

Aron Di Leone Leoni. *La Nazione Ebraica Spagnola e Portoghese di Ferrara (1492–1559): I suoi rapporti col governo ducale e la popolazione locale e i suoi legami con le Nazioni Portoghesi di Ancona, Pesaro e Venezia.*

Ed. Laura Graziani Secchieri. 2 vols. Storia dell'ebraismo in Italia; Studi e testi 26. Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2011. xxxviii + 1,308 pp. €120. ISBN: 978-88-222-6005-5.

This massive and beautifully produced two-volume set was published posthumously, and it represents the life work of an active and widely published scholar of the history of Sephardic Jews and New Christians in Italy and across Europe in the early modern period. Known for his labors in the archives and his preparation and publication of documents, Leoni (1932–2010) here presents a rich treasure of materials that will be of great value to scholars working in the fields of Jewish and Italian history. The first volume, which includes a bibliography and introduction, covers a great deal of ground on many topics, at times in encyclopedic fashion. It includes numerous illustrations, sixteen color plates, a very helpful glossary of terms, and chronological tables that provide information on ducal, imperial, papal, and royal rulers for the period covered by the book. The second volume presents 1697 documents from the period between 1370 and 1567, with most documents from the 1530s through the '50s. Many documents, from a range of sources — including various archives, chronicles, and, on occasion, even rabbinic writings — are presented in full. A larger number of documents are referenced with a brief summary of their contents and location. Documents are primarily in Italian, with many in Latin, and a few in Portuguese or Hebrew (the latter translated into Italian). These documents will be quite useful to scholars of Italian Jewish history, but also to scholars in other fields of Jewish, Italian, and early modern history. Among the many valuable items included in volume two are: extensive agreements and broad privileges granted to Jewish bankers in the fifteenth century; licenses for Jewish involvement in other occupations and economic endeavors; letters patent for various individuals and groups; letters of credit; ducal concessions allowing for autonomy for Jews in religious law and communal governance, as well as permission to establish synagogues; a wide range of wills and court decisions; Italian historical chronicles that reference Jews; correspondence from ducal and papal representatives on a range of issues, including trials and Inquisition activity; invitations of Jewish settlement and edicts of expulsion; various inventories or registers of merchandise; and correspondence and official decrees related to the fate of Jewish books. The second volume also contains a series of detailed and useful indices.

The first chapter provides important grounding for the settlement of Jews in Ferrara, focusing on the concessions and charters (*condotte*) granted to bankers already in the late fourteenth century and until the end of the fifteenth century. Here Leoni provides details and significant summaries of the conditions of these agreements that help to frame early Jewish life in the city and the relationship between Jews and local rulers. These agreements reveal details about individual Jews and also underscore developments in communal organization and institutions.