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**Moshé Liba, ed.** *Jewish Child Slaves in São Tomé*. Wellington: New Zealand Jewish Chronicle Publications, 2003. 242 pp. No price listed (cloth), ISBN 978-0-9582173-1-6.

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This book focuses on the history and heritage of the abduction and forced conversion to Catholicism of approximately two thousand Jewish children. These children were sent to the Islands of São Tomé e Príncipe in 1493, by order of D. João II, the King of Portugal, to populate the newly discovered islands. This history has never been studied before and this volume attempts to fill in a blank in our knowledge.

Edited by Moshé Liba (first Ambassador of Israel in São Tomé e Príncipe), the book is the result of a conference held in São Tomé e Príncipe on July 11-12, 1995, which brought together several scholars and experts. It has a preface, written by Professor Moshé Liba, and is divided in three parts. The articles are written in English, Portuguese, French and Spanish.

Part 1 of the book is entitled “The Conference in São Tomé e Príncipe” and is composed of three sections. The first is on the history of the conference; the second contains the proceedings of the conference; and the third consists of articles written after the conference.

The first section of part 1, titled “History of the Conference,” is composed of five articles or documents. The first, “Pájaro blanco,” is written in Spanish by Moshé Liba and describes how the conference came about. The author extensively describes his travel to São Tomé e Príncipe; his meetings with several people on the island, namely the Bishop and the President; and, in the end, the agreement to organize the conference on July 11-12, 1995—to coincide with the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the Independence of São Tomé e Príncipe. It is a narrative that lacks formal structure; the bibliographic references do not follow any known crite-

ria, and in many cases the needed references are nonexistent. Footnotes 2 and 3 on page 13 do not appear in the text. On the other hand, part of the information scattered in this article is of significance because it shows the readers the importance of the study of the history of this first settlement of Jewish children in São Tomé e Príncipe.

The second document is the program of the conference and the third the opening speech by Liba—both written in Portuguese. The fourth document consists of three letters from Mrs. Alda Espírito Santo, President of the National Union of Writers and Artists of São Tomé e Príncipe. The letters are written in English, Spanish and Portuguese. The fifth document lists the participants in the conference.

The second section of part 1 is made up of the proceedings of the conference and contains seven articles. The second article, “História dos meninos judeus na cultura Santomense,” written in Portuguese by Gerhard Seibert, is undoubtedly the key article in this book. It seems to be the notes that guided the author through his presentation, but it is very clear and organized nonetheless, with proper bibliographic references. In this article, Seibert summarizes the origin of the children who were deported, gives information about the formation of the society of São Tomé e Príncipe during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and compares some social and religious traditions of the people of São Tomé e Príncipe with the traditions of the Sephardic Jews in the Iberic Peninsula. He puts in perspective different and, at times, opposing opinions of several authors and emphasizes the inaccuracy of some historical documents that have been repeated *ad eternum*, causing a flow of incorrect information, especially about the number of de-

ported children and their range of ages.

The fourth article, “Valores Culturais em São Tomé e Príncipe. A Abordagem da Influência Judaica,” was written in Portuguese by Lúcio Lima Viegas Pinto. The article focuses on the cultural values of São Tomé e Príncipe and on the first settlements of people who populated the islands, including the two thousand Jewish children. The author suggests the creation of a research team to study possible Jewish influences in the culture of São Tomé e Príncipe. He cites several authors in the text, but there are no bibliographic references.

The seventh document of part 1, “Research-Correspondence with Gerhard Seibert,” compiles several pieces of correspondence between Liba and Seibert. It is written in English and in French, and has some quotations of historical documents in Portuguese. The answer that Seibert sent to Liba, dated October 11, 1995, provides very clear and useful additional information about the topic. The other letters lack formal structure, do not present proper (or sometimes any) bibliographic references and they repeat information already presented. There are some serious grammatical, orthographic and syntactic errors.

The third section of part 1 of the book is made up of “Articles Written after the Conference.” In fact, these are six press-releases and the transcription of a radio interview that focuses on the conference, its outcomes and its importance for São Tomé, for the Jewish people, and for the promotion of additional research concerning the role of the Jews in the establishment of the society of São Tomé. These pieces are written in English, Portuguese and Spanish.

The second part of the book is entitled “Contextual Articles and Essays.” It is subdivided into two sections, namely “Background Contexts” and “Other Approaches.” It is not clear why the articles needed to be divided into these two sections, as they all give further information about the presence of Jews in Lusophone Africa over time. Be this as it may, this part of the book contains nine articles.

The first, “La Aventura Africana del Rey Don Sebastian: El Purim de los Cristianos y el Sebastianismo,” is by Isaac Benharroch. It makes interesting, though not always clear, links between *Sebastianismo* and the oppression of the Jewish people. The author cites several sources, but does not present any bibliographic references. The second article, written by Leonardo

Senkman, is titled “Encuentros de Afroamericanos y Judios en America Colonial: Los Otros Infames del Cautiverio Racista Ibérico.” It is a very well organized and informative paper, with appropriate bibliographic references. It presents new information about the relationship between Jews and Africans. The article defines different types of racism, emphasizing the fact that although Jews were treated differently from Africans, they all suffered discrimination—even converted Jews. The article makes links with the types of slavery practiced in the New World and it points out the cultural genocide that Jews historically suffered by being obliged to totally erase any characteristics of their culture.

The third article is a selection from “Public Christians, Secret Jews: Religion and Political Conflict on São Tomé Island in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” written in English by Robert Garfield. From the first footnote, the reader can infer that this text is part of an article published in the *Sixteen Century Journal* (1990). The text focuses on the absolute need for Jews in São Tomé to hide their faith. The document is interesting, but its relevance for this publication is questionable. The fourth document, “O Primeiro Batismo Compulsório Coletivo Ocorrido em Portugal,” was written in Portuguese by Elias Lipiner; it repeats information already written in this book about the Jewish children in São Tomé. Once more there are no bibliographic references to support quotations. The fifth document, “Dos Obras en la Historiografia Judia,” is an abstract from a publication entitled *Carta de Jerusalém* (1993). It refers to two studies on the Jewish history of Spain. Again, the relevance of this document to the subject of this edited book is questionable.

The next four articles are loose texts, with no bibliographic references, in which the information is redundant. Their titles are: “Lament for the Jewish Children of São Tomé” by Norman Simms (in English); “Jews in Africa” by Liba (in English); “Le Commerce des Peaux à la Petite Côte au XVIIe Siècle (Sénégal)” by Nize Izabel de Moraes (in French); and “O Povoamento de São Tomé” by António Alves dos Santos Junior (in Portuguese).

Finally, a last section of the book, entitled “Primary Documents,” transcribes several text, in several languages, including Hebrew. It is difficult at times to understand where the extracts came from, due to the very poor editing of this book.

In conclusion, this is a book that badly translates a very good idea. The initiative of organizing a conference

about the Jewish influence in the formation of the society of SĂo TomĂ e PrĂncipe and, overall, the role of the Jews in Africa, is an excellent idea and all the research projects focusing on it should be encouraged. However, the extremely poor editing and the countless grammatical, orthographic, and syntactical errors are too numer-

ous to be excused by the apology that appears on the second page. Because the editor seems to have felt the need to include everything in this book, from the proceedings to personal letters, this publication has also lost much of its scholarly purpose.

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