



# The Livornese Jewry in Tunis: Experiences of the Diasporic Community in the Unification of Italy and Beyond, 1830s-1939

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## **Author's contribution**

*The sole author designed, analyzed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

**Aim:** The present study analyses the unique case of the Jewish Italian community in Tunis ('Grana'), during the 19th and 20th centuries, emphasizing its close political ties with its country of origin (Tuscany and subsequently Italy). Unlike other communities of Jewish Sephardic origin in the Mediterranean basin that have integrated into local communities, the Grana has faithfully maintained its independence and defended its *italianità*. This article explores the influence of this community on the political and ideological changes in Italy in three major periods: the unification of Italy, the imperialist race and the days of the Fascist regime, an era in which the political activity reached a peak among Italian Jews in Tunis. The Livornesi participated enthusiastically in the national movement, played a decisive role in the Franco-Italian imperial race, and were among the most determined opponents of fascism.

**Methodology:** The method approach was characterized by examination and analysis of primary resources (historical Jewish press, consular letters, personal telegrams), using the various perspectives in contemporary North African Jewish studies, Italian Jewry studies and Mediterranean studies.

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**Significance:** The Grana example highlights the interplay between diaspora exiles vis-a-vis national self-determination claims. Shedding light on its experiences regarding significant issues in the history of its country of origin- such as its establishment, its imperial and colonial trends and the struggle for its character- may significantly contribute to understanding the role of a diasporic community in the development of its nation-state. In addition, any reconsideration of the European powers rivalry in relation to North Africa, must take into account the involvement of this community in the complex Franco-Italian-Tunisian forces.

*Keywords: Diaspora; Jewish studies; Tunisia; Italian Jews; unification of Italy; anti-fascism.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the 16th century, the Jewish population in Tunis was divided into those of Tunis itself and those of Livorno. The Livornese Jews were mostly members of the second group, a minority Jewish community named Grana (Livorno translates to El-Gorna in Arabic), that has developed separately from the local majority group, the ancient Arabized community of Tunisian Jews, the Touansa [1]. One of the explanations for this unique division, unparalleled in the rest of the Jewish communities in North Africa was the constant relations of the Grana with its origin overseas. These relations were given extensive expression, with the intensification of European penetration into the Islamic countries, in the 19th century. Examples of these connections can be seen in the fields of culture, education, religious life and even in the legal field.

It is, therefore, revealed that, close ties with the motherland were maintained in the political context too. Evidence of this can be found throughout the period under discussion: from the clandestine encounters at the Palazzo Gnecco of Garibaldi and his Livornese followers (1834), in the participation of riots against the French Protectorate during the colonial race (1871-1914), up to the underground activity of the anti-Fascist movement, on the eve of the Second World War.

The Livornese Jewish community, which belonged both to the Jewish minority in Tunisia and the Italian minority in the Regency was described in the studies of each of these communities. The studies of Sebag and Tsur on the Tunisian Jewry at the end of the pre-colonial period made a significant contribution to the study of the community organization, its legal, social and economic status over the years [2]. The Livornese migration which was one of the three major migratory waves during the 19th century to Tunisia (along with the Sicilian and the

Sardinian ones) was investigated in the studies of El Houssi and Fauri, about the Italian diaspora in the Regency [3]. The community itself was at the focus of Avrahami's detailed studies on its spiritual and rabbinical leadership in the 17th and 18th centuries. However, a transnational Mediterranean perspective on the community is currently lacking. However, despite Tsur's statement that: 'the political affiliation of the Grana with Italy was the determining factor in its identity' [4], and El Houssi's affirmation that the Grana's middle-class: 'was undoubtedly the first force hostile to Fascism' [5], the relationship of this active community with the mother country remained on the margins of the study [6]. Some scholars identified Diasporas as non-national, global movements that undermined the structures of nation states [7]. This article presents the Grana as an example for such a Diaspora, given its complex and multiple layer relationship with the Mediterranean basin.

## 2. THE GRANA DURING THE UNIFICATION OF ITALY - REFUGEES AND JEWISH REVOLUTIONARIES

The Livornese immigration to Tunisia in the 17th and the 18th centuries was mainly of an economic nature, yet as early as 1815, a new motive was added: a political one- mainly related to the suppression of the movement that led to the unification of Italy. During this movement, known as *Risorgimento*, many Italian Jews, especially from Livorno, took a central part in it. Due to their revolutionary activities and the persecutions they suffered, some of them had to go into exile. In the early years of the liberation movement (1815-1830), the Carbonari, a liberal secret society inspired by the French Revolution, led rebellions in Southern and Northern Italy. The proximity of the revolts to Tuscany in the early 1830s brought its first wave of political refugees to Tunis, in the pre-colonial era [8].

Among the prominent Jewish freedom fighters who arrived during this wave, was the republican

Gaitano Fedriani (1811-1881), landing quietly in the port of La Goulette, in 1834, together with his friend Joseph Fani, a revolutionary wanted by the Ligurian authorities. Fani was, in fact, the pseudonym used by one of the main leaders of the Risorgimento movement, Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807-1882) during his stay in Tunis. Shortly before, the two comrades had joined the new underground movement founded by Giuseppe Mazzini, 'Young Italy', and vowed to dedicate themselves to the liberation of their homeland from the Austrian occupation. In 1834 -both had been implicated in a Mazzini insurgency in Piedmont.. The plot was nevertheless discovered, and Garibaldi, who was sentenced to death in absentia, found refuge with Fedriani in Tunis [9]. In the capital, they met other Mazzini's followers and conspired together at the Palazzo Gnecco [10].

One of the reasons, why Tunis was chosen as a haven for freedom fighters (along with the identification of the Livornese community with the issue and the strategic location) was the sympathetic governmental policy. One of the central figures, who contributed to its formulation, was Giuseppe Raffo, the close adviser of the Tunisian Bey [11]. Raffo, son of an Italian slave caught by Barbary pirates, got promoted in the royal court, held liberal views and urged the Bey to encourage European-style reforms. He sympathized with the Italian nationalism, granted patronage to Mazzini's followers, and allowed Fedriani and other Livornese patriots to pursue their subversive activities without fear.

An expression of the *carte blanche* given to these circles can be found in an angry anonymous letter addressed to the Austrian consul, on the eve of the First Italian War of Independence (1848), about the underground activities of another patriot, David Franco. In the letter, it was claimed that Franco run a political club where: 'a gang of Tuscan people who would have been shot anywhere else [...] meet to curse the Grand duke and the authorities who brought order and peace to Italy' [12]. The writer also warned the Austrian government that: 'Franco is preparing to travel to Livorno'.

The second wave of political exiles arrived in Tunis during the first Italian War of Independence, which took place as part of the Revolutions of 1848. The Union's supporters were greatly encouraged by the surge of nationalism on the continent and sparked revolts all over Italy. The Livornese refugees in Tunis

were not indifferent to the events in their country of origin: while a group of them joined the war, another acted in various ways to raise money by holding lotteries, conferences and "democratic dinners". But, despite the victories of the Italian Revival Movement, the Austrians crushed Garibaldi and Mazzini's revolution and brought the dynasty rulers back to their thrones.

## **2.1 The Livornese Activity on the Eve of the 'Kingdom of Italy' Establishment, 1861**

The third period of the liberation process (1850-1861), at the end of which the Kingdom of Italy was established, is associated with the enterprises of Camillo Benso, Count of Cavour and Prime Minister of Piedmont-Sardinia, especially the secret alliance he had with the French Emperor. This alliance led to the removal of the Austrians, from most of Northern and Central Italy, during the Second War of Independence (1859) and paved the way to the Italian Union. In Livorno, the Jewish community celebrated the national victories enthusiastically; when Tuscany joined the emerging Union in 1859, the Jewish community newspaper stated: 'Jews of all social ranks had united with other citizens to support the tricolour flag and proclaim Italy's independence' [13].

The rhetoric of self-sacrifice for the homeland was widely adopted by Jews in Livorno [14], and, in fact, many of their fellow Grana brethren shared similar patriotic sentiments. Under the leadership of the Tunisian branch of 'Young Italy', the capital became a center of distribution of Mazzinian Propaganda, it functioned as a transit point for clandestine correspondence (that attracted the attention of various European espionage organizations) and due to Benedetto Calo's activity, the direct contact with Mazzini in London [15], also as a center of concealed weapons.

The activities of the Livornese Jews in Tunisia intensified towards the next stage of the struggle for independence - the conquest of the Kingdom of Sicily. In fact, due to the exile's dedication and unique geographic location, Mazzini thought of planning the landing in Sicily directly from Tunis: 'We are thinking of weapon and armament [to be transferred to Tunis] and, if necessary, attacking Sicily' [16].

One of the highlights of the Livornese involvement occurred during the 'Expedition of

the Thousand' (Garibaldi's invasion of Sicily), with the shipment of weapons gathered by the Grana in Tunis, attached to others arrived from Malta, and shipped directly to Sicily, during the landing of Garibaldi's forces. The defeat and the dismantling of the Kingdom of Two Sicilies led to the establishment of the Kingdom of Italy (1861), which stirred up the Grana and urged the naturalization of most of the community's elite families [17]. Ostensibly, after having spent the best of their years in exile, they would have chosen to return to their homeland. But most of them decided to stay in the country as they have contributed significantly for its development, and they achieved professional success and economic prosperity. At the same time, they remained loyal to their motherland, and this loyalty influenced their acts, even during the period when Tunisia came under the French protectorate.

### 3. THE LIVORNESE AND THE COLONIAL RACE, 1871-1914

Even though the *Risorgimento* was supposed to solve the question of Italian nationalism, the unification was only the beginning of an internal debate about the new nation-state. With the transfer of capital to Rome (1871), the expectations were high and made it difficult to settle for the existing borders; the belief in Italy's entitlement to its empire and the desire to revive the Roman concept *Mare Nostrum* arose in many circles. But its late accession to the colonial race, forced Italy to adapt its ambitions to its real power. Therefore Tunisia's relative proximity, being part of Italy's glorious past, its existence as a large Italian community- which included the wealthy Livornese elite- increased the attractiveness of the country as a necessary asset for its self-determination as a European power [18]. Thus, in spite of the "natural" Italian ambitions, and apparently because of them, France took action, and at the beginning of 1881, suddenly, it invaded the country and established a protectorate under the Treaty of Bardo. The Italians were stunned by the 'Tunisian bomb' and relations with their French neighbors were aggravated.

However, the basis of the competition between the two powers over their influence in the Regency was rooted during pre-colonial period, while the Grana played a vital role in that race. As early as 1770, the French Consul in Tunis wrote that: 'the main factor impeding the development of French trade is the competition

with the Jewish merchants [who were mostly Livornese]. It is an obstacle on which we would never be able to overcome' [19]. A more acute expression of the tension can be seen in the words of Alexander Dumas, during a political-journalistic mission to the Regency: 'the Jew trades with all his soul, arguing and scorning your money. With the Moor, you can put your wallet in his hand and say: "Take, pay yourself"' [20]. Dumas' Anti-Jewish description, that reflected popular views, disguised according to El-Houssi, the intended future French conquest of Tunisia. In contrast, various Italian circles argued that since the French conquest of Algeria in 1830, Tunisia had been subjected to French political influence. A similar kind of view was also shared by Garibaldi, who attributed the refusal to allow his entrance in Tunis in 1849, precisely to that influence: 'The government, subjected to the aspirations of France, did not want me, and I was transferred back to the island of Maddalena' [21]. Even circles within the Grana felt the same; they were upset by what they perceived as the French intervention in the struggle for the Italian independence, and gathered to protest against it.

In the years to come, it was precisely sinking into debt of the Bey's Government that increased the influence of Italy and France on his country's inner matters, through their Jewish subjects, who were his main creditors. But while Parisian debtors used leverage to threaten the Bay ('The Napoleonic III government threatened the Bey many times that he would repay its debt to its creditors among the wealthy of France' [22]), some of the Livornese ones took advantage of this position in order to establish their status in his court [23]. Their consolidation and the expansion of their Tuscan companies (in the fields of agricultural and oil industry, medicine and construction) increased the Italian presence and influenced in the Regency, but also the French suspicion and desire to prevent Italy from realizing further imperialist ambitions. A suspicion was actually unfounded, for the Italian liberal government led by B. Cairoli, was adhering to an anti-imperialist policy of 'clean hands'. Cairoli, who fought for liberation from Austria for 20 years, declared in 1879 that every country in Europe or in Africa had the right to self-determination. Two years later, when the French army invaded Tunisia, while only 500 of its European inhabitants were French compared to 11,000 Italians, he was ridiculed as naive and lost his office [24].

### **3.1 The Establishment of the French Protectorate - and Its Use as a Tool to Weaken the Grana, 1881**

It seemed that the establishment of the Protectorate would satisfy France in terms of thwarting Italy's future ambitions in Tunisia, but in practice, the regime served as an effective tool for curbing Italian influence. To deal with the 'The Italian Danger' a policy was formulated [25], and the first group to be affected by it was the Grana. However, even though it encompassed the entire colony, its main purpose was directed towards its higher strata. Thus, while the administration opened the door to the emigration of thousands of manual laborers from Sicily, it acted through a series of decrees, to weaken the Italian bourgeoisie, including its industrialists, merchants, lawyers and engineers, most of whom were Livornesi (for example an 1889 decree forbidding the employment of non-native French workers which put the Grana in a difficult dilemma: 'to deny their homeland or to leave their country of residence' [26]).

During the first years of the occupation, the conflict did not deteriorate into violence. One of the reasons for this was that the Grana was a lonely voice in the Jewish community opposed to the French administration. The Touansa (the Tunisian Jewish community) was convinced that it would benefit from many changes made by France. But the authorities' refusal to grant French citizenship to the Tunisian Jews (as opposed to their policy toward Algerian Jewry [27]) and the deterioration in most aspects of their lives [28], led them to perceive this rule in an increasingly critical light, and, in 1887, for the first time since the establishment of the protectorate, a front was established that unified the leadership of both Jewish communities for a joint protest.

On March, 20, in a protest against an attempt to change Jewish burial orders, thousands of Jewish demonstrators broke into the Jewish cemetery in Tunis, clashed with a military force and shouted anti-French and pro-Italian slogans. In his search for the initiators of the riots, the commissioner pointed an accusing finger at the Grana, which according to him, was endangering French rule. A similar conclusion was reached by the French Foreign Minister, who saw the disorders as a hostile plot to France and warned: 'that in times of crisis, those who rise up on us we'll find support among many in the Jewish sector' [29].

Although the validity of the French interpretation is controversial, its acceptance or rejection had dramatic implications regarding the relations between the Grana and the French authorities. If the Foreign Ministry's analysis was correct, then the Livornesi were deeply involved in the Italian effort to weaken France's status in the country. In contrast, if the Livornesi were not among the initiators of the disorders, then it was evidence of the deep suspicion, distrust and even paranoia that the French felt toward this tiny minority [30]. Either way, the French view, that the Grana was behind the uprising, had a negative impact on all Tunisian Jewry. As a result, they were by then defined as a 'turncoat public that the enemies of France could easily tilt in their direction' [29], and, as a consequence, the process of modernization of the community was brought to a stall for decades.

At the same time, the French hostile attitude towards the Italian Jews also had an impact on the community itself, or rather on its political character, in which rifts began to appear. The reasons for the schism were related to the fact that despite the prominent place of the Italian element in the community, some of the Grana Jews had ties with France (on some of these families, the Empire relied on during its takeover of the Regency [31]). This group also included the Jewish representatives on the City Council, Raymond Valensi and Giacomo Cesana who signed the decree that led to the riots of thousands of Tunisian Jews [32]. In fact, the two represented a fraction within the Grana that sought to establish close relations with the French government, even at the expense of harming the interests of most of the Jewish community. But despite its small size, it was the pro-French attitude of this group that helped to ease the tension between the Grana and the French protectorate. Nevertheless, in order to be adopted by other Livornesi, a significant National-Italian event outside the Tunisian arena took place.

### **3.2 Solution of the Crisis - the 1896 Agreements**

As it was noted earlier, the relations between Italy and France went into disarray after the signing of the treaty of Bardo. For 15 years, Italy was the only European power that refused to recognize the Protectorate. But, due to the colossal defeat suffered by its army in Ethiopia, a change began to appear. This event too, like the conquest of Tunisia, led to an immediate change

of government in Italy, and the rise to power of Antonio Starabba marked the beginning of a period of improved relations with France. A treaty that was signed in Paris, put an end to the tariff war, and in exchange for Italy's recognition of the French protectorate, its subjects enjoyed a unique status. However, the privileges that France gave to the Italian subjects were not granted for free: 'the Italian government saved the affairs of its people, but did not save its honor' [33]. Indeed, the price paid by the Italian liberal government to help the Livornese merchants would be collected to the fullest, by the Fascist regime.

#### **4. FASCIST ITALY: A CHALLENGE FOR ITALIAN PATRIOTISM**

It is common to identify Fascism with racism and anti-Semitism because of its political and ideological proximity to Nazism, but before the establishment of the Rome-Berlin axis in 1938, throughout most of the regime's existence, no legal discrimination existed in Italy [34]. In fact, with its rise to power in the early 1920s, the fascist movement came out against any racist ideology and opened its door to many Jews (among the prominent ones are Enrico Rocca, the founder of the movement in Rome and Angelo Oliviero Olivetti, one of the main thinkers). Therefore, it should not be surprising that the initial resistance to fascism in Jewish circles, in Italy and Tunisia, did not stem from an anti-Semitic policy, but instead, from an ideological background- mainly from the left, from its Communist circles.

If the above discussion dealt with the political diversity that began to characterize the Grana, this fragmentation had taken more significant dimensions during the Fascist period. The roots of the intra-Livornese ideological dispute were connected to the political polarization in the motherland, which in the late 19th century, was torn between imperialism and socialism (most of the controversy concerned Italy's expansionist tendencies).

After the First World War, and following the heavy price paid by Italy, the rift in Italian politics deepened; at the extremes of the political spectrum now stood Fascism and Communism. In Tunis, too, the internal Livornese tensions intensified, and the support for the idea of a Greater Italy was replaced by cooperation with an authoritarian regime, and in contrast, the

opposition to the Italian imperialism turned into a resistance to the Regime as a whole.

The opposition to fascism, as mentioned, preceded the imposition of racial laws. Indeed, Bosworth denied the close connection to Hitler as a factor in their adoption, and argued that this was due to the fact that within the Fascist movement existed from its inception an anti-Semitic faction [35]. He argued that, one of the reasons for its strengthening was the prominence of Jews in the Italian anti-Fascist underground. And indeed, in Tunisia too, many Italian Jews operated within the framework of the Communist parties, as well as in other ideological frameworks such as Freemasonry, Anarchist or Republican cells.

However, most of the community tied its fate to the new regime because they hoped, like the majority of Italians, that it would serve the Italian nation. Therefore, many joined its organizations, and demonstratively carried the symbol of the party. They also supported territorial claims such as the one expressed by Mussolini in 1923: 'The 120,000 in Tunisia, [...] who work for the French Regency today, but who will probably work under the Italian Regency tomorrow' [36]. In 1935, when the Duce invaded Ethiopia, the Livornese Jews were among the contributors of wedding rings to the war effort, and some even volunteered to serve in the fascist army. They were praised among others, by Piero Perrini, a minister in Mussolini's government: 'It is a pleasure to emphasize that these Jewish volunteers are the sons of Jews from Livorno who left Italy before it was founded. This is truly a fine example of their devotion' [37]. A week earlier, the 'Boker' newspaper brought the story of the Livornese Lieutenant Atias: 'who commands a whole battalion. He holds the most important position after the Legion commander' [38].

Therefore, the Livornesi were greatly disappointed when it became clear that for the freedom of action given by France to Mussolini in Ethiopia, he paid by sacrificing their rights (as part of the Mussolini-Laval Agreement of 1935, the unique status of the Italians in the Regency had been revoked). This gave rise to doubts in the hearts of the Italian Jews towards the regime, and, at the same time, empowered anti-fascism in the country. More important, however, was the support of anti-Fascist activists from Italy's rivalry new government.

In 1936, the elections in France led to the victory of the Popular Front, led by the Jewish Prime Minister Léon Blum, a devout Marxist. Therefore, the Tunisian anti-Fascist Union held ideologies similar to those of the government in Paris. Proximity that gave impetus to the Livornese underground activists, who began to operate in a variety of arenas: assistance to refugees, support for anti-Fascist circles in Paris and even rioting in Tunis [39]. The fascist organizations called these activities a betrayal of the homeland and the agents of the secret political police (OVRA) began to act against them.

#### 4.1 A Torn Community - Late 1930s

The tension between the sides increased from day to day, reaching one of its peaks in September 1937, when the sailors of the fascist naval ship anchored in Tunis, discovered that at the cellar of the Communist Party, leaflets were being prepared for distribution on board. Later that night: '50 sailors broke into their offices, savagely shot three members and killed the Secretary Micelli' [40]. Referring to the incident, Nadia Gallico, one of the Livornese leaders of the Communist underground, said that the assassination created a rift in the community. Indeed, the differences in positions can be seen from the version of the event published in the consular press, which some of the Livornese bourgeoisie were among its editors: 'The sailors were attacked by people with revolutionary ideas who disseminated propaganda pamphlets, and the secretary shot himself' [41].

However, an event with more significant implications occurred shortly thereafter, in the mother country; the Italian Jews in Tunis began to be marked as hostile to the regime: 'The Jewish mob is acting against the Italians in the French Protectorate' [42]. These accusations, and others from the summer of 1938, were a sign that the situation of the Jews was about to change for the worse.

The racial laws, which were greeted with applause in the Roman Parliament, in July 1938, stunned the Jews of Italy (among other restrictions they were forbidden to marry Christians, to serve in the government and to own land). Although the Grana had suffered partly from the rules: 'the notion that Italy had accepted the Nazi race theory had caused panic among them' [43]. But even this anti-Semitic policy did not produce a uniform reaction among the Livornesi: the patriots continued to show

utmost loyalty to the regime. Some sought help of the Protectorate authorities, and confirmed their French loyalty to General Armand Giun. There were also those who found it difficult to cope up with the new reality (such as Doctors Benson and Ortona who took their own lives). Others chose to intensify their resistance.

The intensification of fascist irredentist demands also fueled the struggle. Similar to Nazi Germany, these territorial claims were accompanied by the radicalization of racial policy. Thus, in the same week the racial laws were adopted, masses of fascist students marched to the French Embassy and shouted: 'We want Tunisia'. To reinforce the claims, the Italian navy carried out maneuvers and raids on the shores of Bizerte [44]. At that time, a new theme line began to characterize fascist propaganda; in its focus, an attempt to incite the Muslim majority against the Jewish minority, using rhetoric taken rather from their Communist opponents: 'The Jews rob the Arabs of the fruits of their labor and live at their own expense' [45]. It also encouraged: 'the masses of Tunis to make a final reckoning with the Jews - the "British agents" and "bloodsuckers"' [46].

In response, the anti-Fascist newspaper published a manifesto against Italy's expansionist tendencies, declaring: 'Fascism yearns for Tunisia only to impose its terrorist domination' [47]. At the same time, to increase the outcry against the racial laws, Maurizio Valenzi, another prominent Livornese activist, went on a mission to Paris, where he helped to publish the exiles' newspaper '*La Voce degli Italiani*'. This newspaper expressed one of the most clear voices against fascism anti-Semitism ('in defending the Jews, who were confiscated, humiliated, beaten to death, we'll defend the heritage of the Italian civilization from fascist barbarism' [48]). Against this background of vigorous activity, one can understand Sebag's affirmation that the Livornese activity in the capital: 'on the eve of the Second World War, turned Tunis into one of the bastions of anti-fascism outside Italy' [49].

#### 5. CONCLUSION

By analyzing the case of the Grana community in Tunisia during the 19th and 20th centuries and its interaction with its country of origin (Tuscany and subsequently Italy), this article demonstrates the influence of a diasporic community on the foreign policy of its nation-state, as well as

on its colonial, imperial, and immigration tendencies.

Given the extensive involvement of this small community of exiles – in the political fate of its country of origin, the question arises due to the effect on the results of the conflicts mentioned above; During the Risorgimento period, the Grana contributed significantly to the unification of Italy, especially during the critical period of the establishment of the Kingdom of Italy. The Jewish exiles turned Tunisia into one of the most active non-Italian arenas during the liberation struggle, while engaging in fundraising, weapons smuggling, disseminating propaganda, recruiting fighters and coordinating the various spheres of exile. The proximity of Fedriani, Calo and their associates to Garibaldi and Mazzini placed them as partners in historical moments, in which improvised volunteer forces defeated the organized armies of the European powers.

In contrast, at the end of the colonial period, the fact that the Livornesi were the spearhead of the Italian economic influence during the Regency, instead led to the acceleration of the French invasion of Tunisia, fearing that the achievements of the Grana would tip the scales in favor of Italy. The siding of the Livornesi with the losing power in the competition, along with the historical French hostility to them, was among the factors that led to a severe blow to Italy's status in the country. During the fascist period, the Grana's activists again stood on the subversive side and against a powerful dictatorial force. Although the anti-Fascist movement did not bring about the downfall of the Regime (as Fascism collapsed from within through the overthrow of the Duce by the Supreme Fascist Council), some of its senior Livornese, such as Maurizio Valenzi, Nadia Gallico Spano and Velio Spano, later became central figures in Italian politics, partly because of their activity in Tunis.

An equally important question concerned with the motives of the community for its extensive political involvement. The answer seems to involve several factors. The geographical proximity between Italy and Tunisia (only 145 km at the Strait of Sicily), the bilateral treaties ensured privileges to Tuscan/Italian immigrants, the patronage given by Tunisian Beys to revolutionary activity, and especially the economic, cultural and social power of the Italian Jewish community in Tunis.

However, most of all, this phenomenon of diasporic political activism is might be related to the subject that was presented at the outset, that is, the unusual division between the two Jewish communities, without which, as Tsur pointed out, the Livornesi would have been destined to be assimilated among their Tunisian brethren. It appears that their uncompromising insistence on a separate Jewish existence helped them forget that they no longer lived in their homeland. The grasp of their language, names, commerce and their theaters allowed them to stay: 'mentally closer to the Jews of Italy than to the Jews of Tunisia' [50]. In another aspect, the cultural tendency, the secular trend, and ethnic separatism had a significant impact on the Italian political agenda of the Livornese.

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## COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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4. Tsur. Tunisia, *ibid.*, p. 80.
5. El Houssi. *ibid.*, p. 167.



6. Examples can be found in Clancy-Smith's discussion of Italian political refugees who arrived in Tunis between 1817 and 1832, in Avrahami's study which refers to Livornese underground activity during the 1848 revolutions, and in Choate's section, dealing with the support of the Italian government (1871-1914) to the Grana's struggle in creating a 'uniform Italian identity'. Sebag also refers the issue, in the context of the Grana's ambivalence to the rise of Mussolini and Sa'adon provides evidence of the internal tension caused by the visit of a Betar's cadets ship from the Naval School in Italy in 1938, see: Clancy-Smith Julia. *Mediterraneans: North Africa and Europe in an age of migration*, c. 1800–1900, University of California Press, 2012; Choate Mark I. "Tunisia, Contested: Italian Nationalism, French Imperial Rule, and Migration in the Mediterranean Basin", *California Italian Studies* (2010); Sa'adon Haim [Hebrew]. *Jews and Muslims in Tunisia: Between French Colonialism and Tunisian Nationality*, Tel Aviv; 2003.
7. Abelman Nancy. *Towards a transnational perspective on migration: Race, class, ethnicity, and nationalism reconsidered*. *American Ethnologist*. 1998;24-25. Choate, *ibid.*, p. 1.
8. Clancy-Smith. *ibid.*, p. 136.
9. Garibaldi Giuseppe et al. *Autobiography of Giuseppe Garibaldi*, W. Smith and Innes. 1889;52.
10. Other Jewish expatriates who arrived in that period were the Carbonari Pompeo Sulema, the founder of the first Italian newspaper, Giulio Finzi, the head of Young Italy movement in Tunis, Leonella Morpurgo and Mazzini's close confidant Benedetto Calo ('Citizen Calo, whom I love and esteem, for the zeal he has shown on every occasion', see: G. Mazzini, *Mazzini's Letters*, London, 1930, letter 1152 (1851).
11. The Beys of Tunis were the monarchs of Tunisia, from the Husainid dynasty, founded in 1705.
12. Quoted in Avrahami. *ibid.*, p. 17.
13. *L'Educatore Israelita* 7(1859):178.
14. Wyrwa Ulrich. *Jewish experiences in the Italian Risorgimento*. *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*. 2003;24.
15. El Houssi. *ibid.*, p. 177.
16. Brondino Michel. *La stampa italiana in Tunisia: Storia e società: 1838-1956*, Editoriale Jaca Book; 1998.
17. Tsur. *Funeral*, *ibid.*, 75.
18. Choate. *ibid.*, p.3.
19. Masson Paul. *Histoire des établissements et du commerce français dans l'Afrique barbaresque (1560-1793): (Algérie, Tunisie, Tripolitaine, Maroc)*. 1903;595.
20. Dumas Alexandre. *Impression de voyage, Le Ve'loce*, Paris. 1898;235.
21. Garibaldi. *ibid.*, p. 52.
22. Ha-Levanon [Hebrew], 31.07.1872
23. Ganiage Jean. *Les origines du protectorat français en Tunisie (1861–1881)*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France. 1959;158-161.
24. Fauri. *ibid.*, p. 335; Choate, *ibid.*, p. 5.
25. Choate Mark I. *Emigrant Nation: The making of Italy Abroad*, Harvard University Press. 2008;203-207.
26. Machzikei Ha-Dat [Hebrew], 17.01.1889
27. Martin Claude. *Les israélites algériens de 1830 à 1902*, Heracles, Paris. 1936;118-119.
28. Shalom Falach, one of the prominent Tunisian-Hebrew intellectuals, gloomily described the decline in the security situation: 'the hatred of the Arabs toward us Jews has grown tremendously, and when the opportunity given they beat us mercilessly'. Ha-Magid [Hebrew], 30.05.1883
29. Tsur. *Funeral*, *ibid.*, p. 96.
30. The Grana constituted a tenth of the Jewish community, which included 25,000 people in 1881, see: Tsur. *Tunisia*, *ibid.*, p. 78
31. Avrahami. *ibid.*, p. 17.
32. Their motive puzzled also the Magid's reporter: 'It is surprising that the three Jews agreed to this constitution, which nullifies a centuries-old tradition of burying their loved ones'. Ha-Magid, 12.05.1887
33. Ha-Melitz [Hebrew], 08.10.1896
34. Bosworth R.J.B. *Mussolini's Italy: Life Under the Fascist Dictatorship, 1915-1945*, Penguin, 2007;419.
35. *ibid.*, p. 420
36. Rainero Romain. *La rivendicazione fascista sulla Tunisia*, Marzorati. 1978;95.
37. Ha-Yarden [Hebrew], 12.11.1935
38. Ha-Boker [Hebrew], 07.11.1935
39. Monchicourt, Charles. *Les Italiens de Tunisie et l'accord Laval-Mussolini de 1935*, *Recueil Sirey*. 1938;86-200.
40. *The Palestine Post*, 23.09.1937

41. Agenzia Stefani, 23.09.1937
42. Ha-Boker, 12.06.1938
43. Ha-Boker, 10.08.1938
44. El Houssi. *ibid.*, p. 176.
45. L'Unione, 02.02.1939
46. Davar [Hebrew], 11.06.1939
47. Quoted in Rainero. *ibid.*, p. 492.
48. La Voce degli Italiani, 04.12.1938
49. Sebag. *ibid.*, p. 212.
50. Doar-Hayom [Hebrew], 06.06.1924

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