

Religious Minorities: Jews and Muslim in Early Modern Europe, Faiths at the Margins?

Europeans' attitudes towards both groups: Jews and Muslims were infidels, not heretics. An immanent threat to Christian society, religious unity and independence. Persecution as a response to a climate of anxiety. Misinterpretation and cultural competition. Enemies of the Faith.

Jews: sympathizer of Islam; religious threat, pre-Christian.

Jews not allowed in public ceremonies in western Catholic Europe except as victims or to pay homage to sovereign authorities. However, Jewish communities played an important role in European trade, finance, and culture. Their presence prevented Christians from lending money at interest.

Persecution started in the 13th century, in Spain (Spanish Inquisition).

In Spain, Jews had achieved unmatched prosperity and cultural brilliance. Choice offered: exile or conversion.

Jewish *Conversos* or new Christians, *marranos* (swine) practiced Judaism in secret. Some accepted the new faith sincerely.

Spanish Jews fled to other European countries (France, Holland, England, and Italy), across the Atlantic or in Ottoman lands. Jews welcome as economically active and politically reliable element.

1481: Spanish Inquisition set up against *conversos*.

1290: Jews excluded from England. Readmitted in 1655.

1394: expelled from the French Kingdom.

1497: from Portugal,

1490s from northern Europe.

1492: from Sicily and Sardinia.

By the 1570s, few openly professing Jews remained in Western or central Europe.

Where did they go? North Africa, Poland-Lithuania Italy, the Balkans and the Levant.

Many *conversos* settled in western France and in the Netherlands. They could practice freely, although not openly.

Muslims: Infidels and heretics (*moriscos*), post-Christians. Muslim seen as barbarians, with animalistic customs and deviant sexuality. Offered to flee or convert: *moriscos*, subject to discriminatory taxation and legislation. *Moriscos* loyal to Islam, (persecuted by the Inquisition).

The Ottomans were a real threat, a military and naval power.

1453: Ottoman conquest of Constantinople. The Turks became 'the foe of Christendom'.

1492: The Conquest of Granada, last stronghold of Muslim power. It shifted the military frontier. (*guerrilla* would start in the south Mediterranean and in the English Channel)

1526: Islam outlawed in Spain.

1614: Complete expulsion from Spain— 320,000, largest group of religious refugees in early modern history, fled to North Africa, Europe or Ottoman lands.

Muslims for centuries mourn their lost land of Al-Andalus.

Why persecution? For centuries Christians had been involved in a *Reconquista* of the Iberian peninsula, shaping a Christian cultural identity.

Spain at war with foreign Muslim powers.

Muslim counterattack? 1529 and 1683 at the gates of Vienna.

'Good fences make good neighbours.': no religious unity, Jews and Muslims still in Europe. Europeans needed solutions for these communities (*ghettos* and walled compounds). In 1555, the

ghetto created in Rome by Pope Paul IV. Segregation had the positive advantage of preserving Jewish culture.

Interaction...: European hypocrisy. Diplomacy conducted abroad. Along the frontier between Christendom and Islam there was always accommodation, and mutual influence (North Africa, the Levant, and East Europe). The economies of Europe and the Middle East connected (Spice trade). European merchants travelled to Muslim lands. Occasionally Muslims stopped in Malta, Palermo, Marseilles, Livorno, and Malaga. However, Unlike the Jews, Muslim presence in Europe would not be organised. Protestant and Muslims had common interests, anti-Catholicism. The Ottomans made possible the success of the Dutch Revolt, by diverting Spanish resources. ...**but also warfare:** Battle of Lepanto (1571).

Christians accepted individual Muslims but no communities. Only exception: Eastern Europe, the Tatars of Lithuania. Since the 14th century around Vilnius. – 100,000 people. In the rest of Europe, only two types of Muslim community: slaves and *Moriscos*.

Trade and Religious Minorities. Marginalisation: an old fable? Livorno and Venice.

The Port Jews of Livorno and the Muslim ‘bagni’.

The Jews, stateless merchants, unable to wage war and seal diplomatic agreements.

Free port of Livorno attracted the Sephardim (Spanish) Jews. Jewish merchants and bankers crucial in the development of the city. Mediators with the Ottomans. Jewish networks contributed to the exchange of Mediterranean goods (tin, lead, silver, fabrics) for Asian silks, cotton and spices.

18th century, Jewish community in Livorno the single largest group of the mercantile class. The Jews tapped into networks of expatriates in France, Syria, the Netherlands and across the Atlantic.

Bagni: community of Muslim rowers, with Mosques and leaders.

Venice and the Ottomans: only Venice had a recognised Muslim community. (*Fondaco*, walled compound, a unique case). Commerce was in both interests. Venice paid tribute to the Ottoman sultan, an intermediary between Europe and Asia. The Ottomans were Venice’s most important international partner. Traders and diplomats formed vibrant communities in both countries.

Between 1482 and 1502 constant warfare and peace treaties between the two parties.

1570-1573 Venice-Ottoman war: Loss of Cyprus (1570).

1570s-90s: between Venice and the Ottomans, pacific coexistence to secure trade through the Balkans.

The conflict was never religious or political, but always commercial.

Venice and the Jews: The community segregated in the *ghetto* since the early 1500s (in the city but not part of it, no corruption of Christendom). Jews controlled trade between Venice and the Balkans and Constantinople. Jewish nations: ‘Levantine’ from the Ottoman Empire, ‘Ponentine’ or Sephardic from Spain and Portugal, ‘Ashkenazim’ from the German lands.

By the end of sixteenth century Jews started to return to Europe. Christendom had new enmities after the splintering of the Reformation. Assimilated in the 18th century.

