

Reconstruction of transnational Sephardic crypto-Jew genealogies in Western Europe in the seventeenth century

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Good afternoon, *erev tov*, everyone. I am very grateful to God and you for giving me the chance to share with you my limited knowledge about Sephardic genealogy in order to help to reconstruct the Spanish and Portuguese crypto-Jew diaspora after the forced conversions to the Christian religion in 1492. This is in part my own history, because the paternal grand-mother of my father, Ester Silva, from Chile in South-America, revealed to my family that she was a Sephardi. And although I am not a Jew, I have other Jewish lines among my Spanish ancestors, specially from the village of Fermoselle, in the province of Zamora, in the North-West border of Spain with Portugal, and even is very possible that my paternal lineage, whose DNA haplogroup is E1b1b1a (the third more common haplogroup in Spain and the second one in Portugal, with a possible origin in North-East Africa and present in some Sephardi lineages), is of Jewish origin, because my father's most ancient ancestor that I know, Alonso González Campo, was a pharmacist, "boticario", a typical job of *conversos* in the Iberian Peninsula then. He lived in the 16th century in the town of Badajoz, in the Spanish region of Extremadura, 7 Km away from the Portuguese border of the region of Alemtejo. And in order to complicate more my past, his son Baltasar, my ancestor too, was a notary public of the Inquisition in Badajoz. This is the truth. I am very sorry.

I must return now to the example that I have chosen to illustrate the crypto-Jew diaspora from Portugal and Spain in the 16th century. In this multiphacetic approach to the mapping of this diaspora, I shall focus in one important Spanish-Portuguese family of crypto-Jew merchants, the Lopes Teles in Portuguese, López Téllez in Spanish, that I had to study for one client, as an example of the important troubles that crypto-Jew families had to keep their Jewish identity without the Inquisition arresting them. They usually belonged to families whose members were distributed in Portugal and Spain (two countries that were joint under the same Monarchy between 1580 and 1640), and in other European countries (mainly France, Italy and the Low Countries), also North Africa and Near East, and even Latin America. So, in addition to weave a trade network, who resisted in Sepharad had more chances to fly from one country to another

one. Who resided in The Netherlands, some towns of Italy and North Africa were lucky that they lived freely as Jews, because their relatives in Sepharad and France had to feign to be Christian. This geographic and religious mobility, unavoidable in most measure, makes more difficult reconstruct the composition of their families and their genealogy: from the Portuguese language, last names and documents we must jump to the Spanish ones, and from these to the French, Italian, Flemish and German ones. Their need to marry to reliable co-religionists and with similar jobs will make that they choose consorts of their same origin, often from their home town; but we must have into account that the *marranos* could change their names in order to not be detected, and in towns as Amsterdam, in The Netherlands, or Livorno, in Italy, they used in public their Jewish names.

In this case, we are lucky because this is a family that was important, there are a lot of notary documents made by its members, and has attracted the attention of the Spanish historians, who have written about them in some books and articles. So, I have not researched about this family, as I usually do, in the Catholic parish records of baptisms, marriages and deaths, but in some trials of the Spanish Inquisition, as those that my ancestor Baltasar wrote, that provide with a lot of data about this family. Moreover, the church records of Vila Flor of the 16th and 15th centuries do not exist already.

The most important member of the Lopes Teles family was Fernão, Fernán López Téllez in Spanish, more known by his alias Fernando Montesinos. He was born in 1588 in Vila Flor, in the region of Tras-os-Montes, in the northeast of Portugal, one of the villages of this country with the highest number of converted Jews, close to the Spanish province of Zamora. His parents were Manuel Lopes Teles, a linen merchant born about 1537 in Vila Flor too and Filipa Dias, daughter of another New Christian merchant of the same town, who married in 1566. They had eleven or twelve children: Bartolomeu, João, Manuel, Diogo, Pedro, Francisco, three daughters (one of them died as a child, other one was named Beatriz Rodrigues and the third one married the merchant Jorge Fernandes Ferro), the aforementioned Fernão and one or two more males who died probably as a child too. All the males of this family were also merchants.

Before seeing what happened to these people, we can wonder if we know something about their ancestors. The answer is yes. The parents of Manuel Lopes Teles

were the *conversos* João Lopes Teles, a business man from Vila Flor and Catarina Nunes. I found the name of his wife in one trial that the Inquisition of the area of Coimbra, in Portugal, made against him in 1577-1578, charging him with heresy, an accusation also very typical against the converted Jews. But João was absolved. We know even who was the father of this one, the great-grandfather of the Lopes Telles brothers. Fernando Montesinos told about him in the trial that the Inquisition of the area of Cuenca, in La Mancha, Spain, made against him for Judaism in 1633-1637, and he says that his name was also Manuel López Téllez, an Old Christian and nobleman native of Jerez de la Frontera, now in the province of Cadiz, Andalusia, Spain, who arrived to Vila Flor about 1492 and for this reason he was confused with the Jews. But it is obvious that he was really a Jew who fled Spain when the Catholic Kings expelled them and opted in favour of baptizing himself when the King of Portugal expelled Jews in 1496 too. In fact, Manuel married in Vila Flor a rich *conversa*, whose name I do not know.

And now, what became of the Manuel's great-grandchildren?

1. Bartolomeu Lopes Teles, a wholesale merchant, worked in Seville (Sevilla), Andalusia and in Valladolid, in Castile, when this town became again the capital of the Spanish Monarchy between 1601 and 1606. He married Violante Rodrigues, daughter of the merchant of Vila Flor Francisco Baes Faro and Leonor Dias. Bartolomeu died in 1618. They had at least one son, Manuel López Téllez, who was a cashier of the salt mines of the town of Pontevedra, in Galicia, Spain.
2. João Lopes Teles, merchant in Vila Flor, where he was the liaison of his brothers between Spain and Portugal. But since 1614 he worked in the town of Segovia, in Castile, where he bought wool and cloth. João married Blanca Henriques and they had at least two sons, Manuel, with no issue, and Bartolomeu, merchant in Seville and Madrid. João was tried by the Inquisition and he died a little after of his liberation, in Segovia, in 1631.
3. Manuel Lopes Teles, merchant in Seville and Valladolid, established himself in the seaport of La Rochelle, department of Charente Maritime, France, until the conquest of this Protestant town by the French in 1628, and after to the port of Bordeaux, Gironde, also in France, Hamburg, in Germany, and finally to Amsterdam in 1631. He changed his last name for Da Serra, De Sierra in Spanish.

4. Diogo Lopes Telles, known as Doctor Téllez, settled in Oporto, in the North-West coast of Portugal, to guarantee the contact of the family business with the Atlantic routes, but about 1618 he emigrated to Hamburg and established himself in Amsterdam in 1621. Diogo married Isabel Henriques, native of Oporto, and they had at least two sons, merchants too: Manuel, who died in Madrid in 1644, after being tried by the Inquisition, and Jorge, who worked sometimes in Hamburg.

5. Pedro Lopes Teles, merchant who worked in Baeza, in the province of Jaen, Andalusia, and when the Inquisition of Cordoba persecuted there the conversos he fled to the port of Marseille, in the South-East of France. He married Guiomar Henriques, they lived also in Amsterdam and had some children.

6. Francisco Lopes Teles, who traded also in Segovia, where he managed an important part of the family business in Spain. He had some children and died at the beginning of the 1630's.

7. One daughter whose name we do not know, who married the merchant Jorge Fernandes Ferro, lived in Segovia and was likely the mother of Manuel López Ferro, a nephew of Montesinos who lived in Madrid in 1625.

8. Beatriz Rodrigues, who emigrated to Hamburg with his brother Manuel; and

9. Fernão Lopes Teles, the most famous and rich of these siblings, born as we said in 1588, who helped first his brother Pedro in Baeza and fled to Vila Flor when the Inquisition persecuted the Portuguese *conversos* there. It was then when he changed his last name for Montesinos, although in the trial against him by the Inquisition of Cuenca in 1633-1637 he stated that he changed his last name before, when he was 17 years old, during one visit to Vila Flor, to make happy his mother, in memory of one brother of her called Luis Dias Montesinos. In fact, Fernando had five or six cousins named Dias Montesinos in Torre de Moncorvo, a village close to Vila Flor.

After, Montesinos lived in Valladolid since 1616 with his brother Bartolomé and established himself in Madrid in 1621 as a wholesale merchant. He married Catalina Rodrigues, sister of the merchants Francisco and Antonio Rodríguez Madrid, a native of Chacim, near to Vila Flor too, and after she died in 1625 he married for the second time, three years later, doña Serafina de Almeida, who lived in Izeda, a village of the municipality of Bragança, in Portugal too. They had in Madrid ten children, among them Manuel, Bartolomé, Enrique, Diego and Felipa. Montesinos became the center of

the contraband networks of the Sephardim in Spain. But he was tried again by the Inquisition in 1653, emigrated to Antwerp, Belgium, and died shortly thereafter in 1659. Nevertheless, the third generation of the Montesinos were in charge of the revenue traditionally entrusted to them until at least 1697.

So, of these seven brothers, Bartolomeu Lopes Teles died in Valladolid, Castile, in 1618; João Lopes Teles in Segovia, Castile, in 1631; Francisco Lopes Teles probably in this town at the beginning of the 1630's; Diogo Lopes Teles (Doctor Téllez) probably in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, after 1621; Manuel Lopes Teles probably in this town after 1631; and Pedro Lopes Teles in Amsterdam or Marseille; and Fernando Montesinos in Antwerp, Belgium, in 1659.

Finally, I can not omit that in the trial against Montesinos of 1633-1637, in 1635, the "malsín" or informer Esteban Ares de Fonseca, revealed, I think that with some mistakes, the Jewish names of some of the Montesinos brothers in Amsterdam: doctor Téllez would be there Salomón Ararim, although his first name was David really, and Salomón that of his son Jorge Lopes; Manuel da Serra was called Jacob Ararim; and Pedro Lopes Serra, Abraham Ararim. The self Montesinos Jewish name was Moses Ararim in the synagogues of Amsterdam, Hamburg and Italy. And why did they choose Ararim as their last name? This word, also Hararim, means "mountains" in Hebrew and is equivalent so to the Portuguese Serra, range, that Manuel adopted as his last name, instead of Lopes Teles. Why this family choosed Serra or Hararim as its surname we do not know it well, but it can have to do whith the last name Montesinos of their mother's family, whose litteral meaning in Castilian would be "people of mountain", and in its original Portuguese form, Montesinhos or Montezinhos, would mean highlanders.

So many thanks. Todá rabá.