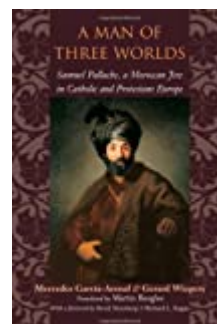


Mercedes Garc a-Arenal, Gerard Wiegers. *A Man of Three Worlds: Samuel Pallache, a Moroccan Jew in Catholic and Protestant Europe.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003. xxiv + 173 pp. \$40.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8018-7225-9.



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Samuel Pallache and the Fluidity of Early-Modern Jewish Identity

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Most of us, including scholars, tend to think of people's religious, national, and personal identities as being fairly static and distinct. The common modern phenomenon of religious and national inter-marriage could be seen to blur some boundaries, but we often imagine this to be a novelty not usually found before the twentieth century. Samuel Pallache, whose activities and identities are painstakingly reconstructed by Garcia-Arenal and Wiegers in this volume, offers a jarring corrective to this picture. Pallache (d. 1616) led an exceedingly adventurous life, during which he variously identified himself as a Moroccan Jew, a Spanish Catholic, an English prisoner, a righteous Amsterdam Sepharadi, and possibly a Protestant. He was a diplomat, a pirate, a merchant, a spy, a smuggler, and an arms dealer.

Pallache migrated through these diverse identities and professions with apparent effortlessness, always putting forward the face that would preserve his life and make him a profit. The authors begin by describing Pallache's Sephardic family background, and their life in Fez,

Morocco. The authors discuss some adulatory legends surrounding Samuel Pallache, and then use archival documents to begin piecing together a more accurate picture. Samuel, and his brother Joseph, show up in Spanish records at the very beginning of the seventeenth century as representatives of the Moroccan crown sent to buy jewels on behalf of the potentate Muley Zaydan. This is interesting in itself, because it is an example of practicing Jews being allowed to live for a period in Spain after the Expulsion. The brothers were, however, refused permission to go to Lisbon for further trade, because it was feared that they would encourage the *conversos* there to practice Judaism. Rather than returning to Morocco when their business was concluded, the Pallache brothers seemed to want to stay in Spain as servants of the king. They offered to convey intelligence on the Moroccan political situation, which was quite volatile, and the council of state accepted. Samuel and Joseph encouraged their new patron, the count of Pu  nrostro, to invade the Moroccan port of Larrache with a Spanish army. Unfortunately for them, King Philip III of Spain and his highest advisors were not impressed with their qualifications and refused to support the proposal.

For many years, the Pallaches went back and forth between war-torn Morocco and Spain, trying unsuccessfully to sell their services as informants. They then tried to interest French and Italian potentates in their idea to invade Larrache, but with no more success. In desperate financial straits, it appears the brothers hinted to the Spanish authorities that they and their sons were preparing to convert to Catholicism, and they were thrown a few ducats to cover their needs. Around 1607 the Pallaches, despite their connections in high places, were forced to flee from Spain to southern France following threats from the Inquisition.

At this point the authors pause to give us more background on the Pallaches' families and the fate of other Fez Jews who were tried by the Inquisition. The Pallaches, it seems, were by no means unique in their negotiations of Spanish and Moroccan nationalities, and Jewish, Christian, and Muslim identities. We are given further useful background about Jews in Morocco and Spain in this period that explains the brothers' desperation to leave Morocco. While Iberian *conversos* were busy escaping Spain and Portugal in the sixteenth century, we discover a whole movement of their Moroccan descendants escaping back to Spain and often converting to Catholicism in the early seventeenth century. The story of the Pallaches picks up again with their arrival in Amsterdam around 1608. It seems the brothers had been there previously; it was another location to which they thought to move their families and resettle. Their plans had been destroyed when pirates took their ships with all their goods and left them destitute. As usual, the occasion for their presence in the Netherlands was a diplomatic mission on behalf of Muley Zaydan, pretender to the Moroccan throne. Samuel negotiated some military assistance for his master, but lost his own shirt in the bargain, and was sued by some Dutch businessmen. It is not clear whether Samuel ever became a real member of the Amsterdam Portuguese community, though he was shown respect as a *Hakham* there. Samuel's brother, Isaac, was meanwhile involved in complex denunciations and negotiations of his own, which are described at length.

Between 1609 and 1614 Samuel was involved in many diplomatic and financial deals on behalf of Muley Zaydan in the Netherlands. He also became head of the

Moroccan diplomatic mission in England. He accompanied Dutch privateers on a voyage to capture Spanish and Dutch ships that was partially successful. He continued to lead semi-piratic missions on behalf of the Moroccan and Dutch interests against the Spanish, but around 1614 he was accused of having sold out and played the spy on behalf of Spain. As it turns out, this was probably correct.

Pallache fell out of favor with both the Dutch and Muley Zaydan. He went off on a piracy expedition on his own, capturing several ships (including an English merchant vessel), but was blown off course and forced to land in Plymouth before he could arrive in Morocco and sell the booty. Having played double-agent between Spain, England, the Netherlands, and Morocco, and having captured an English ship, Pallache was immediately arrested. Amazingly, his connections managed to get him acquitted of criminal charges and released on bail, though civil charges and enormous debts remained. Even more amazingly, Pallache went to Holland and from there picked right back up in his career as diplomat, spy, and merchant, opening up new negotiations with Spain, the Ottomans, and the Dutch for various schemes. Samuel died in 1616 and his body was accompanied by Prince Maurice and members of the Estates General to its final resting place in the Jewish cemetery outside Amsterdam. After all these adventures, Samuel died a poor man.

The constant negotiations of political fealty, religious identity, and vocational flexibility make Samuel Pallache a very colorful figure, but that aspect is deliberately downplayed in this excellent biography. Instead, the authors try to show why a Sephardic Moroccan Jew of the early seventeenth century would feel impelled to live this kind of life, as well as how he was able to do it. In the process, they shatter many of the easy assumptions we have about Jews and the boundaries of their identities in the early modern world.

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