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Gli ebrei, Venezia e l'Europa tra Otto e Novecento

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Amsterdam and Venezia, did they communicate and on which levels?

The Jewish presence and communities of Venice predated the ones in Amsterdam with centuries. The establishment of the Ghetto in 1516 and the influx of new immigrants, made the Venetian community experienced in taking in new members and coping with the economic, political and religious consequences of this influx of new inhabitants. Accepting or refusing possible new members of the Jewish community in general and into the several synagogues in particular must have been an issue. This was a phenomenon that also was a topic in Amsterdam. As the origin of the newcomers was often the same it is worth researching this question again.

We know that in some aspects the organization of the Amsterdam Portuguese Community was modeled after the Venetian examples. So for example the idea and the reasons, for the founding in Amsterdam in 1615 of the famous Santa Companhia de dotar orfans e donzelas pobres which of which the idea seems to have been brought to Amsterdam by the Salonika born Merchant and Rabbi, Jozef Pardo, who spend several years in Venice, where he saw the importance of the functioning of the Hebra de orfans. Pardo had come to Amsterdam in 1608, where he became the Rabbi of the then very young Beth Jacob Community.

In Amsterdam the arrival and influx of new migrants had a development that was much later than Venice and in a different political and religious setting. Still there were similarities. This makes Jewish Venice an interesting paradigm for Amsterdam and made it an obvious example for its leadership to look to Venice and study the situation there carefully for organizational precedents and inspiration.

In my lecture I will discuss on personalities whose lives were intertwined between Venice and Amsterdam, such as Joseph Pardo, Jacob Raphael Saraval and Saul Levi Morteira and others.

I will especially report about the sheeloth and teshuvot, rabbinical responsa, that were taken or put forward from Venice to Amsterdam or were brought to the attention of the Venetian Rabbis from Amsterdam as far as I can locate them in the Amsterdam holdings. In particular I will talk about a manuscript in one of the two famous Amsterdam Jewish collections, the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, namely Ms HS. ROS. 281, written by Benjamin Senior Godines with a lawsuit on the Halachic question of father hood in some specific cases, of which according to the late Chief Rabbi Isaac Maarsen of The Hague a " cause célèbre " existed, that had to be solved around the year 1682.