

## **BETWEEN HISTORY AND TOWN-PLANNING: DANITIS, MACCABEES, SADDUCEES, MEDICIS, SURICIS, CHRISTIANS AND MARRANOS IN TERRA DI LAVORO IN THE MIDDLE AGES**

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### **Abstract**

The coexistence of different peoples and civilization in 'Terra di Lavoro' Caserta - Italy during the Middle Ages urged the Author to ask himself what role everyone of them played there. In particular from the analysis the reader can learn about the minority Hebraic ethnic groups of Danitis, Maccabees, Medicis, Sadducees, Suricis and of others, whose traces had been lost since the destruction of the second Temple in 70 A .D. These peoples were certainly Christianity brokers in the huge area which was the target of the historical research.

**Keywords:** land use, planning, Danitis, Maccabees, Medicis, Sadducees, Suricis, Marranos.

### **1. Introduction**

Southern Italy in the early Middle Ages is a particularly privileged region for civilization historians. The coexistence of regimes and of political contrasting influences, of stock peoples and different civilizations stimulates them to ask themselves what role each of those elements played there and as much preponderance they have gained. In particular, the so-called Southern Longobardy – which was between the Roman Byzantine Empire in the South and the Frank German Empire in the North, in the same time was the target of papal penetration and subject to Islamic incursions – was an area full of contrasts, syntheses and of survivals; here the Longobardic princes acted as intermediaries among different cultures and economies.

### **2. Danitis**

As regards the Hebrews in general, there is no concordance about the time of their early Diaspora in the world. Generally speaking we think that it began on the time of the second destruction of Jerusalem Temple, done by the Emperor Titus in 70 A .D.; other scholars suggest that the Diaspora started in 587

before the Vulgar Era and then on the first Temple destruction, done by Nebuchadnezzar, who obliged part of Jews to move to Babylon, capital of its reign. For other scholars it should go far back and arrive at the Hebrews captivity in Egypt, and then up to the Moses period.

As regards Southern Italy, Judaic communities had been in Capua for very long time. Names as *Abraham, Ananias, Benedict, David, Elias, Iaret, Ierosolima, Iona, Isa, Israel, Iudeus, Jacob, Jesse, Manasses, Moses, Philistine, Samaritan, Zacchaeus* and so many others are met in an astonishing way in our sources. It has been also said that «l'établissement du christianisme à Capoue est très ancien: une forte communauté israélite y existait au I siècle, les conversions étaient fréquentes dans ces milieux» (Baudrillart, 1949). However, according to what it has been possible to document so far, the Hebrews had arrived in our lands more or less after 63 B.C. – but certainly also in 587 B.C. – when Pompey conquered Jerusalem and many of them were transferred to Roma as prisoners of war, together with other not Palestinian coreligionists who perhaps arrived at Hannibal's time or of Scipione Asiatico's conquests. It is known also that at Pozzuoli, not long after Herod the Great's death, there was a Jewish colony, which could arrive from some of many communities scattered throughout the Mediterranean area, especially from Alexandria, where there was a Jewish community at least since III century B.C., rather than from Palestine. Today it has by now confirmed the hypothesis according to which both the ancient Capua (today Santa Maria Capua Vetere), which was destroyed by the Saracens in 841, and the New Capua have been Hebrew religious and cultural cities settled in Southern Italy. We can not exclude that between the two towns there were set minority Hebraic groups belonging to the ancient tribes of Benjamin, Naphtali, Dan, Manasses, Simeon, Reuben and Judas, as in particular the Capuan onomastology of this period seems to show. The most substantial group should however be formed by *Danitis*, judges tribes, since the viper or snake, symbol by which it was designated, appears in the ancient Capua Vetere coat of arms: a cup with seven snakes, that reminds us in its emblem of the *Menorah*, the mythical Hebrew seven-branched candelabrum, chosen as its emblem by the State of Israel. In other words, the cup and the snakes would represent the city of Capua which was inhabited by the *Danitis*. The diffusion in the territory of the surname *Giudice*, in the most frequent form of *lòdice* (from *Dayyan*), seems to confirm this hypothesis: moreover it is famous in the Middle Ages the legislative activity of Capua, with the schools of *ars dictaminis*, with notaries and judges, with its famous "square of judges" that till today has this name.

From our studies emerges for the first time that in the ancient Capua the Hebrews were settled in the *iudaica*: outside Porta Albana, in direction of Saint Prisco's village (*bosco de Adam*), outside Porta Atellana (*ad Ihona*), outside Porta Diana, in direction of St. Angelo in Formis village, which were rich during the medieval age in the Hebraic personal names: we may think to the presence of a Desiderius

basilica dedicated to the archangel St. Michael (XI century), great patron saint of the Hebraic community. Also in New Capua we can speak of the documented presence of three *iudaica*: the first one was inside the walls, in the present Rome street, where St. Martin's church *ad Iudeccam* is still now, while the second was outside Porta St. Vittore (Porta Capuana), near the church of St. Erasmus *ad Iudaicam*, and the last one was outside Porta Fauzana, near the church of St. Nicholas *ad Iudaicam* and of St. Andrew *de Iudecca* (see later). Many Hebrews worked most of all in dye-works: famous is *tinta que vocatur Bascello*, sited between Capua and Aversa. They had two graveyards, the former was sited in the centre, near the church of All Saints; the latter was sited not far from the town. By diploma written at Capua on 20th June 1041, the Prince of Salerno Guaimario gave Grimoaldo, «comes palatii ex civitate nostra Capua», also two familiar nucleuses of Hebrews (Tropeano, 1977). Probably they were linked to the Jews of Achinaaz's chronicle (Salzman, 1924).

The relationships between Hebrews and Christians in Capua were not always peaceful, sometimes they suffered very difficult moments, as for example at the half of IX century (see before). Probably in the ancient city it took place the southern synod, transmitted by the code in Benevento form "Add. 16413", preserved in the British Museum in London, due perhaps to the events that determined the so-called *Capua schism* (880-82), when Landenolfo was appointed bishop of Capua Nuova and Landolfo II *episcopum in sancta Maria cognomento Suricorum*, church of may-be Coptic-Syriac rite in the ancient Capua. In general the links between Capua and Palestine lasted the whole Middle Ages long. We may think that in April of 1219 a Clemente Cosmarulo, who left for Jerusalem, made his will leaving his goods to the congregation of the Church of Capua. In 1229, besides, the same archbishop of Capua, Giacomo Amalfitano accompanied Frederick II in the Holy Land for the VI crusade (1228-29). It is also important the presence in the city of Jewish travelers as Benjamin of Tudela, who in 1165 in his *Travels* spoke of the city on the Volturno: «Capua, the great city built by the king Capis [...]. There live about three hundred Hebrews, among which great researchers and esteemed people» (Benjamin da Tudela, 1989). It is also documented the presence in Capua in 1279 of Avrahàm ben Shemu'el Abulafia, the most meaningful representative of the ecstatic Qabbalà, author of the famous *The Guide for the Perplexed*. Very soon the scholar gathered in the city a group of pupils, that our sources clearly point out as *neofiti Capue* (1279), but already in 1282 he wrote with notable coldness of it and in 1285 he declared bitterly: «They have become unfaithful, because they were not wise disciples and I have abandoned them» (Scholem, 2008). Afterwards, as it is known, by the edict of expulsion of Ferdinand and Isabella of Castile (March 31<sup>st</sup> 1492) a wave of anti-Semitism in the Neapolitan area had its beginning. By pragmatic dated November 10<sup>th</sup> 1539 and consequent proclamation of May 1541, the Hebrews were definitely expelled from the kingdom of Naples.

### 3. Maccabees

As regards the Maccabees, in 1260 we meet for the first time in Capua the sisters *Macchabea* and *Macchia*, daughters of the former *dominus Iacobus de iudice Landone*, dwellers in the parish of Saint John of the Noble Men, who respectively married *dominus Severinus Thoroautus* and *dominus Pandulfus cognomine Pandonus*. It is widespread in the territory of Aversa also the name *Heliazar* (1140), *Elàzar* (1160), that reminds us of the name of the old scribe Eleazar, which – according to what it is said in the *Maccabees* – after having been forced to swallow pig meat, was sent to death torture.

But it is especially in a parchment regarding the center of Pantuliano, that it speaks of a «terra sita in loco ubi dicitur ale Grottele, coniuncta terre *illorum de Machabeis*», 1328 (Bova, 2007). Also in the pertinences of Benevento it is documented in 1448 a place said *li Maccabey*. In diocese of Teano we remember, besides, *l'ecclesia Ss. Septem Fratrum [Machabeorum]*, documented in the years 1308-10 and again in 1484. As it is known, by the name of Maccabees they designated the members of the priestly family of the Asmoneis, that led the so called Maccabees insurrection of the Hebrews of the conservative national party against the king Antiochus IV Epiphanes of Syria, to which Judea was subject, that pursued the policy of forced hellenitation of this region. The orders of the king had forbidden the practice of the principal Jewish rites (circumcision, Saturday, etc.) under death penalty, and had imposed the cult of the Hellenic divinities; on 25<sup>th</sup> Kislév (November-December) 168 B.C. for the first time a sacrifice to a pagan divinity was offered on the altar of the Temple in Jerusalem. The conservative Hebrews opposed a passive resistance, of which it is an example the torture of a mother and her seven children, which were accustomed to being named as the seven Maccabees brothers. Therefore the resistance began in 167 B.C. with the priest Mattathias, of the Asmoneis, who led a group of rebels. His sons continued his work: Jude, that led the struggle successfully, so much that his nickname maccabee (*hammerer?*) went then to the whole family; Gionata got the position of top priest; Szymon (143-135), whose child Iohannes Hyrcanus (134-104) widened his own territory, became king. However, after 67 B.C. the Roman intervention put an end to the dynasty. The news around the activity of the Maccabees is inferred almost entirely from the I and the II books of the Maccabees. Probably since 167 B.C. after the revolts, we have previously spoken of, we can talk of exodus of the Maccabees towards our regions, particularly to the Land of Job (the present Province of Caserta, or Terra di Lavoro).

#### 4. Sadducees

As for the Sadducees, there is to say that: «la premier difficulté reside dans l'explication même du terme *Sadducéen*, dont l'étymologie reste controversée. Selon l'opinion la plus commune, le nom serait à rattacher à celui de Sadoq, qui exerça les fonctions de grand prêtre au temps de Salomon et devint le fondateur d'une lignée appelée à assurer le sacerdoce dans le Temple de Jérusalem: Ce sont les fils de Sadoq, ceux parmi les enfants de Lévi, qui s'approchent de Yahvé pour le servir» (Simon, 1985). The sources are from the works of Flavio Giuseppe, *The Jewish Wars* and *Antiquities of the Jews*. If we read again the xv chapter of the *Historia Langobardorum of Erchemperto* (IX-X sec.), we come to know that «quoque tempore Landolfus iam Capuae praeerat gastaldus [...] vetustam exercens inimicitiam cum quibusdam de genere Saductorum, animo et gente crudelibus viperis, interfici fecit ex primis eorum septem viros, uni eorumque manibus abscidi; reliqui praesidium fugae sumentes, Benevento adeunt Radelgisum, adfinem suum» (Erchemperto, 1878). So in this good period the count Landolfo was the territorial ruler of Capua (815-43). He, for an ancient enmity against some members of the descents of Saducitis, killed cruelly seven of them, and he had another of them severed his hands; the others fled to Benevento to the prince Radelchi I (839-51), one of their relatives. This event is necessarily set between 839 and 843. The slaughter is also confirmed by *Chronicon St. Benedicti* (Leonis Marsicani, 1846).

The Erchemperto's phrase: «de genere Saductorum» (Erchemperto, 1878), interpreted by the Pellegrino and the Cilento «Sadutti, Capua family» (Cilento, 1971), has, in my opinion, some analogies with the phrase employed by Arnobio «Sadducaeam genus» (Arnobio, 1953), by which the Sadduceis are named. Muratori himself had some difficulties to interpret the name *Saductus*, in fact he wrote: «maiori otio fruentibus divinandum relinquo» (I leave to settle the question to the scholars who have more available time) (Muratori, 1837). The question is of great importance. Everybody knows that the Sadducees were disciples of the Jewish religious movement that had performed its work in Giudea since II century B.C., disappearing from Jerusalem after the second destruction of the Temple, in 70 A.D. Since this date onwards in fact we have known that the greatest community of Jews settled in Southern Italy. The Sadducees, whose name is connected with *Sadoc*, supreme priest in the Solomon's era, were the richest people of the population, priests, merchants and aristocratic people. The prophet Ezekiel, in particular, speaks amply of the «priests levitated sons of Zadoc» (Antoniotti, 2003). On this subject I just remember that a man from Capua *Gregorius presbiter seu saductus*, was part of an embassy of the notable people of Capua for the Pope Adrian I (771-95), of whom we have some hints in a letter of 788 sent by the pope to Charles king of Frankish and Longobardic people, patrician of Roman people. Very interesting for our studies is a quotation in 1291 of a Nicola *de Tadeo, de Sadoc*, judge of Cervaro village. According to what we have written, we believe that only afterwards the name

“Saductus”, that at the beginning designated a Jewish priest, was employed as personal noun and at last as a *cognomen* (Sadutto, Sadocco); in the same way the name “Levita”, that at the beginning designated only a Jewish priest, changed into the surname “Levi”. In the area of Capua the Saducitis settled in Capua, in Cicutito area (near Pignataro Maggiore) and in St. Tammaro village.

## 5. Medicis

As for the Medicis, we remember that the surnames as *Medicus* and *de Media* and the name as *Babylon* presented in the Capuan documentation, remind us of an area of Mesopotamian for some family units settled in our territories. They refer to the king Sargon II (721-05) transplanted into Media a strong group of Jews, that we already could define as *Medici*, hardly after the fall of the reign of Samaria (721 B.C.). Later on the governor of Babylon Nebuchadnezzar (604-562) led a campaign against the Jewish reign of Jude: Jerusalem was taken up and was destroyed, while the population was deported to Babylon (586 B.C.). Then the well known *Babylonian captivity* of Jews started. It lasted about fifty years. The Persian king Cyrus, who won the Babylonians in 538 B.C., granted the Jews to return back to Palestine. In particular the deportation to Mesopotamia of 721 B.C. and of 586 B.C. enables us to speak of *Jewish Medici*. Besides we are also aware, through the historical studies, of famous mass exoduses, both from West to East and from East towards West: nothing keeps us from supposing that an exact core of *Jewish Medici* could have reached Campania also, and in particular Terra di Lavoro. Capua already during the Sabellic period (from 423 B.C. onwards) was ruled by a *Meddix Tuticus*, believed the highest official, a kind of popular judge. For that role we have suggested the meaning of Head of a department, counsellor with derivation directly from the Greek language. Besides the presence in Capua during the Norman Age of a family *cognomine Medici*, which usually worked wool, has urged us, some years ago, to more investigate on its origin. In particular the genealogical re establishment of the oldest member of a family named *Medici* present in the Middle Ages throughout the peninsula, is much more difficult owing to the fact that the word *Medicus* (ethnic form of *Media*, *Persia*) probably is referred to different Eastern groups and not to a family in particular. Then the ethnic *Medicus* came little by little to indicate a person skilled in the art of surgery, much widespread among the Jews and Eastern peoples. From our searches it has emerged that three groups named *Medici* were in the peninsula, who were noble, lawyers or judges, and dealers; it's likely that just this last branch, documented in Capua in the XII century and devoted to the working of wool, moved to Florence – even to Mugello – where they practiced the same art (*Calimàla art*), and maybe thanks to some marriages, disappeared most completely from Capua just after the death of Federico II. As it's known our studies have seriously

questioned some historical knowledge that once seemed sure so they have opened new paths for the European culture.

## 6. Suricis

About the *Suricis*, we remember that in Capua the diffusion of the so called Syriac christianity was very important. Besides St. Peter also St. Ignatius, second bishop of Antakya, just after St. Peter, had been to the ancient Capua as a prisoner. In the *Acts of Apostles* the Evangelist Luke mentions, shortly, the mission of the expelled *Hellenists* in Phoenicia (*Northen Syria*), Cyprus and Antakya of Syria. Antakya, capital of the Roman province of Syria and third city of the Roman Empire, after Rome and Alexandria, was the very first foundation of the Hellenists on the Oronte. The birth of this community is told in the *Acts*: «in Antakya for the first time, the disciples were called Christians» (Pesch, 1992). As G. Alberico writes, minor christianities, but of great importance, as the ones in Syriac, Coptic, Armenia areas, joined Hellenistic Christianity, which immediately became hegemonic (as the New Testament written in Greek language shows).

In Capua, through the Syriac onomastics of the sepulchral inscription of the Roman age and the images of some Antiochian martyrs represented in paleo-christian basilica of St. Prisco, the links with Syria are clear, even if the word they use is a bit vague, by which we can mean only Galilea, and its surroundings; we point out in a particular way the ages of *Siricius* and *Hippolitus*. About the medieval age, the memory of the church of S.. *Maria cognomento Suriorum seu Suricorum* (IX century) in the ancient Capua is fundamental. At the beginning of the 400, there was also *the legend of the leprous prince* healed by the help of the "surici" Vergin, where for *surici* we intend *rats* ("sorci" or "sullici") and not the Syriac Jews, because of the anti-Semitic campaign promoted by the Aragoneses. Our studies, as it's known, have given this defamatory legend its due. In particular the Peter *de Capua*, deacon of the Pope and professor of theology in Paris, was appointed *Antiocheno Patriarch* in 1219 and later deacon cardinal to St. George title (1220). Also between XV and XVII centuries, two archbishops of Capua had the qualification of *Antiocheno Patriarch*: in 1485 Giordano Gaetano of Aragon and in 1622 Luigi Caetani of Sermoneta.

## 7. Christians

The Capuan Christianity, as we have just said, rises on the trail of the minor Syriac one; that's why in Capua, at least, the word *Surici* is the same of *Christians*. According to the tradition the Prince of the Apostles, from Antakya, who landed to Brindisi, went to Rome, probably in 42 through Appia street. After one stop in Naples, where he likely celebrated on an already sacred altar dedicated to Apollo, on

which the church of St. Peter *ad Aram* was erected, he would have reached the ancient Capua, and would have preached Jesus' Word, and there he probably appointed the first bishop of St. Prisco town, who had traveled with him during one of his journey. According to the tradition, St. Casto († 66), later bishop of Calvi, St. Rufus (or Rufino) and maybe St. Apollinare had been other friends of St. Peter's. In 1319 it's in fact documented a church dedicated to St. Apollinare (feast on 23<sup>rd</sup> July) in Casapulla village from which the small centre has probably derived its name (*Casa Apollinaris*). In order to celebrate the coming of the Prince of the Apostles to Capua in the V century about the *ecclesia S. Petri ad Corpus* rose in the centre of the city. For *corpus* we mean a relic of St. Peter's, which is well documented by sources, as I highlighted for the first time in 2002. We remember also the African St. Augustine, bishop of Capua (249-60) with his mother St. Felicità, and a group of confessors who landed to Castel Volturno village during the vandal persecution of 439: Castrese, Rosio, Tamaro, Secondino, Eraclio, Benigno, Elpidio, Marco, Adiutore, Augusto, Canione, Vindonio, Prisco II.

## 8. Marranis

As for the Marranis' occupation in Terra di Lavoro, it's important to remember that by their name many Jews, Muslims and theirs descendants that were converted to Christianity, were insulted in Spain. The term Marrani has uncertain origins (XV century), and maybe it was acquired from the Spanish term *marrano* (young pig), according to some scholars taken from the Arabic term *muharram* (forbidden thing). However, as in some capuan documents it's possible to find the term *marrano* in the 1126 (a term that is still used in many villages and towns in Terra di Lavoro with the meaning of *market gardner*) we can assume that it takes its origin from the Latin word *marra* (hoe with long or short blade which is used in orchards). Moreover, it is clear as Syris «hortorum etiam cultures operosissime fuere» (Forcellini, 1994). From the South of the Peninsula the term started to lose its original meaning not only because of the confusion caused by the likeness of many Spanish and Arabic words, but also thanks to Jewish merchants in their journeys; in this way it became common in Western countries' languages. It is also well known that the term *marrano* was forbidden by the King of Castile in the 1380 for its strongly rude meaning. Years later, the term became much more widespread, for example after the anti-Jewish attacks started in 1391, that led many Jews to religious conversions, in order to save their lives. However, those forced religious conversions didn't solve the problems within the Spanish religious situation; in fact, as Roth (1932) claimed, very many Jews who were infedels, soon became heretics within the Catholic religion. In 1478 Isabella of Aragon and Ferdinand of Castile decided to introduce the Inquisition which was already present in Aragon. Moreover, a lot of Jews that kept their religious beliefs were dismissed from Spain in order to break all relationships between *marrani* and Hebraism (1492)..



Many Jews and their descendants were sentenced and condemned to death; however others could flee to other countries where they were able to carry on their fathers' religious beliefs. For what concerns Capua, it is possible to find a *locus qui dicitur Limarani* since XII century (1126), nearby Calvi, and later in Brezza village, we can also find *via deli Marrani antiqui* (1341) and *ecclesia S. Marie de li Marrani* (1469).

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