

THE MYTH OF THE MARRANO NAMES

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The romantic historiography about the Marranos and Marranism created a series of myths in relation to the names adopted by the Jews during and after their forced conversion in 1497 in Portugal. The increasing interest in Sephardic history, mainly after 1992, nourished people's mind with fantastic histories and legends, that made the Marrano chapter especially attractive. The greatest impact came when historians try to prove the attachment of the "Conversos" or New Christians to the Jewish religion and their desire to die in *kiddush-hashem*. Reality was quite different. Analyzing the trials of the Inquisition, we cannot be sure that the confessions of Judaism were true. In torture the Anussim confessed to everything the Inquisitors wanted to hear and they accused friends, neighbors, families. When we examine the trials carefully, we see that the answers and terms of the confessions were always the same, phrases and words repeated during three centuries.

The indiscriminate divulgation of the myths related to Marrano history is dangerous, as within a few years it can lend to a distorted history of the descent of the Anussim.¹ Research on Sephardic history based entirely on unknown manuscripts is actually been made at the University of Sao Paulo, and it is opening new perspectives to Marrano history that will allow us to understand better the multishaped phenomenon of Marranism.²

In relation to the names adopted by the Jews during the conversions of 1497, we have very rare direct references. Christian and Jewish Chronicles left us precious reports about what happened during those troubled times but they are silent about the Jewish patronyms names. The king Dom Manuel authorized that certain names used exclusively by noble families could be given to the converted Jews. By adopting those names as Noronha, Meneses, Albuquerque, Almeida, Cunha, Pacheco, Vasconcelos, Melo, Silveira, Lima ... the New-Christians opened new genealogical lines and during centuries they maintained their link with Jewish roots. Spread through the portuguese empire, the Marranos frequently carried in secret their Jewish names and transmitted them to their descendents; those various names reveal also the double identity of people living in a world of terror. Those names sometimes kept a meaning and histories that were orally transmitted from one generation to another.

The symbolic of the Marrano names repeat exactly the symbolic of the Portuguese tradition, and they represent the animal world like Leon (lion), Carneiro (sheep), Lobo (wolf), Raposo (fox), Coelho (rabbit), the vegetal world like Pinheiro (pine), Carvalho (oak), Pereira (pear tree), Oliveira (olive tree), and sometimes physical characteristics like Moreno (dark skin), Negro (black), Branco (white) ; geographical features like Serra (mountain range), Monte (mount), Rios (rivers), Vales (valleys); and also tools and crafts³. The most common names among the Marranos were those that designed villages and towns, such as Miranda, Chaves, Braganca, Oliveira, Santarem, Castelo Branco. The Portugese had also the habit to feminize men's names, but in Brazil this appears very seldom.

The Inquisition, as we know, persecuted Jews on a family basis, and this was one of the reasons why the Marranos adopted simultaneously two or

three names, so that the work of the inquisitorial agents became more difficult and the risk to the families smaller. In the large books where the Inquisitors registered all the names of the prisoners suspected of Judaism, we can find many repetitions related to the names, and sometimes the Inquisitors themselves became confused and could not identify the suspected ones.

One thing was common: in the same family we find members using different names. Father, mother, grand parents, brothers, adopted completely different names one from each other.

It was also common among the Marranos to skip one or more generations, and to return again to the ancient name of the grand parent, although this custom existed also since a long date, among the Portuguese Old Christians.

Marrano children, when they came to 12 or 13 years old, were taught about the dangers they will have to face because they were descendent from Jews and they were also told about the different names used by the family. In Bahia, in the XVII century, we find an interesting case. At the College of the Company of Jesus the teacher asked a small boy what was his name and the boy answered; "Which one, the inside or the outside one"? ⁴ Frequently the memory of the Jewish origin was lost, and the Marranos became aware, through others, that they were New Christians. When inquired they frequently answered full of pride: "New Christians by the grace of God" ⁵.

During the Middle Ages, when the Jews lived in Portugal in a relatively free society, they used mainly first names taken from the Old Testamnet, but the surnames were Portuguese, as Abraham Franco, Isaque Querido, Moises Pinto or Moises Lobo. Soon after the forced conversion when the Hebrew names and the Hebrew language were forbidden, we still find those Hebrew

names secretly transmitted among some families. But after one or two centuries, mainly when they were already in the New World, most of the memory of being New Christians got lost. I did not find in the Chronicles of that time any mention to what could have been for the Jews the traumatic experience of being forced to abandon their traditional family names. What feelings, emotions, the Jews experienced when they had to change their identity linked for so many centuries to their ancestors? We understand naturally that this “changes” in the Jewish life did not occur from one moment to another, and we have to study them considering each specific situation.

Among the numerous legends built up during centuries in relation to the Marrano names, we frequently hear that the Jews adopted the names of their Godfathers as of region, villages, plants, trees, fruits, geographical accidents. It may be that these legends have some basis but in this stage of studies, it is still difficult to separate fantasy and reality. To the drama of the conversion and to the destruction of Iberian Judaism, it is important to add the results of new investigations. It is also important to research the parochial Archives in each Portuguese village where Jews lived in during the period of conversion.

The principal source for this study is the Archive of the Court of the Holy Office of the Inquisition in Portugal. The Inquisitors ordered the registration of the names of each Portuguese New Christian suspected of Jewish heresy in the so called Book of Guilties. This book is the most important source we have in order to know the Marrano names, mainly of those who remained in Portugal or spread through the Portuguese empire. What leads to great confusion is the fact that the names of the Marranos are exactly the same as those used by Old Christians. How can we distinguish them? Since we don't know, till today, any specific Portuguese document that explains us the criteria

used in the adoption of those names, the only possible way is to investigate their frequency in the inquisitorial records.⁶ We know that a large amount of manuscripts belonging to the Holy Office were lost in the last centuries during the transportation, from the National Library, where they were previously kept, to the National Archive of the Torre de Tombo, and also through flood or deterioration, because of the primitive conditions of the National Archive. Today, there are approximately 40,000 trials according to some scholars, or 39,000 according to others. Almost 80% of those trials refer to the crime of Judaism. But we will only be able to speak in terms of statistics after all the trials and documents are examined. This work will take some more years of research.

About Brazil we have more precise evidence. Brazil received a greater number of New Christian emigrants from Portugal than any other region of the world. The Portuguese archives retain a fantastic quantity of documents that testify that emigration. I used, for this article, as a primary source The Book of the Guilties, where I found registered 1819 names of Marranos imprisoned or suspected of Judaism that lived in Brazil in the XVIII century.⁷ (1,098 men and 721 women). 1076 Brazilians were imprisoned during the colonial period and the highest percentage of them were accused of the crime of Judaism. Only Marrano prisoners received capital punishment.⁸

The Inquisitors knew exactly through denunciations and through their agents (spies of the Holy Office) who were the "suspected" persons that left the Kingdom. As they left without special permission, the Inquisition confiscated all their goods in Portugal.

When I found for the first time, in 1965 the **Book of the Guilties** in the National Archive of Portugal, I immediately notified it to Dr. Daniel Cohen, who

was then the Director of the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem, and after him to Dr. Aryeh Segal. They immediately ordered to microfilm it. Unfortunately, these documents present great difficulties for the historian.

In that paper I will not refer to the descendants of the “Anussim” who returned to Judaism in Europe, North Africa or Levant. Their history was frequently written, their names are known and they already belong to Jewish history. The purpose of my contribution tends to knowledge of the decendent “Anussim”, forgotten by the historians, the Brazilian Marannos that during 285 years suffered discrimination and persecution from the Catholic Church.

In this article I transcribe the names of the Brazilians who persecuted by the Inquisition from 1700 to 1761 (mainly between 1710 and 1736) and indicate the frequency in which those names appeared in those records.

NUNES appears 120 times mentioned in the Book of the Guilties. It is also the name given to the council and district of Vinhais, Diocese of Braganca, but it can also have a Spanish origin.

RODRIGUES, appears among the Brazilians 137 times. It was originated in Rodrigo but may also have a Spanish origin. It appeared in Portugal around the 14th and 15th centuries, but there were many Rodrigues also among the Jews who, at the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century, emigrated from Spain to Portugal. Although there must not be any blood links between them.⁹ We know the curious case of Abin Rodrigues, in Spain, that remain popular in history; as he was at the same time a Jew, a Christian and a Moslem.

HENRIQUES is mentioned 68 times. The origin of the name is diverse, but since 1454 it existed in Portugal a golden coin of 22 karat, called

Henriques. The name became very common among the noble men as well as among Marranos.

MENDES is mentioned 66 times. It has various origins and also comes from the patronymic name Mendo. It is very common among New Christians.

CORREA is mentioned 51 times. It belonged to an old Portuguese lineage, that mixed with a Moslem family from Ormuz.

LOPES is mentioned 51 times. It is a patronymic name that gave birth to several brandies of different families. We find the Lopes in Ciudad Rodrigo, a border town through which the Jews, expelled from Spain entered Portugal. The Lopes also appear during the reign of Afonso V . The patronymic name LOPES has no cross in its coat of arms, but two stars, each one of six points.

COSTA is mentioned 49 times. It is a small parish that belongs to the Council of the District of Guimarães. It is a very old Portuguese name, known since the time of the first king of Portugal Alfonso Henriques, which became later very common among Old and New Christians.

CARDOSO is mentioned 48 times. It existed since 1170. It was the name of a place in the parish of S. Martinho of the Moors. It is very common among New Christians in the past as well among the Sephardic Jews in our days.

SILVA is mentioned 47 times. It was an old parish in the district of Barcleos, and it belonged to one of the most prestigious families of the Iberian Peninsula. According to the legend, it was originated from the King of Leon. It is very common among Portuguese ordinary people and also among New Christians.

FONSECA is mentioned 33 times in the Book of the Guilties. It may have Spanish origin, but it appears among the oldest Portuguese families.

PAREDES is mentioned 32 times. It is a small village not far from the city of Porto. Situated in the right brach of the river Douro. There is also an old fortress by this name.

ALVARES is mentioned 30 times. It is a parish in the Council of Goias, district of Arganoil that belongs to the diocese of Coimbra.

MIRANDA is mentioned 28 times. It is a very common name in Portugal and Brazil. The Jews may have adopted it from the famous Jewish village Miranda. Nevertheless, the origin of the name remounts to from the times of the king D. João II, when a priest, sent to France, returned with a lady named D. Mecia Gonçalves de Miranda, who ordered that her children and descent should be named Miranda.

FERNANDES is mentioned 28 times in the *Book of Guilties*. It is one of the most commom patronymic names and also one the most popular among the Marranos in Brazil. It means "son of Fernando" (in Spanish Fernandez and in Portuguese Fernandes). The origin goes back to the times of the Visigods and it appears among the Jews since the XV century, but many families that carry this name have no relations between them.

AZEREDO is mentioned 25 times. It is the place where laurel cherry grows. According to some genealogists, the toponyme Azeredo is a place that belonged to the parish Leça do Balio (north of Portugal) council of Matosinhos in the Province of Minho.

VALLE is mentioned 24 times. It means a plain between two mountains or at the foot of a mountain. There is an ancient Portuguese lineage that used this name, but Jews began to used it in the XV century. It may have relation with the fact that Jews who emigrated from Spain entered in Portugal through the borders north of Ciudad Rodrigo and were forced to live in tents built in the

valley. The Jews remained in this valley during three years. In the popular tradition this place is known as the "Valley of the Tents."

BARROS is mentioned 22 times. Up to the XV century it was spelled in different ways, also Barrios. It appears among the Sephardim in Holland.

DIAS is mentioned 22 times. It comes from the patronymic name Diogo or Diego; and many families without any blood links adopted that name.

XIMENES is mentioned 18 times. According to certain authors it has an Italian origin and started with an Andre Ximenes from Florence who went to Portugal. But the name already existed in Navarra. In the *Jewish Encyclopedia* it is mentioned as a Hebrew name.

FURTADO appears 5 times. According to some authors there is a curious legend about the name Furtado; (it means "stolen") that goes back to the times of D. João II when the king ordered that all the Jewish children, between 2 and 10 years should be taken away from their parents and sent to the island of São Tomé, where many of them perished.¹⁰

We also find Jews among the first colonizers of the island Açores and their Jewish names appear also in Brazil. As an example: the family Brum and Colaça or Calaça. The first Brum (Wilhelm van der Bruyn) was born in Maestrich and after his marriage he moved to the island of Madeira. There are also Bruns in the island of Tercena and Fayal. The Bruns mixed with the Portuguese families that already lived in the Açores and gave origin of the Brums da Silveira and Brums da Cunha. A very important family Brum lived in Brazil in the XVIII century and some members of this family were imprisoned by the Inquisition.

In Brazil, the Jews could only practice freely their religion during the period when the Dutch occupied the northeast of the State. (1630-1654).

There was then in Pernambuco two congregations that registered the names of its Jewish members. Among them were those that arrived in Brazil together with the Dutch, already born as Jews or reconverted to Judaism in Amsterdam, and they carried Jewish names. There were also these names which belonged to the most ancient New Christian population which after the arrival of the Dutch, tried to convert to Judaism. They often changed their first names and adopted Hebrew names, but they frequently remained with their Portuguese surnames: Duarte Saraiva became David Senior Coronel (he adopted the name of one of his ancestors), Dr. Fernando Patto became Abraham Israel Diaz; Luis Dormido became Daniel Dormido; Simão Franco Drago adopted the name of Isaac Franco Drago; Francisco de Faria was named Jacob de Faria; João de La Faye became Aron de la Faye; Gaspar Rodriguez became Abraão Rodrigues¹¹

In my investigations I did not find any documental proof that the names of trees, plants, fruits, geographical accidents belong only or most times to Marranos. May be. But the most common names of Marranos I found in Brazil are connected to cities, villages, provinces, places of their family origin. Many "conversos" that run away from Spain and tried to find refuge in Portugal or other countries in Europe or America adopted names that reminded them of their place of birth in Castela.

It is interesting also to follow the changing of the Marrano names, after their return to Judaism in Holland, England, Italy, France, Turkey and Morocco. In England we find Lord Monfort, a member of the Monfort family that run away from Bahia, when the Inquisition arrested the chief of the family, the medical doctor Manoel Mendes Monforte. The Brandão family gave origin to Lord Brandon. The Luna, Gomes, Azevedo, Rodrigues, Dias became the founding

fathers of the "London Congregation" in 1669. Also among the Marranos which established in Turkey we find names that remember the land of their origin: Leon, Callvo, Zamarro, Toledano.

Marrocan Jews emigrated to the Amazonas in the beginning of XIX century. Their origin was from Spain, the North Africa, Brazil, and many of them carried Hebrew names, but the surnames reveal their Portuguese origin: Samuel or Isaac Aguiar, Levy Marques, Abraham or Salomon Salvador Pinto. They frequently preserved names totally Portuguese as Armando Soares, Miguel Soares, Jose Baliero de Souza, Elis José Salgado.

Also in the Balearic Islands, Spaniards and Portuguese used surnames taken from their towns and also from colors and trees. According to a legend, these families have Jewish roots.¹²

The anti-Jewish propaganda inculcated by the Catholic Clergy in the mind of the Portuguese conditioned a whole mentality, and even men, which in the XVIII century took position against the methods of the Holy Office when influenced by those prejudices. We can give an example of a famous Portuguese refugee known as Cavaleiro de Oliveira, that left us important writings against the Holy Office. In his work Recreação Periódica he confirms that "there is not one only name in Portugal that does not belong, simultaneously to the finest nobility and to the extreme lower class. Braganca, Pereira, Mascarenhas, were names considered of the most "purest blood", but these names are found also among the Portuguese bourgeoisie. A shoe maker is called João de Mascarenhas, as the Marquis of Gouveia, a nobody compete with a Marquise and Dukes.¹³

Living in England, the Cavaleiro de Oliveira were acquainted Portuguese people which were arriving every day from Portugal. Among them

he found Marrano names that belonged to famous families, the Pereira, Carvalho, Andrade etc. Even if he had such a critical enlightened mentality he could not left up above his time. He tried to save "his blood" showing that rare were those New Christians that carried the name "Oliveira". And he comments ironically that "the ignorants of England and Holland" think that those surnames belong only to the Jews, and they believe that every Portuguese is a Jew.¹⁴

It is interesting to note how strong was among the Portuguese the preoccupation with the cleanness of their blood line. In verses they express this obsession:

Para a conhecer os meus antepassados	To know my ancestors
Cheio de entusiasmo, investiguei Comecei pelos registros para guiar E dali passar ao tanto afim	Full of enthusiasm, I investigated I started from the parish records And from there I went to the Holy Office
Oh! Como era bom saber que atrás de nós Houve nomes ilustres, boa gente Morgados militares, enfim avós	Oh! How good it was to know that behind us Were illustrious names. Good people Majorats, soldiers, at last grandparent
Que sempre se trataram nobremente Com escravos, cavalos, criados E toda a mais fidalga ostentação Sem nunca terem sido infamados De ter sangue de infecta nação. ¹⁵	That always treated themselves with nobility With slaves, horses, servants And all the "noble" ostentation Without being slandered Of having blood of the infected nation ¹⁵

After having navigated in a sea of uncertainty, what can we know about the Marrano names? On the basis of inquisitorial sources we can say that in Brazil:

1. The majority of the Marrano names reflect the cities or villages from where they came.

2. The majority of the Marrano names were taken from the old aristocratic families.
 3. Practically all the Marrano names repeat the names of the Portuguese families that have the coat of arms.
 4. The Brazilian Marranos carried simultaneously two or three names.
 5. Members of one same family frequently used totally different names.
 6. After two or three generations we often find New Christians adopting again the names of grandparents.
 7. Marrano surnames are exactly the same as the surnames used by the Old Christians.
 8. Marranos who lived in Holland, North Africa, Levant and returned to Judaism adopted many times Hebraic names, but they maintained frequently their ancient Portuguese surnames as it gave them a certain prestige.
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Comments of the Lector: I would recommend to the author of this important article the following bibliographic references which would strengthen her arguments

1. Luiz De Bivar Guerra, Um Caderno De Cristãos O Nevos De Barcelos, Braga

On Marrano names - see -

2. Elias Libiner, Os Baptizados em Pé; Estudo Acerca da Origem da Luta dos cristãos-novos em Portugal, Lisboa 1998

3. To see and compare the names of New Christians whose former names are known, see:

Maria Jose Pimenta Ferro Tavares, Os Judeus em Portugal no Século XV, Vol II, Lisboa 1984

¹ On the "credibility" of the confessions see: I. Révah and Antonio José Saraiva, Saraiva, Antonio José, Inquisição e Cristãos-Novos. Ed. Estampa, Lisboa 1985, p.211-291, "Polemica acerca da Inquisição e Cristãos Novos" , Novinsky, Anita "Confessa ou Morre" in SIGILA , Paris. 2000 p. 77-86.

² Some results of those researches are already published in Gorenstein, Lina Ferreira, Héreticos e Impuros ed. Arquivo Nacional, Rio de Janeiro, 1995; Mizrachi, Rachel Bromberg, Um capitão - Mor Judaizante, ed. Universidade de São Paulo, 1984; Carneiro, Maria Luiza Tucci, Racismo e Preconceito no Brasil Colonial, ed. Brasiliense, 1988.

³ On Portuguese names see Távora, D. Luiz de Lencastre, *Dicionário das famílias portuguesas* ed. Quetza (Lisboa, 1989)

⁴ Novinsky, *Inquisição. Cristãos-Novos na Bahia*, 2nd. Ed. Perspectiva (S. Paulo, 1992)

⁵ Novinsky, Anita *Cristãos-Novos na Bahia*, *ibid.*

⁶ About "The Book of the Guilties" (Rol dos Culpados) see Novinsky, Anita, "Uma Fonte Inédita para a História de Brasil", Revista de Historia, Universidade de S. Paulo, No. 94, **1973**. p. 563-572.

⁷ Novinsky, Anita, *Rol dos Culpados*. Ed. Expressão e Cultura, Rio de Janeiro, 1992.

⁸ Novinsky, Anita, Prisioneiros Brasileiros na Inquisição ed. Expressão e Cultura, Rio de Janeiro, 2002.

⁹ Távora, *op cit* p. 307-308

¹⁰ Guide des Patronymes Juifs , Beth Hatefutsoth, Tel Aviv, 1996, p.110

¹¹ Wiznitzer, Arnold, Os Judeus no Brazil Colonial ed. Pioneira . **São Paulo** 1966 p. 121

¹² Mound Gloria, Distinctive Jewish Family Names in the Balearic Islands of Spain in A. Demsky, J. A .Reif, J. Tabori (eds) "These are the Names" Vol 1 (1997), p 65-82.

¹³ Cavaleiro de Oliveira, *Recreação Periódica I*. Lissabon, 1922. p. 216. XLIV.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Falcão, Armando Sacadura, in Távora, op cit p.12 (the verses are freely transcribed from the Portuguese original)