

El Prezente

Studies in Sephardic Culture

Editors: Tamar Alexander • Yaakov Bentolila • Eliezer Papo

El Prezente, vol. 4, December 2010



Ben-Gurion University of the Negev



Center Moshe David Gaon
for Ladino Culture

האיגוד העולמי למדעי היהדות
WORLD UNION OF JEWISH STUDIES



The National Authority for Ladino
and its Culture

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Adolescence and the Period of Apprenticeship among the Western Sephardim in the Seventeenth Century

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Introduction

The history of the Western Sephardi communities in the early modern period: –Livorno, Hamburg, Amsterdam, and London, as well as the New Christian merchant communities of Southern France, Antwerp, and the New World–has been amply documented. Rather often, this history refers to adults, or more precisely to the “Men of the Nation”, as the Western Sephardim referred to themselves and historians continue to refer to them today.¹ Only recently, the study of how the Western Sephardim structured family life, including the role assigned to all family members, parents, children, servants and slaves, has begun to attract the attention of historians.²

- 1 Yosef Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity. The Sephardi Diaspora in Western Europe*, Brill, Leiden 2000; Miriam Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation. Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN 1997; Daniel M. Swetschinski, *The Portuguese Jews of Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam*, The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, London 2000; Jonathan Israel, *European Jewry in The Age of Mercantilism, 1550-1750*, Vallentine Mitchell, Portland, OR 1998; Renzo Toaff, *La Nazione Ebraica a Livorno e a Pisa (1591-1700)*, Leo S. Olschki Editore, Firenze 1990.
- 2 Yosef Kaplan, “Familia, matrimonio y sociedad. Los casamientos clandestinos en la diáspora sefardí occidental (siglos XVII y XVIII)”, *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma*, 4, *Historia Moderna* 6 (1993), pp. 129-154; Tirtsah Levie Bernfeld, “Mujeres judías hispano-portuguesas en el entorno holandés de Amsterdam en el siglo XVII”, in Jaime Contreras et al. (eds.), *Familia, religión y negocio. El sefardismo en las relaciones entre el mundo ibérico y los Países Bajos en la Edad Moderna*, Fundación Carlos Ambers, Madrid 2002, pp. 137-172; Jonathan Schorsch, *Jews and Blacks in the Early Modern World*, Cambridge University

As soon as the Western Sephardim established communities in places where they could practice Judaism, they developed a network of social institutions that aimed to organize family life. These institutions included dowry confraternities in Venice, Amsterdam, and Livorno that provided dowries to both poor and orphaned young women, and the *Aby Jetomim* (Father of Orphans) confraternities of Amsterdam and London that provided financial and social support to fatherless young males. Recent studies on these dowry confraternities have revealed important information about communal and ethnic formation as well as charity and philanthropy practices among the Western Sephardim.³ But these institutions could also provide historians with information about early socialization and attitudes toward women, children, and youth that have yet to be explored.

Adolescence as a separate life stage

Philippe Ariès, in his well known and often criticized book *Centuries of Childhood*, concluded that the notion of adolescence as a stage distinct from childhood did not fully develop until the eighteenth century.⁴ In the seventeenth century, he claims, it was still confused either with childhood or with adulthood. In this study I would like to focus on the *Aby Jetomim* confraternity of Amsterdam as a source of information on orphaned male adolescents and the support they received. As I hope to demonstrate, the Western Sephardim's ideas about the needs of adolescents differ from our

Press: Cambridge, UK 2004. See also the collection of essays, Julia R. Lieberman (ed.) *Sephardi Family Life in the Early Modern Period Diaspora*, Brandeis University Press, Waltham, MA, 2011.

- 3 Miriam Bodian, "The 'Portuguese' Dowry Societies in Venice and Amsterdam. A Case Study in Communal Differentiation within the Marrano Diaspora", *Italia* 6:1-2 (1987), pp. 30-61; Moises Orfali, "The Portuguese Dowry Society in Livorno and the Marrano Diaspora", *Studia Rosenthaliana* 35 (2001), pp. 143-156. The practice of caring for the poor in the Amsterdam community will be dealt with by Tirtsah Levie Bernfeld in her book, *Poverty and Welfare among the Portuguese Jews in Early Modern Amsterdam*, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, Oxford, forthcoming. See also Bernfeld, "Caridade Escapa da Morte: Legacies to the Poor in Sephardi Wills from Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam", *Dutch Jewish History* 3 (1993), pp. 179-204.
- 4 Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, Robert Baldick (trans.), Vintage Books, New York 1962, p. 268.

contemporary twenty-first-century views on this formative life stage, but nevertheless adolescence was viewed as a separate life stage between childhood and adulthood.

Among the Western Sephardim we have several ways to observe whether or not adolescence was viewed as a separate life stage. In the merger agreement resulting from the fusion of the three congregations into one in Amsterdam in 1639, chapter 25 refers to how males were grouped for the purpose of being called up to the Torah, one of the most important honors given to congregants:

- (1) The younger group was formed by *mosos*⁵ or youths up to eighteen years of age.
- (2) The next group was formed by *mansebos* or males between eighteen and twenty-five.
- (3) The third group was made up of unmarried *mansebos*, twenty-five and older, and married men.

In the same merger agreement, when it was made public to all congregants, the grouping of males was slightly modified, an indication that there was more than one opinion as to what constituted each grouping:

- (1) *Mansebos* up to twenty were grouped together; that is to say the term *mosos* was replaced by *mansebos* and the age was raised from eighteen to twenty.
- (2) The next group was made up of *pesoas* (married or single persons) twenty or older.
- (3) The last group was made up of males fifty or older.⁶

For our interest in adolescents, the two important terms are the adjectives *mosos* and *mancebos*. In contemporary Iberia each of these terms had a different meaning but were at times used interchangeably. The term *moço*⁷ in Spanish refers to physical development, and it is defined by Covarrubias in 1611 as derived from the Latin *adolescens* and meaning “to grow”, “because as a plant, he (the *moço*) is in the process of growing up”;⁸ it also means unmarried; finally it also designates a servant

5 Most communal records in the Amsterdam Sephardi community were recorded in Portuguese, therefore the spelling of these terms is in Portuguese.

6 Wilhelmina C. Pieterse, *Daniel Levi de Barrios Als Geschiedschrijver van de Portugees-Israelietische Gemeente te Amsterdam in zijn ‘Triumpho del Gobierno Popular’*, Scheltema & Holkema, Amsterdam 1968, pp. 161-162 and 164-165.

7 In modern Spanish the same term is spelled *mozo*.

8 Sebastián de Covarrubias Horozco, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española*, 1611, reprint S. A. Horta, Barcelona 1943, p. 808.

(*moço*, the male, and *moça* the female). The Spanish term *mancebo* refers to a legal state of dependency on the father. According to Covarrubias a *mancebo* is a *moço*, from the Latin *adolescens*, who is a *mancipium*, because he is still under the control of his father as if he were a slave who has yet to earn his freedom or emancipation.⁹ The age of legal majority in contemporary Iberia was twenty-five, and until that age a male could only get married with the consent of his father. *Mocedad* or youth as a life stage is not defined by Covarrubias, but about a century later, in 1726, the *Diccionario de Autoridades de la Lengua Castellana* indicates that it begins at fourteen years of age.¹⁰ Jewish tradition, of course, also played a role among the Western Sephardim. Turning thirteen, the age of religious majority, was in the process of becoming marked with a special celebration, which at the time was referred in Portuguese as *Entrar no gremio dos observantes dos preceytos divinos* (Entering the Guild of Commandment Observers).¹¹

Apprenticeship in the Early Modern Period

In the Early Modern Period apprenticeship was the way a male adolescent learned to become an independent adult and set up his own household. An apprentice worked under the supervision of a professional adult who took charge of teaching him a trade, profession, or business. At the end of the apprenticeship period, the young man was considered an official who could be gainfully employed by a master. Many officials never became masters. We have several sources that give us glimpses of apprentices in Western Sephardi communities and the roles assigned to them. One semi-fictional account of the life of an adolescent is in the form of a memoir titled *Vida de Abraham Pelengrino* (The Life of Abraham Pelengrino—the Wanderer or the Convert).¹² It is the

9 Ibid., p. 784.

10 *Diccionario de Autoridades de la Lengua Castellana*, 1726, reprint by Editorial Gredos, Madrid 1963, vol. 2, p. 581.

11 See my study “‘Entering the Guild of Commandment Observers’: The bar-mitzvah celebration in Amsterdam and Hamburg in the early modern period”, paper presented at the Association for Jewish Studies, December 22, 2009, where I document various sources using these terms.

12 See the manuscript *Vida de Abraham Pelengrino* (The Life of Abraham Pelengrino or Abraham the Convert), at the Ets Haim Library, EH 49 A15.

story of a Portuguese Old Christian who converted to Judaism and eventually became a member of the Amsterdam Sephardi community. The story begins in 1599, in Ponta Delgada in the Azores, with the family of the Portuguese merchant Antonio Cardozo de Macedo. Antonio decides to send his elder son, Manuel, fourteen years old, to England in the care of a stranger, Mestre Gerden, to learn a trade related to dyeing woolen clothing. Manuel is first taken to Scotland and then to London, where he converts to Calvinism and remains until his Portuguese father calls him home. When he returns to Portugal, a young man of about twenty, he is jailed by the Portuguese Inquisition. In prison he meets others accused of judaizing and eventually escapes and leaves his country again. After more travels and adventures, he joins the Western Sephardim, converts to Judaism and becomes one of them, known as Abraham Pelengrino (The Convert or Wanderer), first in Hamburg and then in Amsterdam, where he ends his days in 1659. This case illustrates the vulnerable position in which young apprentices were put when they were sent out to fend for themselves, many miles away from their families, in order to learn a trade. In some cases they never returned to their homes.

Another source mentioning apprentices is an ethical will by Isaac de Matatia Aboab, a well-known member of the Amsterdam community. The will was originally written to “indoctrinate his nephews and later [commended] to his sons for a life of virtue”.¹³ One section of the manuscript was addressed to fathers, advising them how to select professions for their male sons.¹⁴ A father of many sons who did not have a great deal of wealth and who had no way to find an occupation for all at home was advised to direct some of his sons to letters, that is to intellectual professions, and others to commerce. For the sons destined to become merchants, the father was advised to send them away as apprentices to a merchant’s firm at around the age of sixteen for a period of five to six years. The document then addressed the youths with a list of practical advice, including how to behave in order to be trusted by their masters (suffer patiently) and how to advance in the various stages of apprenticeship (first learn bookkeeping for several months, then learn to write business letters, and

13 Isaac de Matatia Aboab, *Documentos para todo estado e ydade em particular para abituar bem os mosos desde sua mocidade avertude. Feitos e juntados por o senhor meu pay o senhor Ishack de Matatia Aboab. Primeyro para doctinar seus sobrinhos e depois para exortar seus propios filos a vertude [...]* Copiados por mi Matatia de Isaac Aboab. Em Amsterdam no anno de 5445 [1685].

14 Marked as section 2 in the manuscript, pp. 8-10.

finally witness sales and purchases of properties).¹⁵

Information on adolescent orphans has also come down to us, since their names and other details of how the communities financed their care and education were recorded and preserved. Such is the case with the records of the *Aby Jetomim* confraternity in Amsterdam, which was founded in 1648; a similar institution was founded in London in 1704.¹⁶ The Amsterdam *Aby Jetomim* society bore the cost of food, clothing, medical care, and some basic education, both secular and religious, for fatherless young boys, between the ages of ten and thirteen. When these orphans reached age thirteen, some were simply dismissed but for others the confraternity also paid the cost associated with learning a trade at the homes of senior masters, most Jewish but some not.

The *Aby Jetomim* confraternity of Amsterdam was founded as an offshoot of another confraternity, the *Gemilut Hasadim* (Performance of Charitable Acts), also known in Portuguese as *Hebra dos Coveiros* (Society of Gravediggers), founded in 1639 by Mosch Belmonte, whose members' main task was digging graves for burials as a pious deed. This institution acted independently of the Mahamad (lay leaders of the community). In 1648, after the death of Belmonte, the Mahamad took control of *Gemilut Hasadim* and named its administrators. Some members who valued their independence voiced their objection to the takeover and the Mahamad expelled them. Soon after and as an act of defiance to the Mahamad, forty-two of the expelled men founded the *Aby Jetomim* confraternity.¹⁷ In order to justify their existence apart from the other confraternity, they gave up all the activities related to death and burial, and instead, they singled out two different tasks: (1) taking care of fatherless male orphans and (2) providing lodging and food for a short time to newcomers from Iberia who lacked financial resources of their own.

Soon after the foundation of the *Aby Jetomim* confraternity, membership grew to

15 "Documentos", pp. 8, 9.

16 Amsterdam Municipal Archives, SAA PA 334, No. 1211, Register of the *Aby Jetomim* Society. For the London institution, see *Shaare orah ve-avi yetomim: Laws of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' orphan society for educating, maintaining, clothing and apprenticing orphan children*, Wertheimer, Lea and Co., Printers, London 1885.

17 The story is told by David Franco Mendes in his memoirs, see Lajb Fuks and Renate G. Fuks-Mansfeld, (eds.), *Memorias do estabelecimento e progresso dos judeos portugueses e espanhoes nesta famosa cidade de Amsterdam 1772*, Van Gorcum, Assen 1975, pp. 50-51 for *Gemilut Hasadim* and pp. 55-57 for *Aby Jetomim*. See also Swetschinski's section on Charity, pp. 196-202.

sixty and then to 100 male members, who paid an entrance fee of at least twenty florins and a *tamid* (monthly membership) of ten placas. Women also were admitted as members, and they paid an entrance fee of eleven florins and the same monthly membership fee of ten placas. Eighty-three women were listed as members at the founding of the confraternity.¹⁸ Upon their deaths, a number of members also made charitable bequests to the institution.

The existence of so many confraternities in Amsterdam and other Western Sephardi communities is notable and merits some context. Their existence can only be understood if we take into account that in contemporary seventeenth-century Catholic Spain and Portugal, men of all social classes were customarily members of various confraternities. Iberian confraternities, numerous in every city or town, were of two kinds: (1) voluntary lay associations of men who paid membership and with the proceeds, financed pious deeds such as feeding the poor, orphans, widows, etc., and (2) the so-called guild-confraternities who performed the same type of pious deeds but only for their members (and dependents in the case of illness or death of a member) as a kind of social security. In Iberia, guilds and confraternities were at times independent institutions. Some were competing while others were collaborating with the Catholic Church and the Crown, two institutions with a preference for the centralization of charity institutions. The relationship with the Catholic Church assured confraternity members reward in the afterlife, as members gained indulgences for sins committed.

In Spain, municipalities in various regions such as Valencia, Navarra, and Aragón relied on a *Padre de Huérfanos* (Father of Orphans), an individual paid by the municipality. This urban institution was highly regarded socially and had existed since the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries. The Spanish Jurist Vicente Pino, who studied the one in the city of Zaragoza, has traced its first statutes back to 1475. The name *Padre de Huérfanos* was really what Pino calls “a pious euphemism”, as the position was created to take charge of what we would call today juvenile delinquents.¹⁹ This “father” would go to public places where vagrant youth, male and female, would gather; he took them under his legal charge and placed boys as apprentices with a

18 These numbers however need to be taken cautiously as often members were expelled because they did not pay their monthly membership but the specific date is not given; also if members passed away dates (in most cases) are not given. See fols. 56-59.

19 See Angel San Vicente Pino, *El Oficio de Padre de Huérfanos en Zaragoza*, La Editorial, Zaragoza 1965.

master and girls as servants with a mistress. If youngsters ran away, the *Padre de Huérfanos*, invested with the paternal authority of *patria potestad*, could imprison the youths and force them to go back to their masters or mistresses.

In the founding of the Amsterdam *Aby Jetomim* confraternity, we observe influence of these various Iberian institutions: (1) in the selection of its name which originated in Psalm 68:6, “Father of orphans and Defender of widows is God”, and was translated from Portuguese into Hebrew as *Aby Jetomim*; (2) in the desire of its members to be a voluntary association independent of the control of the Mahamad; and (3) in the desire to care for their own as well as for other less closely related individuals in times of crisis: a kind of social security that provided for the extended family.

The records of the *Aby Jetomim* of Amsterdam that have come down to us are in an accounting notebook that was started in 1654, six years after the founding of the confraternity, and ended with records of the year 1768. In this essay I will only refer to the records up to the end of the seventeenth century that were documented. As a register with an accounting purpose, it does not have all the information I was hoping to find. In fact, the information entered in this register was often retroactively copied from another book, the *Livro grande desta santa yrmandade*,²⁰ which no doubt contained important data but, to my knowledge, has not survived. For example, we do not have all the *hascamot* or statutes of the confraternity, only those that were occasionally revised were included in the register under study here. But the register does include important information. In terms of the orphans, the records were organized basically in two different ways: (1) it lists the names of orphans, the year they were admitted (although it does not give their precise age), and occasionally it lists the orphans supported in a given year; (2) the second type of recording was done when an orphan was awarded funding to learn a trade as an apprentice—this was referred as *colocado de oficio* or *posto a oficio*; this type of recording, in the form of double entries, *debe* and *haber* (debit and credit), gives financial details of the costs of apprenticeship. It also suggests that the awarding of funding for apprenticeship was done in a kind of ranking, giving priority to the sons of members who passed away and then in descending order to others.²¹ It appears that not all orphans were awarded funding to become apprentices, and at the end of their time supported by

20 See Register of the *Aby Jetomim* Society, f. 16, where the *Livro grande* [sic] *desta santa yrmandade* is mentioned.

21 See *ibid.*, in reference to “hermanos supra numerarios”, an indication that some members had a special category.

the confraternity, they were dismissed instead. This perhaps had to do with a limited demand for apprentices in the trades or professions practiced by Jews, as in Amsterdam they were excluded from some guilds.²² The records do not tell what became of these orphans. However, from the records of those who were awarded funding we can glean important information.

Orphans were admitted to the confraternity at the age of ten, first for a period of three years and later, after 1658, this period could be extended up to three more years. The number of orphans financed by the confraternity was low at first. In the year it was founded, 1648, six orphans were admitted and received an allowance of forty-five florins per year, to cover their living expenses: food, clothing, and medical care when needed. But three out of the six orphans admitted were expelled when the administrators found out that their fathers were alive.²³ The following year (1649) another six orphans were admitted; in 1655, nine; in 1656, two, in 1657, one. Although it is difficult to assess with precision how many orphans were financed at one time (as the dates when they were expelled or dismissed are not given), I have estimated that, up to the year 1657, there were at any given time, between ten and fifteen orphans; later on the numbers went higher.²⁴ At first, the confraternity planned to purchase or rent a house to lodge the orphans, but this never seems to have happened, and the orphans continued to live with their mothers or relatives, though in some cases they were lodged with members of the confraternity.

Some of the orphans were admitted younger than the stipulated age of ten; this is evident only if they were awarded funding for their apprenticeship but were still minors (not yet thirteen), and therefore could not yet be placed as apprentices. In such cases they were allocated funding which was held until they turned of age. For example, Ishac Obediente was admitted in 1673, but three years later, in 1676 the confraternity awarded him 150 florins to learn a trade, and continued to refer to him as a minor.²⁵

Similarly Mosseh Nunes da Costa was admitted in 1675. Three years later in 1678,

22 See Swetschinski, *Portuguese Jews of Seventeenth-Century*, pp. 20-21.

23 See Register of the *Aby Jetomim* Society, f. 1, where the records simply say: expelled for having a father (por ter pay).

24 See *ibid.*, f. 6, for the year 5424 (1664), eleven orphans are listed. Then for the year 5429 (1669), five years later, a new list of thirteen orphans is recorded.

25 *Ibid.*, f. 7, the entry when he was admitted in 1673; f. 8, in 1673, his double entry account: "E por ser de menor ydade se lhe guardarao ate que atenda competente p^a aprender f150."

he was allocated funding (f150), but was still considered a minor; he was finally placed as an apprentice for three years with Isaac and Mosseh Henriques Faro to learn the trade of stockbroker (*corredor*) which he successfully completed twelve years after he was admitted in 1687.²⁶

Ishack de Mordehay Abendana also was dependent on the confraternity for a total of nine years, from 1689 to 1698, including three years as an apprentice to become a *lapidario* (diamond cutter) under his master, Eliau Gaon.²⁷

In some cases, the children were expelled from the confraternity before the three allotted years because of lack of attendance or behavior problems, described as (1) *travieso* (being naughty), (2) *por nao se sujeitar* (being incapable of subjugation),²⁸ (3) *desosegado* (being out of control when talking to the administrators), or (4) *velhaco* (being evil).²⁹ Other times the confraternity seems to have been lax about enforcing the three-year limit. In 1654, the administrators decided to enforce the three-year period and expelled those orphans who had gone beyond the three years.³⁰ However, beginning in about the year 1658, some entries indicate that the date for dismissal was prolonged.³¹

Some orphans left the orphanage of their own will (or more likely it was the will of their relatives) to travel to other countries where Judaism was permitted, or even to places such as Ireland, Bordeaux, or Antwerp where the practice of Judaism was not allowed.³² Another reason for leaving the confraternity was marriage. This, however, did not happen very frequently, as an orphan was obligated to return his entire allowance if he quit before his time.³³ Menasseh ben Israel in his *Thesovro dos*

26 Ibid., f. 7, 9, 19.

27 Ibid., f. 12.

28 See *ibid.*, f. 4. Listed among these orphans were Eleazar del Canho, Abrao Gadella, Menase Garom, Efraym Garo, Yshaque Rodrigues, Ysaque Rosa, Aron Gabay; f. 6, Abraham Jesurun, falta de asistencia.

29 Ibid., f. 5, Abraham Pretto, admitted in 1654 (5424), “despedido p velhaco.” F. 21, Jacob Maimon, admitted in 5439 (1679), expelled probably the same year, “p nao acudir ao que devia e haverse desaforado tanto elle como sua may com os ssres administradores.”

30 See *ibid.*, f. 1.

31 See *ibid.*, f. 4 and others.

32 I have found no evidence that any of them went back to Iberia. In the month of Sivan, 1662, Isack Vaez went to Livorno (f. 4); Jacob Dias in 1670 went to Antwerp (f. 6); Eliau Benvimiste, in Elul 1670 went to Hamburg (f. 6).

dinim (published in Amsterdam in 1647) gives the ideal age of marriage as eighteen for a boy and thirteen for a girl, but the contemporary sources as well as recent studies tell us that the mean age for marriage among the Sephardim in Amsterdam in the seventeenth century was twenty-nine for a men and twenty-four for a woman.³⁴

From the date of its founding, the *Aby Jetomim* institution provided all orphans with clothing that is clearly described in the register and reveals details of how adults viewed the needs of adolescents.³⁵ It appears that clothing for orphans was not different from the clothing worn by adults, with garments appropriate for either winter or summer, such as the stockings (two pairs knitted for the summer and two pairs made of *pano*, an inexpensive woolen fabric for the winter). Also, every other year orphans alternatively received either a *vestido de pano*, a winter vestment or men's clothing worn over the shirt of the same inexpensive fabric, or a *capa para inverno*, a cape. Every year they were provided with two shirts (at the time a shirt was a garment that reached down to the knees, was worn directly over the body and served as a pajama at night) and four pairs of shoes each year. Orphans also wore *valonas*, which were starched white collars.

We do not have many details in reference to the education provided to the orphans, only that they were taught reading and writing (I assume in Spanish or Portuguese) and were provided with some school supplies, such as paper for writing.³⁶ The cost per pupil was rather low (seven florins per year), so they were probably taught by teachers who were not highly skilled. They also received a Jewish education. The details we have about the religious education they received are in the form of an anecdote which reveals that acceptance to the confraternity was probably considered by some as a way out of misery and poverty. In 1675, Manuel Palache requested the entrance of

33 Jeossua de Moseh Cohen Peixotto, who was apprenticed to Caixero in 1686, was married in 1687 (f. 10); Ishac Zacuto, in 1678, went to Hamburg and married there (f. 20); Abraham Lopes left in 1682 and married in Bordeaux (f. 20); Moseh Lopes married in 1686 (f. 21).

34 Jona Schellekens, "Determinants of Age at First Marriage among Jews in Amsterdam, 1625-1724", *Journal of Family History* 24 (1999), pp. 148-163.

35 See Register of the *Aby Jetomim* Society, f. 1, where clothing given to the orphans in 1648 is described, including its cost; then f. 92, on Rosh-Hashanah, 1688 (5448), where very similar clothing is described (*sapattos em gespes, eogesas*) plus *capote* in addition to *capa*, *talet*, and *tefilim*.

36 See *ibid.*, f. 1, where the cost of schooling "*escuela de ler y escreuer*" per pupil is listed (7 florins). On the same folio it says that orphans were given paper to write.

one of his sons, David, into the confraternity, alleging that he and another member of the family were among the founding members. The administrators could not accept David given that he was not fatherless, but they took in consideration the family's dire situation as well as the child's desire to be educated in the teachings of "the divine law and good doctrine" and admitted David to the confraternity's religious school.³⁷

The most fortunate among the orphans, it appears, were those who at age thirteen or later were provided with funding to learn a trade and indentured as apprentices.³⁸ Some evidence suggests that placement as an apprentice was done based on some kind of merit system which took into consideration both personal merits as well as family. Frequently, those who were awarded funding were sons of former members of the confraternity, while in other cases orphans were replaced by another child because they could not learn the trade. In some cases, they were apprenticed with their own relatives, such as an uncle.³⁹ The total cost of apprenticeship included a modest monthly salary for the orphan which was about half of a servant's salary. The most common apprenticeship was training as a *lapidario*, but some were placed with other types of masters: *livreiros* (booksellers or book dealers), *barbeyros* (barbers), *cirurgião-barbeyros* (barber-surgeons), *corredores* (stockbrokers), *caixeros* (accountants), and *estampadores* (engravers).

Some orphans, instead of learning a trade, were placed in the *yeshivah*, with the

37 Ibid., f. 7, 5435 (1675), Samuel Palache, in favor of his son David Palache. See also f. 19, when David was admitted but quit of his own will to go to Barbados.

38 For the system of apprenticeship in Spain, see the following studies: on Murcia, see M^a Rosario Caballero Carrillo y Pedro Miralles Martínez, "El Trabajo de la infancia y la juventud en la época del barroco. El caso de la seda murciana", *Scripta Nova. Revista Electrónica de Geografía y Ciencias Sociales* 6, no. 119 (12), August 2002; on Almería, see Antonio Muñoz Buendía, "La infancia robada. Niños esclavos, criados y aprendices en la Almería del Antiguo Régimen", in *Los marginados en el mundo medieval y moderno: Almería, 5 a 7 de noviembre de 1998*, M^a Desamparados Martínez San Pedro (ed.), Instituto de Estudios Almerienses, 2000, pp. 65-78. For Converso families in Portugal who sent their children to Spain, see Bernardo López Belinchón, *Honra, libertad y hacienda (Hombres de negocios y judíos sefardíes)*, Eurolex, Alcalá de Henares, Madrid 2001, pp. 37-38. Fernando Montesinos, from Vila Flor, Portugal, was sent to Spain as soon as he turned sixteen, to peddle "threads and ribbons" for the family business, and he succeeded in having a business of his own.

39 See, for example, Register of the *Aby Jetomim* Society, f. 2, David Israel who became apprentice of barbeyro to his uncle Joseph Pereira.

same rights as apprentices. This was referred as *meldar em lugar do oficio*.⁴⁰ Orphans also provided services to the confraternity. For example, when members passed away, they accompanied the procession from the home to the canal-boat (as the cemetery was located in the village of Ouderkerk, along the Amstel) and to the cemetery for burial, then prayed with mourners on the seventh day, on the thirtieth day, and at the beginning of the eleventh month.⁴¹

Conclusions

My survey of the records of the *Aby Jetomim* confraternity has led me to the following tentative conclusions on adolescence: Among the Amsterdam Sephardim, adolescence was considered a period of readiness for entering apprenticeship. For orphans under the care of the confraternity, it began at about age ten and for some children even earlier. Although it was intended to last until thirteen years of age, the age of religious majority, for most youngsters it lasted longer, even to sixteen years of age or beyond. During this preparatory time, the adolescent received some formal education, secular and religious, and was given some responsibilities. He was expected to attend school regularly, to arrive on time, and to provide a service for the confraternity: to accompany the burial procession, dressed formally as a little adult, and to pray for the dead on commemoration dates. Above all this was a period of listening to adults, obeying, and learning self-control, instead of expressing his feelings vociferously. At the end of this preparatory time, the more fortunate ones went on to be indentured as apprentices for another three or more years, no longer among their peers but lucky enough to be trained in professions or trades that ensured an entry into what we would call today, middle class. The less fortunate ones, those who were not placed as apprentices, returned to the care of their mothers or other relatives, to an uncertain future in the low levels of society. Among the Western Sephardim, there was definitely a period of adolescence, between childhood and adulthood, and during this period in their lives adolescents were prepared to become members of the extended family that they called the Nation.

40 Some orphans who were assigned to *meldar*, for example, can be found in *ibid.*, f. 2, Joseph Franco in 1672, for three years; f. 6, Abraham Gomes in 1671, and f. 24, Abraham Lopes Lucena in 1693.

41 See David Franco Mendes, p. 57.



Tables I/2: Daniel Kabiljo, *A Street in Sarajevo*,
colored linocut, 1937(?), private collection, Sarajevo