1998:134 for the references.

²⁷ On this category of Jewish foreign names, see now Mussies 1994:249.

²⁸ As has been convincingly demonstrated by Williams 1997:274 and 2002:279-83.

²⁹ For a recent discussion, see Mussies 1994:243f. and Van der Horst ²1996:17f.

³⁰ Van der Horst ²1996:16-18.

³¹ García Iglesias 1973:344 n. 7 = RIT 400 = Noy 1993:224: ἐνθάδε κατ[ά]κλιται Νεκτάρης ΤΑΑΠΙΗΣ / χωρίῳ Πιτερ/μων (Noy); 'Ενθάδε κατ(ά)κ(ε)λιται Νεκτάρης Ταλήτης / χωρίῳ Πιτερ/μων (Alföldy, RIT). In l. 3, Lozano Velilla 1998:139 suggests recognizing the patronymic *Thales*. For yet another reading, see SEG 1997, 1541.

³² See Lozano Velilla 1998:139 and esp. Abascal Palazón 1994:436.

³³ CIL II 515 = Rabello 1985:663f. n. 9 = Noy 1993:222 (who proposes a dating to the 2nd century CE): *Iustinus Menandri filius Ter(etina) / Flavius Neapolitanus anno / XLVI h(ic) s(itus) e(st). S(it) t(ibi) t(erra) l(evis). Sabina marit(o) / optimo et merentissimo et / Menander filius cum seroribus (!) // suis Rece[pt]a et Salvina / patri piissimo [---] / p(osuerunt).*

³⁴ I. Magen, Shechem/Neapolis, in E. Stern (ed.), *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* 4, 1993, 1354-9.

³⁵ For Jewish *Sabini*, see Noy 1993:134; CIJ I 468 = Noy 1995:140; CIJ I 230 = Noy 1995:291. As yet, there is no further evidence for a Jewish *Recepta* or *Salvina*.

³⁶ Mussies 1994:249; compare Ilan 2002:333.

³⁷ Koch 1977:249 n. 59; Leon 1960:98; Noy 1993:18. 69. 120. 189; Noy 1995: pp. 520f. with the references for Rome, almost none of them earlier than the 3rd or 4th century CE.

³⁸ CIJ I 3 = Noy 1995:415 n. 531.

³⁹ Iust. apol. 1,26,1-3; cf. Eus. HE 3,26.



Fig. 1. Inscription of a *famulus Dei* from Augusta Emerita (Mérida). From Ramírez Sádaba — Mateos Cruz 2000: l m. 67.

The onomastic coincidence of one name (*Iustinus*) being frequent among Jews and another (*Menander*) being recorded for a Samaritan of the first century CE may warn us not to be in a rush to exclude the inscription from the Jewish material. Still, the relatively frequent occurrence among non-Jews of both these and the other names recorded in the inscription, as well as the typical pagan formulae, leave reasonable doubts. Noy may go too far in considering it ‘almost certain’ that the Iustinus buried at the Lusitanian capital ‘was from a colonist family rather than ethnically or religiously a Samaritan’,⁴¹ but the inscription is definitely not a clear-cut piece of Jewish evidence.

A second inscription from Mérida (fig. 1) was originally regarded as Jewish. Joaquín M.^a Navascues y de Juan, who had ingeniously brought together the three pieces of the fragmentary epitaph⁴² published under two different numbers by Vives,⁴³ was firmly convinced that the deceased had been a Jew: ‘... seguramente es un epitafio judío, como lo sospechó Vives, judaísmo que puede estar garantizado por la terminación del nombre del difunto; por consignarse su filiación, como en otros epitafios hebreos ...; por su uso del verbo *pausare*, que se encuentra igualmente en los susodichos epígrafes de Pal-laresos y de Mérida; y por el adjetivo *bona*, que pudiera referirse a *memoria* o a *recordatio*, como en los dos primeros referidos’.⁴⁴ Cantera Burgos and Millás Vallicrosa

⁴⁰ Iust. apol. 1,26,4; cf. Eus. HE 3,26.

⁴¹ Noy 1993:300.

⁴² Navascues y de Juan 1947:305-8 with fig. 20,1: [---]ia, *famulus* / [D]ei, *filius domu[s?]* / [.]C[.]i et re[---] / *ixit an[nos] ---* / XXI et *pausa[vit]* / in *req(ui)e* et [---] / *bona* [---].

⁴³ ICERV 481 (upper fragment); 483 (the two inferior fragments).

⁴⁴ Navascues y de Juan 1947:308.

followed him almost word for word,⁴⁵ and so did Ramírez Sádaba and Mateos Cruz in their last re-edition of the text.⁴⁶ Until Noy, who discarded all the arguments in favour of the Jewishness of the inscription as ‘completely inadequate’,⁴⁷ the only scholar who had considered it Christian was Ferrua, starting from the assumption that the name of the deceased was not a biblical name at all.⁴⁸

A careful reconsideration of the inscription does, however, show that its Jewishness is in fact doubtful. To start with the name of the deceased, which seems to have ended in *-ia*: the text is framed on its left by a horizontal line, and a regular space has been kept between this horizontal and the first letter of each line. Accordingly, the name of the deceased must have been short: no more than four letters, as has been indicated by the most recent editors.⁴⁹ If the man actually bore a biblical name, there are not many options — *Elia(h)* or *Iona* seem to be the most obvious.⁵⁰ At least in the case of *Elia(h)*, that name was no longer a valid indicator for a person’s Jewishness, as it is known to have been used by Christians as well.⁵¹

The deceased is called *famulus [D]ei*, an expression that seems to be exclusively Christian.⁵² The first line ended with *famulus*, from which we learn about its width, which will have been roughly similar in the following lines (with the exception of the shorter final one). The text of lines 4-7 can almost certainly be reconstructed: for reasons of space, it must have read *vixit an[os] / XXI et pausa[vit] / in req(u)ie et p[ace] / bona*.⁵³ While *pausare* frequently occurs in Jewish epitaphs, too,⁵⁴ the conclusive formula *in requie et pace bona*, as far as I am aware, does not.⁵⁵

⁴⁵ Cantera Burgos — Millás Vallicrosa 1956:410-2.

⁴⁶ Ramírez Sádaba — Mateos Cruz 2000:116-119, n. 67; lám. 25.

⁴⁷ Noy 1993:300f. n. 223. Noy, however, obviously consulted neither Navascues y Juan’s first complete edition of the inscription nor Ferrua’s interpretation (see below); except for Cantera Burgos and Millás Vallicrosa, he cites only Rabello’s reprint of the text (Rabello 1985:664 n. 10).

⁴⁸ A. Ferrua, RAC 1952, 189, restoring the text in the following way: *[Ge]ta, famulus / Dei, filius dom(ini) V[---] et Re[ginae.] / vixit an[nos ---] / XXI et pausa[vit] / in req(ui)e et i[rene] / bona*.

⁴⁹ Ramírez Sádaba — Mateos Cruz 2000:117: [.]++A.

⁵⁰ This would be in accord with the first editor’s suggestion that the second letter might have been either L, N or V: Navascues y de Juan 1947:307; cf. Ramírez Sádaba — Mateos Cruz 2000:117. According to Ilan 2002:63 (cf. p. 6), the name does not seem to have been in use for Jews until 200 CE. For a late namesake in Roman Italy, see CIJ I 628 = Noy 1993:119.

⁵¹ See ICVR n. s. I 2675: *Elias in pace*, followed by a christogram; cf. Kajanto 1963:93. *Iona* was a personal name uncommon in early Christian nomenclature, as personal names of Hebrew origin derived from the Old Testament generally were (Kajanto 1963:93f.). For Jewish namesakes, see Ilan 2002:143f.; CIJ I 671 = Noy 1993:191; CIJ I² 660 d = RIT 1074 = Noy 1993:187.

⁵² For the many references in inscriptions from Roman Spain, see ICERV pp. 209f. and the series from Mértola (Portugal) published in HEp 5, 1995, 950 (= AE 1992, 930); 951 (= AE 1992, 931); 952 (= AE 1992, 932); 956 (= AE 1992, 933); 958-61 (961 = HEp 2, 1990, 755 = AE 1990, 475); on the expression in general, see Muñoz García de Iturrospe 1995:93-6.

⁵³ *Pausavit* in Christian epitaphs: see ILCV III p. 377 with references. For *in req(u)ie et p[ace]* compare ILCV 4738 *in requie et pace vixit; in pace et requ(i)e*: ILCV 2553 A adn. 2720.

The one rather strong indicator of Jewishness appears to be the filiation following the name in lines 2 to 3. I do not believe that the deceased was called a *filius domu[s]*, ‘a son of the house’, here, a suggestion of the first editor repeated in all later editions except for Ferrua’s,⁵⁶ and that we have to expect a Jewish title or office in the following, as the most recent editors have proposed.⁵⁷ In epitaphs of *famuli Dei* from Mérida where an (ecclesiastical) office is mentioned, it always comes in between the name of the deceased and the *famulus Dei* designation.⁵⁸ I would rather take up Ferrua’s idea to restore the names of the parents,⁵⁹ tentatively suggesting *filius Domi[n]/içi et Re[ginæ?]*, which would be in accordance with the extant letters in the third line.⁶⁰ As a matter of fact, filiatio[n]s of this type were common in Jewish epitaphs from Roman Spain and elsewhere;⁶¹ in Christian epitaphs, they seem to have been a prerogative of the upper ranges of society and used to refer only to the father of the deceased.⁶² There is, however, a notable exception: both father and mother figure in the epitaph of another — indisputably Christian — *famulus Dei* of senatorial origin, *Principius*, from the *conventus Gaditanus*.⁶³ As for the epitaph from Mérida, this means that neither the name nor the type of filiation nor the formula of the epitaph is typically (if by that we mean exclusively) Jewish. In all probability, the deceased *famulus Dei* was a Christian of noble descent whose premature

2720 adn. *Pax bona*: compare ILCV 2285 in *pace bona quiescat*; ILCV 3114,1 *cum pace bona quiescit*.

54 CIJ I 610 = Noy 1993:68; CIJ I 613 = Noy 1993:87; CIJ I 608 = Noy 1993:89.

55 The nearest equivalent to it is *sit pax in requie eius* in a late Jewish epitaph from Taranto: CIJ I 629 = CIL IX 6400 = ILCV 4984 and 4984 = Noy 1993:120.

56 See Ramírez Sádaba — Mateos Cruz 2000:117f.

57 Ramírez Sádaba — Mateos Cruz 2000:119: ‘Entre la copulativa ET y la edad del difunto esperaríamos el oficio o cargo del difunto. Tal vez haya que restituir *re[bbi]* ...’

58 Ramírez Sádaba — Mateos Cruz 2000:58f. n. 22: *Barusus praesbiter (!) famulus Dei*; 80-2 n. 37c: *(H)eleuterius arc(h)idiaconus ec(c)lesiea (!) Emeritensi(s) famulus Dei*; 93f. n. 47: *Orbanus pr(e)s(biter) famulus Dei*; 107-109 n. 59: *[St]hefanus (!) [pre]sb(iter) famul(us) [Dei]*.

59 A. Ferrua, RAC 1952, 189: *filius dom(ini) V-/[---] et Re[ginæ]*.

60 In his *editio princeps*, Navascues y de Juan (1947:307) considered the last extant letter of line 2 either a *V*, which he preferred, or an *I*; cf. Ramírez Sádaba — Mateos Cruz 2000:118. There is, however, no Latin name beginning with *Domu-* that could be brought into line with the extant letters of line 3. We do not necessarily have to expect another letter between what seems to be a *C* and the rest of an *I* there, as has been suggested by Navascues y de Juan; note the rather big space between, e.g., the last two letters of line 1. For the names suggested here, see ILCV III pp. 49 and 135f. with references to Christian namesakes; for the name of the woman, there are, of course, alternatives. For *Regina*, there is a Jewish namesake from Monteverde: CIJ I 476 = I² 37f. = ILCV 4933 = Noy 1995:103 with a full recording of the numerous editions.

61 See, e.g., CIJ 661 = Noy 1993:183 from Tortosa (Dertosa) and CIJ I² 660d = RIT 1074 = Noy 1993:187 from Pallaresos near Tarragona.

62 See, e.g., CIL XIII 1796 = ILCV 89; CIL V 6176 = ILCV 116; CIL III 9534 = ILCV 117; CIL X 4502 = ILCV 140; CIL V 5414 = ILCV 147; CIL XIII 2483 = ILCV 150; CIL III 13127. 13170. 14239 = ILCV 151; CIL III 14207,25 = ILCV 215.

63 ILCV 222a = ICERV 145: *Principius, [famulus Dei], filius (A)emilia[ni] v. c. et?] / Paulin(a)e inl. fem. [unige?]/nitus*.

death at the age of only 21 led his parents to give prominence to the family he had come from.

If we keep on the methodologically strict side, the result of this balance of the epigraphic material from the first three centuries is frustrating: apart from the problematic epitaph from Villamesias⁶⁴ and the funerary inscription of *[An?]nia Salo[mo]nula* from Abdera,⁶⁵ we lack clear-cut testimonies. For a slightly greater number of solid cases of Jewish inscriptions, we have to wait until as late as the fifth century.

Literary and epigraphic evidence from Late Antiquity

If for Late Antiquity the Jewish Diaspora on the Iberian Peninsula does, in fact, take some shape (although the material is far from giving us anything like a moderately full view of Diaspora life), this is mainly due to literary sources. It is, first of all, from the records of the Council of Elvira (ancient Iliberri, most probably situated near the Andalusian town of Gerona, in what in Roman times had been part of the province of Baetica) at the beginning of the fourth century that we have some idea of the by-then considerable dimension of the Jewish Diaspora there and of the notable interaction between Jews and Christians (many of the latter unquestionably sympathizing with Judaism and the Jewish way of life) which the council aimed to limit.⁶⁶ The *canones* concerning Jews prohibited mixed marriages between Jews and Catholic Christians⁶⁷ as well as adultery with a Jewish woman,⁶⁸ and forbade eating at table with Jews,⁶⁹ forbade the unmarried sister of a deceased wife from marrying (in accordance with Jewish law) her brother-in-law⁷⁰ and forbade having one's crop blessed by a Jew;⁷¹ transgressors were threatened with exclusion from the holy communion for five years or even, in the last case in question, with

⁶⁴ See above at n. 11.

⁶⁵ CIJ 665 = Noy 1993:179.

⁶⁶ On the following, compare, e.g., Sotomayor 1979:81-119; Rabello 1996:163-7; on the current study of the council and the *canones*, see Sotomayor 1989 with abundant bibliography. On the *canones* mentioned in what follows, note the respective commentaries by Reichert 1990.

⁶⁷ Can. 16 De puellis fidelibus, ne infidelibus coniungantur: *Haeretici, si se transferre noluerint ad ecclesiam catholicam, nec ipsis catholicas dandas esse puellas; sed neque Iudaeis dare placuit, eo quod nulla possit esse societas fideli cum infideli. Si contra interdictum fecerint parentes, abstinere per quinquennium placet.*

⁶⁸ Can. 78 De fidelibus coniugatis si cum Iudaea vel gentili moechati fuerint: *Si quis fidelis habens uxorem cum Iudaea vel gentili fuerit moechatus, a communione arceatur. Quod si alius eum detexerit, post quinquennium acta legitima poenitentia poterit dominicae sociari communioni.*

⁶⁹ Can. 50 De Christianis qui cum Iudaeis vescuntur: *Si vero quis clericus vel fidelis cum Iudaeis cibum sumpserit, placuit eum a communione abstinere, ut debeat emendari.*

⁷⁰ Can. 61 De his qui duabus sororibus copulantur: *Si quis post obitum uxoris suae sororem eius duxerit et ipsa fuerit fidelis, quinquennium a communione placuit abstinere, nisi forte velocius dari pacem necessitas coegerit infirmitatis.*

⁷¹ Can. 49 De frugibus fidelium, ne a Iudaeis benedicantur: *Admoneri placuit possessores, ne patiantur fructus suos, quos a Deo percipiunt, a Iudaeis benedici, ne nostram irritam et infirmam faciant benedictionem. Si quis post interdictum facere usurpaverit, penitus ab ecclesia abiciatur.*

exclusion from church. Another *canon*, possibly also intended against association with the Jews, intervened against the habit of fasting severely (*superpositiones celebrare*) on each Saturday, thus making the Sabbath into a festival.⁷²

From these canons, it is evident that by the time of the council Christian communities and a conspicuous, well-established Jewish population with its flourishing religious tradition were co-existing on the Iberian Peninsula. The canons unequivocally point to Christians and Christian communities in free contact with Jews and the local Jewish communities. Not yet able to follow their early traces, we still have every reason to think not of insular and isolated communities, but of a constant process of contact and cultural interchange in which Jewish religious ideas were met with respect and may often have influenced the thinking and behaviour of the pagans and Christians around them. Their story does not yet seem to have been one of increasing distance or even enmity, although the first occasional attack on a synagogue at Roman Spain appears to have happened as early as the time of the Council of Elvira: the bishop of Dertona is said to have led his people in an attack on the synagogue of the Jewish community, which he later turned into a church.⁷³ If at the beginning of the fourth century the Catholic church made efforts at further dissociation, it may be supposed that the actual cause was the same which some decades later gave John Chrysostom reason to deliver his sermons *adversos Iudaeos*: the still fragile Christian communities ran the risk of losing a considerable number of Judaizing god-fearers prepared for conversion by close acquaintance and sympathy with Judaism.⁷⁴

Jewish inscriptions from Late Roman Spain appear more frequently, but the evidence is far from abundant and (with one possible exception) frustratingly uninformative about the inner structure and organisation of the Jewish communities. We are not surprised to see that nearly all the texts come from coastal towns or islands convenient for commercial and communal activities. The largest extant bulk of Jewish inscriptions comes from Tarraco, which until Rome's loss of the *Tarraconensis* in 475 CE remained the provincial capital of the considerably reduced province, subdivided into the three provinces of *Tarraconensis*, *Carthaginiensis* and *Gallaecia* by the Diocletianic administrative reform.⁷⁵ While the synagogue of the Jewish community at Tarraco has not yet been located, a number of inscriptions record individual members or reveal Jewish presence in general:⁷⁶ the Latin epitaph of Isidora, daughter of Iona (or Jonathan) and Axia, from Pallaresos near Tarragona (fig. 2);⁷⁷ the white marble trough (fig. 3) of uncertain

⁷² Can. 26 *Ut omni sabbato ieiunetur: Errorem placuit corrigi, ut omni sabbati die superpositiones celebremus.*

⁷³ *Acta Sanctorum* II 438; cf. Simon 1986:223.

⁷⁴ On Chrysostomos, his sermons and their historical and religious context, see especially Ritter 1973, Hahn 1996 and Brooten 2000. For similar thoughts on the intention behind the canons from Elvira in question, cf. already Sotomayor 1979:99f.

⁷⁵ On the transformation of the town in late antiquity, see, e.g., Keay 1996 and Macias Solé 2000.

⁷⁶ The choice of language follows the habit of other Diaspora communities in the West: Noy 1997 and 1999. On the use of the Hebrew language, see De Lange 1996:122-32.

⁷⁷ CIJ I² 660d = RIT 1074 = Noy 1993:187: *Hic est / memoria bon(a)e recordationis. Isid/ora, filia beneme/morii Ionati et Ax//iaes. Pauset ani/ma eius in pace cu/m omne Israel. / [A]men, amen, amen.* There are a number of Jewish symbols — *lulab* and *menorah* in front



Fig. 2. Latin epitaph from Tarraco (CIJ I² 660d = RIT 1074 = Noy 1993: 187).
Neg. DAI Madrid R 130-69-7.



Fig. 3. Hebrew-Latin-Greek(?) trilingual inscription from Tarraco (CIJ I² 660c = RIT 1076 = Noy 1993: 185). Neg. DAI C 272.

of the first line, another *lulab* interrupting the letters *HI* and *C* of the first word, yet another *menorah* and a third *lulab* following at the end of the first line.

function with trilingual inscription — the Hebrew prayer ‘Peace upon Israel and upon ourselves and upon our sons. Amen’, the Latin terms *pax* and *fides* on its right and some letters of totally unclear meaning which appear to be Greek below the Latin text;⁷⁸ the two new pieces of evidence from the necropolis at Mas Rimbau (see below); finally, a Latin-Greek bilingual epitaph (fig. 4) which according to the fundamental recent studies of J. Gil⁷⁹ and J. Curbera⁸⁰ was put up in memory of *Rabla*, native of Kyzikos and mother-in-law of *Sias*, an *archisynagogos* (or, less likely, daughter of *Sias* and mother-in-law of an *archisynagogos*).⁸¹ If *Sias* held the key Jewish post of *archisynagogos* at Tarraco (though we cannot rule out with certainty the possibility that it was at Kyzikos that he had held the office), he is the only synagogue head known epigraphically so far from a Hispanic community.⁸²

Two new pieces from the late Roman necropolis at Mas Rimbau, situated some 650 metres to the north-west of the area enclosed by the Republican walls in the upper town of Tarraco, now seem to add to this epigraphic evidence. First, there is the funerary inscription of a certain *Samuel*, uncovered at Mas Rimbau in 1997 (fig. 5).⁸³ The still unpublished epitaph,⁸⁴ a rather crude slab made of local limestone, at first sight does not seem to reveal any indication of Jewishness except for the name of the deceased, a

⁷⁸ CIJ I² 660c = RIT 1076 = Noy 1993:185, interpreted either as a basin for ritual washing in the synagogue or as an ossuary (or a sarcophagus) for a baby. The piece comes from an area that probably formed part of the Jewish quarter of Tarragona until the expulsion of the Jews in 1492.

⁷⁹ Gil 1982:359-64, reconstructing the first lines of the Latin and the Greek texts in the following way: *In nomine D(omi)[ni ---]/vi(?) requiesci[t na]/ta in Quisico [Rab]/la, Sies soce[ra] / didascalī, fe[li]/cit(er) cum pac[e]*. “Ενθα κατά[κειται] / Ράβλα τοῦ Σί[ε]ς ἐκυ[ρ]α τοῦ μακ[αρτά- (or: μακ[αρί-)]/του κυ[ρί]ου?, ---] / ἀρχησυν[αγωγ]ου / Κυζήκο[υ ---]. None of the recent editors of the text (see note 81) except for Curbera 2003 has taken notice of Gil’s reconstruction.

⁸⁰ Curbera 2003, 357-9 giving the following restoration (which follows closely the orthography of the writer in the Greek part): *In nomine D[omi-]/ni requiesci[t na-]/ta in Quisico [Rab-]/la Sies soce[ra] / didascalī. Ia-/cit cum pac[e]*. “Ενθα κατά[ητε] / ‘Ράβλα τοῦ Σή[α] ἐκυ-]/ρα τοῦ μακ[αρή-]/του κ(αί) [δηκ]εο[τάτου (?)] / ἀρχησυν[ι](αγωγ]ου). Πατρῆς] / Κύζηκο[ς ἦν. μνήα] / δηκέω[ν ἦς εὐλο-]/γῆαν. “Η[της ἔζησε ἀ-]/νευ λώ[βης ἔτη --] / κύρηε, ε[ὐλογοῖ] τοὺς] / τεθνεῶ[τας].

⁸¹ The reconstructions and interpretations of Gil and Curbera replace a number of unconvincing earlier editions which do not make sense of the text: Millás Vallicrosa 1957; Alföldy, RIT 1075; Noy 1993:186; Canós i Villena 1996 and 2002. For a critical commentary on the implausible restoration submitted by Canós i Villena, see J. Curbera, HEsp 7, 2001, 962.

⁸² On the office, see Rajak — Noy 1993, whose catalogue (appendix 1, inscriptions of uncertain nature, n. 31) includes the text from Tarraco; cf. Levine 1998.

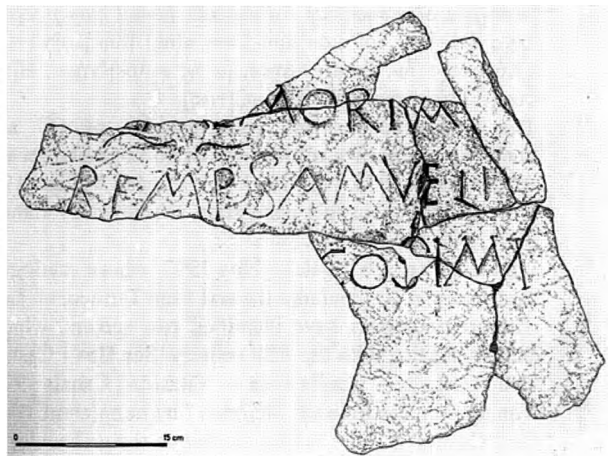
⁸³ The archaeologists have identified two sectors, which clearly differ chronologically, the burials starting with the fifth century. See Bea i Castaño — Vilaseca Canals 2000:155-64; Bea i Castaño — Carilla Sanz — Vilaseca i Canals 1997:587-92.

⁸⁴ The text runs as follows: Μεμoρηα / be(ne)m(erentis) or be(ne)m(emorii) p(atris?) Samuēli / [---] Cosimi. Sincere thanks are due to the archaeologists who without delay made this and other new epigraphic finds available to Géza Alföldy and his co-editors of the forthcoming CIL II supplement covering the inscriptions of Tarraco.



Fig. 4. Latin-Greek bilingual inscription from Tarraco (RIT 1075 = Noy 1993: 186). Neg. DAI Madrid R 136-69-3.

Fig. 5. Inscription of *Samuel* from the necropolis of Mas Rimbau (Tarraco). Drawing procured by the *CODEX — Arqueologia i Patrimoni* with some corrections on the part of G. Alföldy (23.10.1998).



favourite among the Hebrew names of patriarchs and prophets frequently borne by Jews in Western diaspora communities.⁸⁵ The formula comes from the common stock of both Jewish and Christian inscriptions⁸⁶ and, like the text from Mérida, once again reminds us that in language, forms, formulas and motifs Jewish epitaphs hardly differ from their pagan or Christian counterparts.⁸⁷ *Samuel* was not an exclusively Jewish name,⁸⁸ and if Margaret H. Williams' observation that Jews favoured the undeclined form of biblical names, whereas Christians had a marked preference for the declined form,⁸⁹ can be applied to Western communities as well,⁹⁰ then the declined *Samuel* from Mas Rimbau would perhaps more likely be considered a Christian.

Still, there is one more problem: the interpretation of the abbreviation *P* before the name in line 2. In Christian inscriptions introduced with *memoria*, the term is almost without exception followed by the name of the deceased.⁹¹ The most obvious suggestion for the inscription from Mas Rimbau would be *p(ater)*, which immediately raises the question whether it designates fatherhood in a biological sense or is the abbreviated form for the Jewish honorific title *pater synagoges*.⁹² In Christian inscriptions, *pater* is, as far as I know, hardly ever abbreviated in that way⁹³ and never put in front of the name of the deceased. In Jewish inscriptions, the relationship to the dedicant or other members of the family only exceptionally precedes the name of the deceased;⁹⁴ it is, however, most striking that *pater* in the sense of 'the (biological) father' is apparently nowhere abbreviated,⁹⁵ and if this observation, based on only a few inscriptions, may be generalized, the reason would be all the more obvious: Jews tried to avoid a confusion with the honorific

⁸⁵ Other namesakes of *Samuel*: Noy 1993:69 = CIJ I 583; 187, n. 145 = CIJ I 650; 157, n. 121 = CIJ I² 630; 238, n. 177; Noy 1995:174 = CIJ I 399; 149f., n. 187 = CIJ I 401; Noy 187 = CIJ I² 401 and CIJ I² 399.

⁸⁶ For *memoria* + the name of the deceased in the genitive (but note that in the inscription *memoria* is followed by the name in the dative) compare ILCV 670, 1584, 3601; see the Jewish parallel Noy 1993:176 = CIJ I² 660b. Christian analogues: Muñoz García de Iturrospe 1995:115-117. — *Be(ne)m(erens)* or *be(ne)m(emorius)* in Jewish inscriptions: Noy 1993:1f.; 11; 14; 20; 120-2; 130; 137; 183; 187; 189; Noy 1995: p. 534 for the numerous texts from Rome. Christian inscriptions: Diehl, ILCV III pp. 490 and 492f.

⁸⁷ For a survey, see Van der Horst ²1996:40-60.

⁸⁸ See Williams 1992:251f.

⁸⁹ Williams 1992:11.

⁹⁰ The undeclined form does, in fact, occur in the Greek funerary inscription of Ἰούστα [θυγ]άτερ <Σ>αμωή[λ] from Venosa (Noy 1993:69). In all other inscriptions from Western Europe known so far, the namesakes appear in the nominative.

⁹¹ There are but two exceptions in which additional information — in both cases an ecclesiastical office — precedes the name: ILCV 1108 and 1649. Apart from these, note esp. ICVR n.s. VII 19253 *M(emoriae?) bene merenti Rest(i)tuto*.

⁹² On which see, e.g., Levine 2000b:404-6.

⁹³ For an exception, see ICVR n.s. I 1799.

⁹⁴ See CIJ I 24 = Noy 1993:40 from Monteverde, set up by one Aur(elius) Olympius for his son (*filio benemerenti Bo[e?]to*).

⁹⁵ CIJ I² 534a = Noy 1993:15; CIJ I 71 = Noy 1995:495; CIJ I 489 = Noy 1995:143; CIJ I 252 = Noy 1995:271.

title, which they in fact happened to abbreviate.⁹⁶ So do we, after all, have a Jewish *Samuel* at Tarraco?

As a matter of fact, the second piece of evidence — an anepigraphic stone slab (which had obviously been put above the head of a deceased person) decorated with a *menorah* with tripod base, round arms and crossbar⁹⁷ — corroborates a Jewish presence at Mas Rimbau. The horizontal crossbar, which connected the arms and served as a base for glass containers or lamps, is a characteristic of the latest and most common group of *menoroth* with a wide circulation from the fourth to the seventh century CE.⁹⁸ The same type of *menorah* occurs on the famous marble trough with trilingual inscription from Tarraco.⁹⁹ Like the two other Jewish epitaphs from Tarraco,¹⁰⁰ the *menorah* from Mas Rimbau has been tentatively dated to the fifth or sixth century CE by the excavators of the cemetery.¹⁰¹

In late antiquity the *menorah* had become the Jewish symbol *par excellence*.¹⁰² Although the seven-branched candelabrum was appropriated and used by Christians, too, it has already been noted that the Christian *menorah* differed in its shape from the Jewish *menoroth*, or was even combined with a cross.¹⁰³ This being so, the *menorah* from Mas Rimbau clearly points to a Jewish burial, as has already been suggested by the excavators.¹⁰⁴ If so, it would reinforce the apparent Jewishness of the epitaph of *Samuel* from the same necropolis and shed some light on where the Jewish community of Tarraco buried its dead. While wealthier Jewish families may have preferred tombs on their landed estates,¹⁰⁵ for the majority two types of burial arrangement will have been common practice: funerals in separate cemeteries of their communities or in mixed burial areas shared with other religious or ethnic groups. That the latter was common in the Western diaspora until the third century, when the development of separate Jewish burial areas appears to have begun, has recently been argued by David Noy.¹⁰⁶ Still, Rutgers

⁹⁶ CIJ I 613 = Noy 1993:87 and CIJ I 611 = Noy 1993:86 (*pat(er)*); Noy 1993:107 (*Augusta ... filia Isatis p(atris) de Anciasmon, nepus (!) Symonatis p(atris) Lypiensium*); CIJ I 614 = Noy 1993:90 (*Gesua ... nepos p(atris) p(atrum) Marc<e>lli*).

⁹⁷ For a drawing, see Bea i Castaño — Vilaseca i Canals 2000:163 fig. 13.

⁹⁸ Hachlili 2001:165f. (type IV). Compare her exhaustive collection of *menoroth* on tombstones, epitaphs and tiles: pp. 318-36, n. IS10.1-11.37 (Israel); pp. 366-425, n. D8.1-335 (Diaspora finds).

⁹⁹ Hachlili 2001:438, n. D12.1 = CIJ I² 660c = RIT 1076 = Noy 1993:185. On the two other Jewish tombstones from Tarraco, the *menoroth* differ slightly in that they have straight arms: Hachlili 2001:405, n. D8.208 = RIT 1075 = Noy 186 and CIJ I² 660d = RIT 1074 = Noy 187, which does not figure in Hachlili's catalogue.

¹⁰⁰ See the previous footnote.

¹⁰¹ Bea i Castaño — Vilaseca i Canals 2000:158f.

¹⁰² For recent syntheses, see Levine 2000a:145-53, and, of course, Hachlili's path-breaking corpus of *menoroth* finds in Palestine and the diaspora (Hachlili 2001).

¹⁰³ See Hachlili 2000:269-74; Rutgers²1998:76-85, esp. 84 with n. 56.

¹⁰⁴ Bea i Castaño — Vilaseca i Canals 2000:158: 'El símbol de la *menorah* apuntaria vers la hipòtesi que ens trobem davant d'un enterrament hebreu'.

¹⁰⁵ This might explain the find spot of the epitaph of Isidora, the daughter of Iona and Axia, which does not come from Tarraco itself, but from its surroundings (CIJ I² 660d = RIT 1074 = Noy 1993:187, from Pallaresos).

¹⁰⁶ Noy 1998:75-89.

gives an impressive list of communal Jewish-Christian-pagan cemeteries across the Roman world, including the fourth- to eighth-century Jewish-Christian cemetery at Beth Guvrin in Palestine itself,¹⁰⁷ at the same time insisting on the fact that ‘Jews buried in the same general areas in which non-Jews too buried their dead, but that Jews were *not* normally interred in the same tomb or funerary complex as non-Jews’.¹⁰⁸ Mas Rimbau with its inscription of *Samuel* and the stone slab with a *menorah* — the only epigraphical remains or objects actually giving insights into the ethnicity or religion of the dead of the necropolis¹⁰⁹ — quite obviously has to be added to Rutgers’ list, thus proving the existence of a communal Jewish-Christian cemetery at late Roman Tarraco.

Besides the evidence from Tarraco, the total of late Roman Jewish inscriptions from the Iberian Peninsula includes what seems to be the Aramaic epitaph of a certain *Samuel*, son of *Haggai*, on three lead sheets from Santa María del Camí on Majorca,¹¹⁰ the trilingual Hebrew, Latin and Greek epitaph of *Meliosa*, daughter of *Ionas* and *Maria*, from Dertosa¹¹¹ and probably a fragmentary inscription from Mértola which figures among a large number of epitaphs of *famuli* and *famulae Dei* from the late Roman basilica and cemetery. The text follows a typically Christian formula,¹¹² but at the same time a *menorah* has been carved into the stone below the text. *Recessit in pace*, followed by the date, appears in other obviously or clearly Christian epitaphs from Mértola¹¹³ and from Baetic Spain, where the formula was in use until the early seventh century.¹¹⁴ As a matter of

¹⁰⁷ Rutgers ²1998:83-91 (for the list: pp. 88f.). The presence of both Jewish and Christian symbols and inscriptions on the lamps and in the excavated caves at Beth Guvrin has recently been explained by the well-known phenomenon of Christian reuse of formerly Jewish tombs: Magness — Avni 1998.

¹⁰⁸ Rutgers ²1998:151, interpreting the evidence from Syracusae. Cf. Rutgers 1995:96-9. On the late Roman cemetery near Tavium in rural Asia Minor, see Mitchell 1993:36.

¹⁰⁹ For the vast majority at Mas Rimbau, we do exclusively rely on the archaeological evidence, such as grave types or modes of burial — that is, on extremely unreliable material for the identification of Jewish tombs. Compare especially Rutgers ²1998:85: ‘Contrary to what is often stated, there is nothing specifically Jewish about loculi that were sealed with tufa and fragments of tiles, and to posit the existence of Jewish graves from the lack of grave goods, or to say that reburial and the presence of ossuaries must automatically point to a Jewish-Christian cemetery, runs counter to everything that is known about Jewish burials in Hellenistic and Roman periods’.

¹¹⁰ Noy 1993:177.

¹¹¹ CIJ 661 = Noy 1993:183 with a large number of editions.

¹¹² The text is quoted from M.M. Alves Dias, in Torres — Macias 1993:111 n. 1, the only edition to which I had access: [-----] / [--- vi]xit ann[os ---] / [--- re]cessit i[n] / [pa]ce de die quar[tu]l[o N]jonas Octo/[bre]s era SXX / (*menorah*). For an earlier edition, see M.M. Alves Dias, FE 21, 1987, n. 93 (with photograph) = HEp 2, 1990, 749. The text is dated to October 4, 482.

¹¹³ See ICERV 87 = ILCV 1175 and M.M. Alves Dias, FE 21, 1987, n. 95 (with photograph) = HEp 2, 1990, 751; M.M. Alvez Dias, FE 41, 1992, n. 182 (with photograph) and in Torres — Macias 1993:138 n. 28 (with photograph) = HEp 5, 1995, 951; this may be identical with the inscription published in *O Arqueólogo Português* 1, 63b referred to by Muñoz García de Iturrospe 1995:199 (also dating from the year 525).

¹¹⁴ Muñoz García de Iturrospe 1995:199-210.

fact, the *menorah*, being the most distinguishing feature of Jews in Late Antiquity, does not leave any doubt about the deceased person's ethnicity and religion.¹¹⁵

With the exception of this fragment, all the inscriptions have in common an element of uncertainty about their date. Quite probably none of them antedates the fifth century, and some — such as the Latin-Greek bilingual text from Tarraco — may belong to the late sixth century,¹¹⁶ that is, to Visigothic times. The onomastic content of the few inscriptions — biblical names (*Iona/Ionas* or *Ionathas*;¹¹⁷ *Samuel*¹¹⁸) besides the Semitic *Rabla* and *Sias* at Tarraco, the Greek *Isidora*¹¹⁹ rarely attested as a Jewish name,¹²⁰ *Maria* borne by Jewish and Christian females alike¹²¹ and two names nowhere else attested as Jewish (*Meliosa*, *Axia*)¹²² — is, of course, too scanty to permit us to deduce reliable tendencies from it.

Ancient Jewish synagogues of the Iberian Peninsula appear to be a problem: so far, not a single extant building has been indisputably identified as a synagogue. The synagogue of the Jews of Magona on Minorca, which appears to have been situated in the town,¹²³ has not yet been discovered;¹²⁴ the same is true for the synagogue of the considerably larger Jewish community of Tarraco and the synagogue at Dertona, said to have been converted into a church at the beginning of the fourth century.¹²⁵ The identification of other synagogues is hypothetical¹²⁶ or, as in the case of Ilici (Elche) on the southeastern coast of Spain in the province of Alicante, the subject of a long and

¹¹⁵ Unless we think of him as a Christian sympathizer of Judaism, one of the so-called 'God-fearers', θεοσεβείς, φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν or *metuentes*.

¹¹⁶ As is suggested by Curbera 2003 for RIT 1075 = Noy 1993:186 (on which see above, p. 169, with nn. 79-81): According to him, Rabla's family may have left her native place Cyzicus after the earthquake of 533 and the subsequent plague that hit the town on the southern coast of the Propontis.

¹¹⁷ Other references from Western Europe: CIJ I 671 = Noy 1993:191; CIJ I 216 = Noy 1995:265; CIJ I 259 = Noy 1995:366; CIJ I 277 = Noy 1995:402. For Palestine until 200 CE, cf. Ilan 2002:143-50.

¹¹⁸ See above, p. 169.

¹¹⁹ For references from Roman Spain, see Abascal Palazón 1994:391 and Lozano Velilla 1998:122.

¹²⁰ There are Jewish namesakes from the Cyrenaika: Lüderitz 1983:72. On later Jewish namesakes from Egypt, see Noy 1993: p. 260f.

¹²¹ For Spain, see the Christian namesakes ICERV 30, 178, 255 and 509.

¹²² *Axia* is recorded as a *nomen* of several women in imperial times: AE 1982, 212 = 1988, 357 = 1989, 190; CIL VIII 20996 = ILS 1356; AE 1966, 596; AE 1895, 35 = ILGN 516; AE 1977, 293. Cf. Solin - Salomies ²1994:30 (with references for *Axius*).

¹²³ Epist. Severi 12,7-13,3.

¹²⁴ Cf. Bradbury 1996:26 and 40.

¹²⁵ See above, p. 167.

¹²⁶ Most recently, the excavators of a building near São Cucufate in southern Portugal have suggested that it might have been a synagogue: M.L. Real, in *IV Reunió d'Arqueologia Cristiana Hispánica (Lisboa 1992)*, Barcelona 1995, 47-9 (with fig. 10). Another building in Sádaba (northern Spain) figuring in Halperin's monograph on ancient synagogues of the Iberian Peninsula (Halperin 1969:25f.) has been deleted from the list; see especially García y Bellido 1962.

continuing controversy.¹²⁷ The interpretation of the building has alternated between a palaeochristian church and a synagogue,¹²⁸ or a synagogue that later was converted into a church.¹²⁹ Its identification has from the start been substantially based upon the three Greek inscriptions in the mosaic pavement of the main hall, composed of three longitudinal panels with various geometric designs running parallel to each other on an east-west axis.¹³⁰ The recent re-edition and re-interpretation of the inscriptions by Josep Corell, according to whom the building was unquestionably a Christian basilica from the start,¹³¹ is unconvincing and raises a number of serious objections. For reasons of space, the discussion must be left for a separate work resting on a fresh autopsy of the (at present inaccessible) mosaic pavement and the three inscriptions, including their different palaeography.¹³²

It is once again a literary source — paradoxically, a fundamentally anti-Jewish narrative — by which the overall picture of cordial relations between Jews and Christians as indicated by the canons from the Council of Elvira is confirmed: the *Epistula Severi* on the conversion of 540 members of the Jewish community of Magona, a town in the east of Minorca, in 418 CE.¹³³ Since Diocletian's administrative reorganisation, the Balearic Islands, by then an autonomous province of their own, had ceased to form a part of the *Tarraconensis*.¹³⁴ Bishop Severus, the author of the letter, is at pains to attribute the conversion to the power of the relics of St. Stephen the Protomartyr, which had just been deposited in the church of Magona, and to stress the threat of the growing Jewish community of the town to the Christians: 'Magona seethed with so great a multitude of Jews,

¹²⁷ The independent and partly inconsistent reports given by the two excavators, P. Ibarra Ruiz and E. Albertini, have been most thoroughly reconsidered by Schlunk 1948. For shorter recent reappraisals, see, e.g., Halperin 1969:26-28; Schlunk — Hauschild 1978:9 and 142-6; Hachlili 1998:45-7; Márquez Villora — Poveda Navarro 2000:185-9, 192-6; Levine 2000b:261-3. Parts of the structure have been dated to the fourth century; other findings and structures — such as the semicircular apse — were obviously added later. According to Ramos Fernández 1995, the recent discovery of two Constantinian *folles* (one from 318/319 CE with the titulature of Constantine, the other bearing the titulature of Constantine II Caesar) in a corner of the northeastern wall seems to corroborate an early date, but this conclusion is far from convincing.

¹²⁸ For a confrontation of the different positions, see Schlunk — Hauschild 1978:146f., and Márquez Villora — Poveda Navarro 186 with n. 5. In their reappraisal of the fragmentary mosaic pavement in the south panel of the building, supposed to have depicted a scene from a Jonah-tradition, the latter have recently suggested a Christian context for this complex of inscription and mosaic.

¹²⁹ A position most recently asserted by Hachlili 1998:46f., 93.

¹³⁰ For a more detailed description, see Hachlili 1998:205-7.

¹³¹ Corell 1999:97-102 n. 47, followed by Gómez Pallares 2002:25-9.

¹³² Judging from palaeography (note especially the form of the letters *omikron* and *upsilon*), the inscription in the north panel appears not to be contemporary with the two other inscriptions from the south and the central panels.

¹³³ On the *Epistula Severi* and the events in Magona, see now S. Bradbury's fundamental introduction to his new edition and translation: Bradbury 1996, 1-77. Compare Lotter 1986 and esp. Hunt 1982.

¹³⁴ Zucca 1998:139f.

as if with vipers and scorpions, that Christ's church was wounded by them daily'.¹³⁵ The sharp contrast constructed between Magona and the bishop's seat Iamona — a town miraculously spared from harmful and poisonous animals, in which 'Jews are absolutely unable to live'¹³⁶ — is, of course, thought to make the violent clash between Jews and Christians appear almost predictable and inevitable from the start. The metaphors for Jews and the Jewish religion, which Severus particularly borrows from the plant and animal world, as well as his startlingly militant vocabulary, run through the whole *Epistula*, concluding with Severus' prayer 'that the whole breadth of the earth might be ablaze with the flame of love in order to burn down the forest of unbelief'.¹³⁷

Even onomastics within the *Epistula* embrace Severus' dramatic and programmatic intentions. Only the names of two Jewish protagonists, Theodorus and Meletius, are attested elsewhere in inscriptions from the Western diaspora;¹³⁸ the Greek and Latin names of other leading figures — Innocentius, Caecilianus, Florinus, Artemisia and Litorius, her father (if he was a Jew)¹³⁹ — may be considered typical of a late Roman Jewish community.¹⁴⁰ Two names, however, seem to be deliberate fabrications by the bishop: *Reuben*, the name of the first Jewish convert 'chosen by the Lord (that appropriate names be preserved in all matters) to be made the first-born of all' who 'without delay ... became the "first-born of Jacob" [Gen. 35,23] and received the sign of salvation',¹⁴¹ and *Galilaeus*, the geographical name of a young cousin of Theodorus who is said to have fled 'to the aid of our Galilaeon [i.e. Jesus Christ]' and to have been enrolled into the list of converts under His name.¹⁴²

Severus cannot gloss over the amicable relations between Christians and Jews before the outbreak of religious zeal among the local Christians.¹⁴³ Christians and Jews used to greet one another, formed friendships with each other and evinced warm feelings for one another.¹⁴⁴ The intimacy of the two religious communities appears to be most distinctively reflected in the fact that both could sing the same hymns.¹⁴⁵ Individual Jews were highly respected by Christians for their education and culture;¹⁴⁶ one of them, the *pater Iudaeorum* Caecilius, was 'a worthy man and so eminent not only among the Jews, but also in the town that even now [i.e. on the eve of the conversion in 418] he had been elected *defensor* [scil. *civitatis*]'.¹⁴⁷ Even greater integrity distinguished Theodorus, the head of the synagogue and one of the learned teachers and exegetes of the Law (*doctor*

¹³⁵ Epist. Severi 3,6.

¹³⁶ Epist. Severi 3,1.

¹³⁷ Epist. Severi 31,4.

¹³⁸ *Theodorus*: Noy 1993:17 (?); Noy 1995:206; 454; 457. — *Melitius*: Noy 1995:198.

¹³⁹ See Bradbury 1996:34-7.

¹⁴⁰ Millar 1992:119.

¹⁴¹ Epist. Severi 15,1-3.

¹⁴² Epist. Severi 19,7. On both names, see the comment of Bradbury 1996:37.

¹⁴³ On the following, compare Bradbury 1996:30-40 and elsewhere.

¹⁴⁴ Epist. Severi 5, listing *salutationis officia, familiaritatis consuetudo* and *inveterata caritas*.

¹⁴⁵ Epist. Severi 14 with Bradbury 1996:128 n. 14, where he also collects other evidence.

¹⁴⁶ During his flight from Magona, Innocentius is addressed by Meletius, another refugee, as *frater, qui non solum Latinis verum etiam Graecis litteris eruditus es et legem iugiter meditaris*: Epist. Severi 18,15.

¹⁴⁷ Epist. Severi 19,6.

legis) on Minorca: outstanding among all the others for his knowledge and authority (*auctoritas* and *peritia*), 'pre-eminent in both wealth and worldly honour' (*et censu et honore saeculi praecipuus*) and respected by Jews and Christians alike, he had fulfilled all the curial duties of Magona and had been accepted as the *patronus* of his fellow citizens.¹⁴⁸ It was certainly not accidental that the clash between Christians and Jews was looming just at a moment when Theodorus had left in order to inspect his landed estates on Majorca.¹⁴⁹

When Theodorus returns, the clash — Severus is speaking of a veritable 'war planned on each side with great zeal'¹⁵⁰ — takes its course. On February 2, Severus leads a Christian congregation from Iamona to Magona, intending to draw the Jews into public debate. When they refuse because of Sabbath observance, they are accused of plotting violence and of stockpiling weapons in the synagogue. An inspection of the building, to which the Jewish authorities consent, is not carried out: instead, in the course of a riot between Jews and Christians, the latter occupy the synagogue, seize its objects of value and the holy books and burn it down to the ground; later on, a Christian basilica is built on its ruins. On the next day, the first Jew, *Reuben*, is said to have converted to Christianity. After three more days, because of a misunderstanding — Theodorus, the head of the Jewish community, is mistakenly thought to be willing to convert, too — the majority of the Jewish community is ready to follow Reuben's example. Theodorus, no longer in a position to mediate and lacking control of his people, finally can see no other way out but to take the final step as well. Eight days after Severus's march from Iamona to Magona, the last Jewess returns from her flight and is admitted into the church, thus completing the number of 540 new converts.

Conclusion

The period from Constantine to the 430s in the history of the Diaspora Judaism on the Iberian Peninsula was, as has been stressed by Millar for the history of Diaspora Judaism in general,¹⁵¹ a unique phase of overt but uneasy coexistence which could suddenly break out into communal violence. The literary sources give an overall picture of peaceful coexistence of Jewish and Christian communities, of benevolent contact, interaction and communal collaboration between Jews and Christian until the early fifth century; at the same time, they reflect the fragility of this coexistence, openly revoked for the first time with the early synagogue burning at Dertona.

For the time being, archaeology and inscriptions only have a comparatively small contribution to make. While we still await clear evidence of the inner structure and organisation of the Jewish communities on the Peninsula, the new pieces from Mas Rimbau at least seem to prove for the first time the existence of a communal Jewish-Christian cemetery. The occasional multilingualism of some inscriptions might reflect education, culture, and social standing; the reversion to Hebrew a certain traditionalism or 'desire to

¹⁴⁸ Epist. Severi 6.

¹⁴⁹ Epist. Severi 7.

¹⁵⁰ Epist. Severi 9,1.

¹⁵¹ Millar 1992:103.

exhibit some Hebrew knowledge for reasons of national or religious sentiment';¹⁵² exclusively Latin inscriptions, a considerable assimilation to their environment.

By the time of the events on Minorca, the juridical and social marginalization of the Jews was in full progress,¹⁵³ and the calamities that afflicted Gaul, Spain and Italy in these years¹⁵⁴ furthered the religious intolerance of the time and the change in the religious climate since the 380s.

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¹⁵² De Lange 1996:132.

¹⁵³ For a recent summary of their legal, economic and social status, see Noethlichs 2001 with a compilation of fundamental primary sources and bibliography. On the situation of the Hispanic Jews from the fourth to the sixth century, see Pérez Sánchez 1992, Jiménez Garnica 1994 and González Salinero 1998.

¹⁵⁴ Briefly sketched by Bradbury 1996:47-53.

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