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GRACIA MENDES IN DUBROVNIK

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ABSTRACT: On her flight from the Apennine Peninsula to the Ottoman Empire Gracia Mendes made a stopover in Dubrovnik, as evidenced by four recently discovered documents that she had registered at the Ragusan notary on 20 September 1552. Sparse data in the Dubrovnik Archives on a distinguished figure such as that of Gracia Mendes does strike as odd, considering that the city authorities kept detailed record of the political, economic, private and public life. This fact along with the content of the mentioned documents spurred us to investigate deeper and find the reasons underlying her stay in Dubrovnik and her business affairs with the Ragusans.

Keywords: Gracia Mendes, trade, Jewish community, *conversos*, Ottoman Empire, Dubrovnik, Inquisition

Before arrival in Dubrovnik

Since the life of Gracia Mendes before her departure for the Ottoman Empire has been thoroughly studied,¹ in this article we aim to focus on her stay in

¹ Here is a select bibliography on the life of Gracia Mandes: Cecil Roth, *The House of Nasi: Doña Gracia*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1947; Andrée Aelion Brooks, *The Woman who Defied Kings: The Life and Times of Doña Gracia Nasi - a Jewish Leader*

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Dubrovnik and her business dealings with the Ragusans. While planning the escape to the Ottoman Empire, Gracia Mendes must have been preoccupied with the reorganisation of her affairs. In order to manage her business from Istanbul, she needed a suitable 'link' with the West and the neutral Dubrovnik Republic may have proved as a good solution. This could explain why Gracia Mendes decided to travel to the Ottoman Empire en route Dubrovnik. Also, it is noteworthy that Isaac Ergas, her future agent, has been traced in Dubrovnik from 1544 onwards.² Perhaps he was the one whom Gracia Mendes assigned to 'feel the puls' of the Ragusan port and, when the time was right, to start negotiations with the authorities of Dubrovnik. This is where our assumptions end. Archive sources provide no information whatsoever on the first negotiations the Ragusans had with any of Gracia's agents, nor on her correspondence with the Ragusan authorities. It seems not by chance that in her case not a single decision regarding the otherwise regularly discussed agenda on the meetings of the Ragusan government has been entered into the minutes.³

Gracia's arrival

From the 1530s the Jews lived within the walled city area of Dubrovnik.⁴ Although in 1546 the Ragusan authorities set up a ghetto, the Jews continued to inhabit various parts of the city. In order to reside outside the ghetto, they most often needed special permission of the Minor Council or the Senate. A number of examples confirm this practice. Famous poet Didachus Pyrrhus

During the Renaissance. St. Paul (Minnesota): Paragon House, 2002; Marianna D. Birnbaum, *The Long Journey of Gracia Mendes*. Budapest-New York: Central European University Press, 2003; Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli, »Beatrice de Luna, vedova Mendes, alias donna Graci Nasi: un'ebrea influente (1510-1569 ca.)«, in: *Rinascimento al femminile*, ed. Ottavia Niccoli. Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1991: pp. 83-116; Libby Garshowitz, »Gracia Mendes: Power, Influence and Intrigue«, in: *Power of the Weak. Studies on Medieval Women*, ed. Jennifer Carpenter and Sally-Beth MacLean. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995: pp. 94-125; Herman Prins Salomon and Aron de Leone Leoni, »Mendes, Benveniste, De Luna, Micas, Nasci: The State of the Art (1532-1558)«, *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 3-4 (1998): pp. 135-211.

² *Lamenta de Intus* (hereafter: *Lam. Intus*), series 51, vol. 89, f. 260; State Archives in Dubrovnik (hereafter: SAD).

³ Sadly, the minutes of the Senate's secret sessions have not been preserved, for they might have provided us with some much-needed data. It is generally assumed that upon the entry of the French troops in Dubrovnik (1806), the minutes of the Senate's secret sessions were destroyed by the Ragusan authorities themselves. The few extant volumes do not cover the time period of Gracia's stay in Dubrovnik (*Secreta Rogatorum*, series 4; SAD).

⁴ *Lam. Intus*, vol. 88, ff. 220v-221v.

lived in Dubrovnik from 1558 until his death in 1599 in a small rented house by the sea, but shortly before death he moved to the ghetto.⁵ In 1565 Reina Benveniste arrived in Dubrovnik with her family from Ferrara, probably planning to proceed to the Ottoman Empire. On 30 April 1565, the Minor Council issued her a permit allowing her to reside outside the ghetto “because she was blood-related to Gracia Nasi”.⁶ In 1580 the Ragusan authorities permitted Samuel Ergas, consul of the Jewish Community, to reside with his family outside the ghetto.⁷ Rabbi Solomon Oeff (Ohev) lived in a house in Prijeko for years (1583/8).⁸ Archive sources show that apart from the notables quite a number of other Jews also lived outside the ghetto.⁹ As shown by the examples above, for the residence outside the ghetto an official decision of the authorities was required, which in the case of Gracia Mendes is missing.

Before the Great Earthquake of 1667, in the immediate vicinity of the Rector’s Palace stood one of the finest city palaces, commonly known as *Herzegovina*.¹⁰ It used to host the most distinguished guests of the Ragusan government, such as the envoy of Sultan Murad II (1431) or Austrian archduke Friedrich V (1436).¹¹ From the mid-sixteenth century distinguished Ottoman guests were usually accommodated in it.¹² The fact that *Herzegovina* stood on an exposed location leads us to assume that Gracia Mendes was not among its residents. We believe that the authorities offered her comfortable and safe accommodation at a more

⁵ Đuro Körbler, »Život i rad humanista Didaka Pira Portugalca, napose u Dubrovniku«. *Rad JAZU* 216 (1917): p. 306; Jorjo Tadić, *Jevreji u Dubrovniku do polovine XVII stoljeća*. Sarajevo: La Benevolencia, 1937: p. 306.

⁶ *Captum fuit de concedendo D. Renae Benvenisti hebraeae et eius familiae, quae ex Ferraria ventura est Rhagusium, ut hic in civitate nostra, extra Ghetum Hebraeorum possit conducere unam domum et tam habitare cum dicta eius familia, donec Rhagusii demorabitur, quae D. Rena affinis seu consanguinea est Donae Gratiae Nassiae* (*Acta Minoris Consilii*, hereafter: *Cons. Min.*, series 5, vol. 47, f. 200v; SAD).

⁷ *Acta Consilii Rogatorum* (hereafter: *Cons. Rog.*), series 3, vol. 65, ff. 223, 223v (SAD). Samuel was the brother of Isaac Ergas, Gracia’s agent in Dubrovnik (J. Tadić, *Jevreji u Dubrovniku*: p. 157).

⁸ J. Tadić, *Jevreji u Dubrovniku*: p. 87.

⁹ J. Tadić, *Jevreji u Dubrovniku*: p. 82; Vesna Miović, *The Jewish Ghetto in the Dubrovnik Republic (1546-1808)*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2005: p. 29; *Cons. Min.*, vol. 51, f. 175v; *Lam. Intus*, vol. 109, f. 229v; vol. 110, f. 142v.

¹⁰ For more details on this palace: Nada Grujić and Danko Zelić, »The Palace of Duke Sandalj Hranić in Dubrovnik«. *Dubrovnik Annals* 15 (2011): pp. 7-66.

¹¹ *Cons. Min.*, vol. 7, ff. 77v-78, 96v; *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 5, f. 23v.

¹² Vesna Miović, *Wisdom at the Crossroads: True Stories from the Time of the Republic of Dubrovnik and the Ottoman Empire*. Dubrovnik: Kartolina, udruga za promicanje multikulturalnih vrijednosti, 2011: pp. 70-71.

discreet location within the city walls. No special protocol was organised to welcome Gracia Mendes in Dubrovnik. The authorities made sure that her arrival and stay in the city remained private.

It is hard to believe that those in pursuit of Gracia's fortune had no knowledge about her whereabouts, or that they at least might have anticipated her making a stopover in Dubrovnik after leaving the Apennine Peninsula. Doubtless, influential individuals from the Ragusan political and ecclesiastical circles did not approve of the government's relations with a crypto-Jewess in flight. By not leaving concrete evidence on Gracia's stay in Dubrovnik, the authorities aimed to protect both her interests and safety, as well as the interests of the Dubrovnik Republic.

Papal Curia along with a number of secular rulers tried to deprive Gracia of her wealth on the grounds of the defence of faith, accusing her of being a crypto-Jew, a new Christian who returned to Judaism. Regarding this let us mention the disapproval of the papal nuncio to Venice, Lodovico Beccadelli, over "the harm for Christianity should such a fortune, amassed amongst us, go into the hands of the infidels". Beccadelli wrote to the pope about Gracia as a woman who had seriously offended the Christian faith, publicly renouncing it with an intention to return to Judaism once on the sultan's territory. He was indignant about the news that the Venetians had no intention of stopping her, but simply allowed her to leave. The rumour actually proved to be true, as the Venetians wanted to avoid any friction with the Ottoman Empire.¹³

Beccadelli's reaction¹⁴ clearly shows the Church's overly concern for the wealth of the Mendes family, of which the Ragusans were well aware. Judging by a piece of archival data, the Ragusans decided to neutralise the Curia's eventual disapproval of Gracia's stay in Dubrovnik by resorting to an established manoeuvre which we might refer to as 'time lag', a calculated delay in the news reporting.¹⁵ Namely, in June 1553 (some nine months after Gracia's departure

¹³ A. Brooks, *The Woman who Defied Kings*: pp. 285-286; Brian Pullan, *The Jews of Europe and the Inquisition of Venice 1550-1670*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983: p. 179.

¹⁴ It is noteworthy that only three years after Gracia's stay in Dubrovnik Beccadelli was installed bishop of Dubrovnik (1555-1560), and permanently displayed his dissatisfaction with the status of the Church in the Republic and the restrictions imposed on it by the Ragusan authorities. See Beccadelli's biography by Seraphinus Maria Cerva in the work *Sacra Metropolis Ragusina* (Library of the Franciscan Monastery in Dubrovnik, MS no. 215, pp. 2376-2446).

¹⁵ Vesna Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istanbulu*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: HAZU Zavod za povijesne znanosti u Dubrovniku, 2003: pp. 137-138.

from Dubrovnik), through their representative in Rome, the Ragusans informed the Curia that some Jews who claimed to have been converted had arrived in Dubrovnik the previous year. According to their report, the converts exhibited the bulls of indulgences for the catechumens, and deposited 40 ducats until the validation of the bulls which, however, were proven to be forged. Hence the authorities were asking permission to invest the money in the renovation of the city walls, which would be of the common benefit.¹⁶ As we can see, the Ragusans made no mention of the converts' fate, but it is quite clear that they left Dubrovnik, probably to continue their journey to the Ottoman Empire. The literature on Gracia Mendes generally agrees that she arrived in Dubrovnik accompanied by many *conversos* whom she tried to save from persecution.¹⁷ This might lead us to conclude that the report the Ragusans addressed to the Curia concerned no other but Gracia Mendes and the shielded *conversos*.

Four notary documents drafted on 20 September 1552 "at the home of the Illustrious Lady Beatrice de Luna in Dubrovnik"

While in Dubrovnik, Gracia Mendes drafted four documents and had them registered at the notary in the Rector's Palace. In order to avoid appearance in public, the notary paid her a private call. The documents were registered on 20 September 1552 in the privacy of her home and in the presence of two witnesses: Ivan Gozze, nobleman and judge of the civil court, which greatly added to his credibility as witness,¹⁸ and notary Nikola, son of Pasko.

¹⁶ *Vi dovete raccordar qualmente l'anno prossimo passato comparsero in questa citta alcuni hebrei, secondo dicevano fatti christiani, quali presentorno alcune bulle con indulgentia concessa per li catecumini. Costoro raccolsero in circa 40 ducati quali furno depositati nelle mani de vecario e lo Monsignor Arciveschovo; in processo di tempo s'e dappoi cognosciuto dette bulle esser state false e essendo false oratores carent impetratis. Rimanendo ora detti denari in deposito nelle mani del vecario ne possendose saper a chi si habbino restituire, vogliamo supplicarli dove ne parera per convertire detti denari in adiuto della fabrica delle mura della citta nostra, quale concerne lo publico beneficio e tale conversione vederete fare quanto piu presto e ce le mandarete. (Lettere di Levante / hereafter: *Let. Lev.*, series 27.1., vol. 25, ff. 123v-124r; SAD).*

¹⁷ J. Tadić, *Jevreji u Dubrovniku*: p. 318; A. Brooks, *The Woman who Defied Kings*: p. 248.

¹⁸ Nobleman Ivan Gozze is undersigned as witness on all the four contracts. By emphasising his official status of the judge of the civil court, the notary abided by the ancient custom by which the judges "enjoyed such authority that only one signature of a judge would suffice for the document to be valid, which otherwise required several witnesses, and in this case it took one judge only to authorise everything with his signature" (Seraphinus Maria Cerva, *Prolegomena in Sacram metropolim Ragusinam. Editio princeps*, ed. Relja Seferović. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2008: p. 312).

All the persons in these documents are cited by Christianised name. Gracia Mendes is mentioned as Beatrice de Luna, a Portuguese, widow of Francisco Mendes. Her daughter Reina is cited as Ana, while her niece Gracia (Gracia *La Chica*) as Beatrice Mendes.

Beatrice de Luna acted as guardian and curator of the estate of her adult daughter Ana, present in Dubrovnik with her, and of her niece Beatrice Mendes. Under the terms of these documents, Beatrice terminated the partnership with her five agents (It. *fattori*), whom she authorised to administer her financial affairs, mainly the collection of debts.

Like Gracia and her family, these agents were also crypto-Jews. Because of their relations with Gracia who managed to flee with the wealth, the Inquisition was a serious threat to their safety. The documents were most surely written for the purpose of the agents' security after Gracia's departure for the Ottoman Empire.

The agents in question were as follows:

1) Tommaso Gomes, a relative of Gracia's late husband, who from 1545 managed the finances of the Mendes family "in Venice, Ferrara and many other Italian cities, in Lyon and in numerous other areas and places"¹⁹ (Appendix 1).

2) and 3) Guillaume (written as Guillermo) Fernandes and João Miques (written as Juan Mecas) were entered together in one document. By the will of Gracia's late brother-in-law, Diogo Mendes, the former two and Gracia were to manage the half of the estate disposed to his daughter Gracia *La Chica*.

In 1550, in Ferrara, Gracia's sister Brianda signed that in no manner would she interfere with the rights of Gracia, Fernandes or Miques.²⁰ However, this notary document was probably drafted as an additional legal protection from Brianda.

Guillaume Fernandes spent many years in the service of the House of Mendes. Apart from João Miques and Duarte Gomes, Fernandes was one of Gracia's most confidential advisers and assistants.²¹

João Miques (Micas, Miycas, Miquez) was a famous relative of Gracia Mendes, who in 1554 settled in Istanbul and married Reina, Gracia's daughter.

¹⁹ With regard to the family of Gracia Mendes, Tommaso Gomes is less frequently mentioned than his brother Agostino Enriques. He, too, was a confident and agent of the Mendes family (C. Roth, *The House of Nasi: Doña Gracia*: p. 41; M. Birnbaum, *The Long Journey of Gracia Mendes*: p. 49; L. Garshowitz, »Gracia Mendes: Power, Influence and Intrigue«: p. 99).

²⁰ A. Brooks, *The Woman who Defied Kings*: p. 257.

²¹ A. Brooks, *The Woman who Defied Kings*: pp. 182, 192.

In the Ottoman Empire he was known as Joseph Nasi whom Selim II, upon his ascension to power, proclaimed “Duke of Naxos”.²²

João Miques and Guillaume Fernandes attended to financial affairs “in the vicinity of Antwerpen, ...in the Duchy of Brabant, in Lyon, France, Italy, Spain and in numerous other parts.” Also, Guillaume Fernandes acted as agent for Miques, and collected money from his debtors, too (Appendix 2).

4) Christopher Manuel (written as Cristofor Emanuelis) most likely ran the household of Gracia Mendes while she lived in Ferrara.²³ He managed the finances “in Venice, Ferrara, Lyon, Dubrovnik and in numerous other places and parts” (Appendix 3).

5) Lope de Probenza/ Provincia²⁴ (written as Lopez de Provera) from 1543 on managed the finances “in the Italian parts but equally so in those of Spain and Germany” (Appendix 4).

Gracia's business with the Ragusans

According to most recent research, in the sixteenth century the Republic of Dubrovnik was a prosperous state of some 55,000 inhabitants.²⁵ By the end of the 1530s and in the early 1540s, its commercial fleet had 132 ships only to rise to 170 by the end of the century, having doubled the tonnage from 1540. In 1570, Ragusan fleet was bigger than that of England and somewhat smaller than the French one. The same research indicates that in the sixteenth century the economic welfare of the Dubrovnik Republic was slightly lower than on the Apennine Peninsula, but higher than in France, England, and the states of Eastern Europe.²⁶

The Ragusans were able merchants, they skillfully handled the finances, they were well-informed about the West, had a strong commercial fleet and an established transit port. That is why the Ottomans decided not to interfere with their freedom,

²² M. G. Muzzarelli, »Beatrice de Luna, vedova Mendes, alias donna Graci Nasi: un'ebrea influente«: p. 114.

²³ A. Brooks, *The Woman who Defied Kings*: pp. 195, 241.

²⁴ C. Roth, *The House of Nasi; Doña Gracia*: p. 37.

²⁵ Nenad Vekarić, »The Population of the Dubrovnik Republic in the Fifteenth, Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries«. *Dubrovnik Annals* 2 (1998): pp. 7-28.

²⁶ Vladimir Stipetić, »Population and Gross Domestic Product of Croatia (1500-1913) in the Light of Angus Maddison's Book *The World Economy: A Millennial Perspective*«. *Dubrovnik Annals* 8 (2004): pp. 109-176.

yet imposed the payment of tribute.²⁷ In the West, the Ragusans presented themselves as the defenders of Christianity, as a tiny state bordering the mighty Osmanlis to whom they paid tribute and submitted in order to survive.²⁸

Dubrovnik often hosted able Jewish physicians or Jews of influence at the Porte. Among them were many *conversos* who in the Ottoman Empire or in the Republic of Dubrovnik returned to their original Jewish faith, and were persecuted by the Curia. Whenever the Curia urged their banishment from the Dubrovnik Republic, the Ragusan authorities responded diplomatically: "These Jews are in sultan's favour and the Republic may not go against him".²⁹ The Papal States and other Christian states generally yielded before this argument, because it was not in their interest to see the Dubrovnik Republic tangled in problems: the West also needed the Republic just as it was.

The wording of the petition that Gracia Mendes and her Ragusan agents submitted to the government of Dubrovnik clearly reflects their perception of the Dubrovnik Republic as described. No doubt, they were determined to trade through the neutral Dubrovnik port.³⁰

On the other hand, the Ragusans were reluctant in their decision to do business with Gracia Mendes. Evidently, they were weighing up the pros and cons of their eventual relations with Mendes and the possible harm they could suffer on account of the circumstances under which she fled from the Christendom.

Upon her departure from Dubrovnik, Gracia Mendes waited for the decision of the Ragusan authorities for some time, but there was no response. Then she wrote to them insisting on their decision, but again received no reply. Shortly after, Gracia's agents Isaac Ergas and Abner Alfarin came forward with a new request, kindly supplicating the government to finally decide whether they accepted the business terms proposed by Mendes or not. In order to persuade

²⁷ On this topic see Lovro Kunčević, »Janus-faced Sovereignty: The International Status of the Ragusan Republic in the Early Modern Period«, in: *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. Gábor Kármán and Lovro Kunčević. Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2013: pp. 91-121; Vesna Miović, »Diplomatic Relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Dubrovnik«, *ibidem*: pp. 187-208.

²⁸ See Lovro Kunčević, »The Rhetoric of the Frontier of Christendom in the Diplomacy of Renaissance Ragusa (Dubrovnik)«, *Dubrovnik Annals* 17 (2013): pp. 37-68.

²⁹ Vesna Miović, »Jewish Life in Sixteenth-Century Ragusa«, *Hispania Judaica Bulletin* 8 (2011): pp. 115-119.

³⁰ *Cons. Rog.* vol. 51, f. 125v-126v (Appendix 5). It should be noted that this was the second petition Gracia Mendes and her agents filed to the Ragusan authorities. From its content we learn about another petition that Mendes had probably submitted to the authorities during her stay in Dubrovnik.

the government, the agents underlined that the proposed customs fees could be negotiable in future. They continued with the terms stated in the first petition of Gracia Mendes: for a bale of cloth or any other goods imported from Italy, they would pay 1 ducat, for the goods imported from the East, 1% of the goods' value. For silk and crimson, they would pay 4 ducats, for a chest of silk fabric 1/4 of a ducat, for a bale of crimson 2 ducats, and for a bale of goat skins 1 ducat. At the Customs House Gracia Mendes would be given special place for the storage of her goods, under lease. Lastly, in case she decided to use another transit port, she would pay the Ragusans an amount of 500 gold ducats. Her agents guaranteed that they would do everything in their power to channel as many Jewish merchants into the Ragusan port as possible (Appendix 5).

On 22 November 1552, the government accepted the proposed deal. Some fifteen days later the Ragusan Customs Office received a payment of 500 ducats made by Gracia Mendes,³¹ a guarantee for the customs fees with a grace period of six months.³²

Another preserved document pertaining to Gracia Mendes is dated 9 November 1554. Her business affairs were obviously threatened in some way since she decided to turn to the Ragusan authorities in request of additional guarantee of the safe passage of her merchandise and the safety of her business partners. If the passage via Dubrovnik proved unsafe, she would channel her goods to another port (Appendix 6).³³

Until recently, the mentioned letter has been considered a unique written proof of Gracia's sojourn in Dubrovnik. Gracia penned it in 1554, and in it thanked the Ragusans for the hospitality they had offered her "last year". This would mean that she visited Dubrovnik in 1553, and not in 1552. The likelihood is that the scribe made a mistake while copying the text of the letter into the Senate's minutes.³⁴

³¹ These were gold ducats (*Cons. Rog.*, vol. 51, f. 126v).

³² *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 51, f. 126v.

³³ *Prima pars est de dando et concedendo salvum conductum D. Beatricis de Luna iuxta formam sue supplicationis lectae in presenti Consilio et si prima capiatur, postea dicitur per quantum temporis et quibus personis dictus salvus conductus sit dandus.* (30:7).

Prima pars est de concedendo dictum salvum conductum per spacium quinque annorum proximi futurorum. (23:14).

Prima pars est de concedendo eundem salvum conductum ultra mercimonia dictae D. Beatricis etiam mercimoniis familiae sue. (30:7) (*Cons. Rog.* vol. 52, ff. 154v-155r; J. Tadić, *Jevreji u Dubrovniku*: p. 430.).

³⁴ *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 52, f. 155; J. Tadić, *Jevreji u Dubrovniku*: pp. 430-431. See Appendix 6.

On several occasions the Ragusan authorities were addressed by the Jews who wished to enjoy the same customs privileges as those granted to Gracia Mendes and her agents. At the beginning of 1556, Isaia Benaser intended to unload half of his cargo from Alexandria at the Dubrovnik port if the authorities allowed it under the same passage fees as those paid by Gracia. The authorities of Dubrovnik accepted his supplication unanimously.³⁵

In 1564, a group of Jewish merchants turned to the authorities through the *harach* ambassador in Istanbul. In their aim to trade via the Ragusan port, they demanded privileges similar to those enjoyed by Gracia's agents, but preferred to trade without the latter's service. The government replied that Gracia's agents brought great profit to the Ragusan port. If the mentioned Jews were prepared to contribute considerably, they, too, would be given certain privileges.³⁶ Apparently, the Jewish merchants abandoned any further contact.

³⁵ *Prima pars est de acceptando supplicationem Benaser hebrei lectam in presenti consilio et D. Dohanieris debeant eum tractare in solutione dohane iuxta formam suae supplicationis lecte in presenti consilio; omnes.*

Molto Magnifici Signori. Esai Benaser hebreo havendo desiderio scaricare nella città delle Signorie Vostre la mita del carico di questa nave Santa alla Roma, che sono robbe di Alessandria supplica al tribunale di Vostre Signorie Excellentissime le vogliano fare gratia che paghi el transito sicome e la parte della Signora Beatrice e se alcuna cossa vendera, si paghera sicome e l'ordinario del daccio, e perche sera bissoigno per destivare la nave, ponere altre robbe delli turchi al modo le Signorie Vostre non li farano pagare altro dacio perche se recarecarano in nave un altra volta dichiarando el transito a raggioni di una per cento. E Nostro Signori Iddio le felicit et conservi (Cons. Rog., vol. 53, f. 166v).

³⁶ *...A quanto ci scrivete in materia degli Hebrei, li quali costi vi hanno ricercato, che à nome loro ci debbiare pregare, che gli vogliamo trattare nel modo, che facciamo gli agenti della Signora Beatrice, dicendo ch'hanno intentione di darci alcun utile, ma che tutti non si contentano che le robbe, et merci loro passino per le mani di detti agenti, alli quali Hebrei, voi à nome nostro risponderete, dicendo, che quando per la sinagoga loro ci vogliano sporger alcun buon partito, obligandosi di certo, et con promissione di voler far passar di qui tutte le robbe loro, noi non mancaremo similmente ad essi dar ogni aiuto, et favore, et procuraremo che non solamente siano accomodati delli navigli di ducento carra, ma delle nostre navi, accio le robbe, et merci loro siano à buon salvamento condotte di qui in Ancona et di Ancona à Ragusa che sol questo potra loro importare di sicurtà un sei per cento onde per questa cagione potranno ben sporgerci alcun buon partito, et che se noi facciamo alcun piacere alli agenti della detta Signora si habbiamo la causa, perche ogni anno ci da utilità grande, et li sui agenti non mandano altrove le robbe, che nella città nostra, però se li detti Hebrei ci voranno anchor essi sporger alcun partito ragionevole, con promissione di mandar tutte le lor robbe per Raugia, non solamente li trattaremo bene come facciamo gli agenti di detta Signora ma anchor assai meglio, perche ordinaremo à tutte le nostre navi, che passano per Ancona che si debbano acostar qui, nelle quali potranno sempre accomodar le robbe loro, et saranno sicuri che non incorreranno nelle mani di corsari sicche intesa la mente, et opinione di detti Hebrei sopra questo fatto, ci darete particolar avviso del tutto (from a letter the Ragusan authorities addressed to Marin Cervia and Nikola Pozza, the *harach* ambassadors, on 4 July 1564; *Let. Lev.*, vol. 29, ff. 185v-186).*

Gracia Mendes made personal effort to advocate for the Jewish merchants to be given privileges in Dubrovnik. This we learn from the Ragusan reply dated 2 October 1562 to her letter of 25 August that year. The Ragusans stated that the merchants she recommended would receive the same treatment as her agent Isaac Ergas. According to them, there was no cause for her concern as long as she kept her promise to channel Jewish merchants through the port of Dubrovnik³⁷ (Appendix 9).

The business contract between Gracia Mendes and the Ragusans was regularly renewed every five years. Signed in November 1552, it was renewed by a short decision of the Senate on 7 August 1557.³⁸ For the second and last time it was renewed on 9 July 1562. Mendes's supplication for the renewal of the contract was registered on the same date³⁹ (Appendix 8).

The Ragusan ambassadors delivered a *harach* of 12,500 ducats to the sultan every year. Considering that their mission was provided with fairly modest means, in case of need they could rely on the Jews in Istanbul. In agreement with the Ragusan authorities, the latter lent money to the envoys on several occasions and presented the bill, most commonly in Dubrovnik. At the beginning of the seventeenth century the envoys received a loan from Mattatia ben Castiel, physician Daniel Abeatar and his son Samuel.⁴⁰ Before them, in 1555, 1557 (Appendix 7), 1559 and 1560, Gracia Mendes was the lender, Ergas and Alfarin being the payees.⁴¹

Abner Alfarin, Isaac Ergas, Isaac Ergas Abenaso

There is reason to assume that Gracia's agents, Isaac Ergas and Abner Alfarin, lived outside the ghetto from the very beginning. We know little about their residence before 1557, when they rented a flat in a house in front of the

³⁷ *Let. Lev.*, vol. 29, ff. 30v-31.

³⁸ *Prima pars est de prorogando Dominae Beatrice de Luna beneficium pro computo dohanae sibi concessum de anno 1552 de mense novembris adi 22 ad alios quinque annos proximi secuturos, completo primo quinquennio cum pactis et conditionibus contentis in prima sua supplicatione* (*Cons. Rog.*, vol. 54, f. 39v).

³⁹ *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 56, ff. 110r-110v.

⁴⁰ V. Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istambulu*: p. 183.

⁴¹ J. Tadić, *Jevreji u Dubrovniku*: pp. 323-324; Moises Orfali, »Doña Gracia Mendes and the Ragusan Republic; The Successful Use of Economic Institutions in 16th-Century Commerce«, in: *The Mediterranean and the Jews: Society, Culture and Economy in Early Modern Times*, ed. Elliott Horowitz and Moises Orfali. Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2002: pp. 194-195; *Let. Lev.*, vol. 26, f. 17.

⁴² V. Miović, *The Jewish Ghetto in the Dubrovnik Republic*: pp. 14-15, 29, 33.

ghetto.⁴² Ergas and Alfarin lived in Dubrovnik with their families about whom scarcely anything is known: Ergas's brothers Samuel and Abraham also lived in Dubrovnik.⁴³ Abner Alfarin's wife was named Orseta.⁴⁴ Abner Alfarin was the first Ragusan Jew who had sole ownership of a ship.⁴⁵ The last record of him dates from 1561, when he is mentioned as a consul of the Ragusan Jewish Community.⁴⁶

Isaac Ergas was also a consul of the Jewish Community and was appointed to this position twice: before Alfarin⁴⁷ and upon Alfarin's death. By this time Gracia Mendes had passed away.⁴⁸ Still, Isaac Ergas remained highly respected among the Jews of Dubrovnik and equally so by the Ragusan authorities. For example, in 1572 the government brought a decision by which five Ragusan Jews were exempt from wearing a special sign. This decision concerned the famous poet Didachus Pyrrhus, distinguished surgeon Abraham, his son, his son-in-law and Isaac Ergas.⁴⁹ The latter was last mentioned in 1583.⁵⁰

In a supplication for the contract renewal submitted in 1562, Gracia cited that instead of her current agents in Dubrovnik, Abner Alfarin and Isaac Ergas, she was appointing a new agent, Isaac Ergas Abenaso. On the basis of her wording, one could say that Isaac Ergas and Isaac Ergas Abenaso were two persons. Archive sources, however, suggest that it was one and the same person.⁵¹

Upon the death of Gracia Mendes (1569) the merchandise of the Mendes-Nasi family was no longer channelled to Dubrovnik. Her death marked the end of their business relations with the Dubrovnik Republic, best witnessed in a

⁴³ J. Tadić, *Jevreji u Dubrovniku*: p. 157.

⁴⁴ *Criminalia*, series 16, vol. 16, f. 26v (SAD).

⁴⁵ Joint ownership was far more common in merchant fleet, the owners having shares, *karats*, of several ships, which reduced the investment risk. Alfarin, however, was a sole owner of a ship which in 1559 he sold to a Ragusan nobleman (J. Tadić, *Jevreji u Dubrovniku*: p. 226).

⁴⁶ *Criminalia*, vol. 16, f. 26v.

⁴⁷ *Criminalia*, vol. 16, f. 40 (year 1566); *Lam. Intus*, vol. 107, f. 153 (1566).

⁴⁸ *Lam. Intus*, vol. 109, f. 362, 362v (year 1571); vol. 110, f. 20v (1572).

⁴⁹ *Captum fuit de indulgendo Abrame Chirurgo et eius filio, et genero, nec non Didaco Doctori, et Isaco Ergas hebreis incolis huius civitatis ut possint palam in publicum ire, stare et negociare sine birettis croceis, seu rubeis...* (*Cons. Min.*, vol. 51, f. 15v).

⁵⁰ *Diversi e Possesso de Criminali*, series 37, vol. 5, f. 13 (SAD).

⁵¹ In August 1571, Isaac Ergas was mentioned as consul of the Jewish Community. Only six months later, Isaac Ergas Abenaso was mentioned as consul (*Lam. Intus*, vol. 109, f. 362v; vol. 110, f. 20v). Isaac Ergas, first mentioned in Dubrovnik in 1544, from the 1560s onwards bore the nickname Benaso (Benazo, Abenaso, Abenazo, Benason; *Lam. Intus*, vol. 110, f. 20v; vol. 111, f. 112v; *Cons. Min.*, vol. 48, f. 7v; vol. 54, f. 176; *Diversi e Possesso de Criminali*, vol. 4, f. 133).

conflict between the Ragusans and Joseph Nasi that took place only a year and a half after Gracia's death. In early 1571 the Ragusans sentenced to death a Jew who represented himself as Benvenisti Nasi for murdering another Jew by the name of Menahem Maraz. Benvenisti Nasi was Joseph Nasi's relative and the latter did everything in his power to save him, but in vain. Later he was determined to avenge himself on the Ragusans by spreading rumours on their collaboration with the Ottomans in the ongoing war.⁵²

Conclusion

The Ragusan authorities showed great zeal in keeping record of the political, economic, public and private life of the Dubrovnik Republic. With this in mind, one would rightly expect to find abundant data on the arrival and stay of Gracia Mendes, particularly on her business negotiations with the Ragusans. The data, however, is lacking, with the exception of four documents which Gracia Mendes registered at the Ragusan notary on 20 September 1552. The documents' content along with the lack of evidence on a prominent figure such as that of Gracia Mendes have prompted us to seek the answers to a number of questions. How was she received by the Ragusan government? What was her sojourn in Dubrovnik like? Why did she choose Dubrovnik to terminate the partnership with her agents and have the documents registered at the local notary? What were the conditions under which the Ragusan government accepted Gracia's wish to channel her trade through Dubrovnik port while stationed in Istanbul?

Gracia Mendes was aware that her escape had infuriated those in power, their rage being equally targeted at her business partners. Dubrovnik being her first stop, it was at the city's notary that she decided to register the documents confirming her dissolution of partnership with the five agents. For the same reason the Ragusan authorities were determined to cover up the traces of her Dubrovnik visit. In this way they protected both sides. The city must have witnessed influential individuals from the political or ecclesiastical circles who disapproved of Dubrovnik's collaboration with a crypto-Jewess in flight.

For the reasons mentioned, we can merely speculate on Gracia's sojourn in Dubrovnik. Our reconstruction was mainly based on the Ragusan conventions in similar situations. Therefore, we believe that Gracia Mendes set foot in the

⁵² For more details on this case: V. Miović, »Jewish Life in Sixteenth-Century Ragusa«: pp. 120-122.

Dubrovnik port without any ceremony, that the authorities accommodated her in a discreetly located house within the city walls, and that her stay in Dubrovnik was fairly short.

The Ragusans' first reaction to Gracia's business offer was affirmative, which is why she decided to journey to the Ottoman Empire via Dubrovnik. Yet she left Dubrovnik without a concrete answer, for it took the Ragusan authorities some time to bring the final decision. Their reluctance might be accounted by the fact that she had recently escaped or, perhaps, the profitability of her business proposal.

As to what extent Gracia Mendes was eager to channel her business through Dubrovnik's neutral port we learn from the supplication that her agents submitted to the Ragusan authorities on 22 November 1552. They reconfirmed the propositions of Gracia's business terms, and at the same time underlined that these conditions were negotiable and that, should the business be realised, they would do their best to attract Jewish merchants to Dubrovnik.

Gracia's contracts with the Ragusans were valid for five years. The first contract describing her privileges and duties was drafted in November 1552, the second in August 1557, and the last in July 1562. We do not know as to how long she did business with the Ragusans after these contracts. The contract was to be renewed sometime in mid-1567, but it did not take place. Thus her business relations with the Ragusans lasted almost 15 years. The benefit was mutual, as well as the satisfaction with well-organised and orderly business. Many implicit indicators point to this. Ragusan ambassadors who delivered *harach* to the sultan once a year were regular visitors of Gracia Mendes in her palace at Bosphorus. She offered them assistance whenever necessary. Her agent Isaac Ergas remained highly esteemed in Dubrovnik well after her death in 1569. Apparently, the figure of Isaac Ergas was a long reminder of this exceptional woman among the members of the Jewish Community in Dubrovnik but also among the representatives of the Ragusan government.

Appendix

Appendix 1. Document drafted on 20 September 1552 by which Beatrice de Luna terminates her partnership with Tommaso Gomes (*Diversa Notariae*, vol. 112, ff. 90r-91v).

Die XX Septembris 1552, indictione decima.

Constituta in presentia mei notarii et testium infrascriptorum Magnifica domina Beatrix de Luna relicta quondam Magnifici domini Francisci Mendes Lusitana, Racusii nunc commorans, agens ad infrascripta tam suo nomine proprio, quam veluti tutrix et curatrix generalis ac legitima administratrix personarum et bonorum dominae Annae Mendes eius filiae legitime et naturalis ex dicto quondam Magnifico domino Francisco Mendes marito suo, et dominae Beatricis Mendes eius neptis et filiae ac heredis quondam Magnifici domini domini Didaci Mendes iam fratris dicti quondam Magnifici domini Francisci Mendes ac Magnifica domina Anna filia et heres suprascripti quondam Magnifici domini Francisci iam adulta cum voluntate, consensu ac expressa licentia dictae Magnificae dominae Beatricis, matris, tutricis et curatricis suae, ambae ibi praesentes dicentes qualiter nobilis et spectabilis vir dominus Thomas Gomes Lusitanus incipiendo ab anno 1545 nuper decurso de consensu et voluntate suprascriptae Magnificae dominae Betricis, tutricis et administratricis rexit, gubernavit et administravit cum summa fide, studio et diligentia plura negotia heredum quondam domini Francisci et domini Didaci Mendes et praefatae dominae Beatricis de Luna. In qua quidem administratione juxta bonorum mercatorum morem et consuetudinem contigit ut dictus dominus Thomas tam in civitate Veneziane quam Ferrariae et in aliis pluribus locis Italiae Lugdunisque et in variis aliis partibus et locis tam nomine heredum quondam domini Francisci et domini Didaci Mendes et dominae Beatricis tutricis et administratricis praedictae et nominibus nonnullorum aliarum personarum a variis et diversis personis receperit plures et varias pecuniarum summas et quantitates et de dictis pecuniis una cum aliis denariorum summis tam nominibus dicte dominae Beatricis de Luna et heredum quam nomine proprio ipsius domini Thomae, cum expressa tamen licentia et consensu ipsius dominae Beatricis nonnullas dederit ad cambium pro computu dictorum heredum ac dominae Beatricis. Et in dictis nominibus similiter fecerit varias alias negotiationes, et cum sit quod idem dominus Thomas pariter in banchis

numulariorum fecerit varias assignationes et pecunias in banchis eidem assignatas exegerit, pro quibus similiter fecit varias quietationes, litteras, declarationes et alias scripturas pro cautela solventium, sicuti negotii qualitas exigebat. Et demum cum in administratione praefati domini Thomae intervenerint plures aliae negociationes, quas enumerare perdifficile est, de quibus omnibus et singulis rebus actionibus et negociationibus suprascriptis idem dominus Thomas semper dedit ac reddidit bonum, verum et legalem computum praefatae Magnificae dominae Beatrici tutrici, administratrici principali et quoniam praefata Magnifica domina Beatrix tutrix tam dominae Annae filiae suae quam dominae Beatricis neptis et ipsa domina Anna desiderant obviare omnibus et singulis litibus, questionibus et differentiis quae quovis modo, colore et ingenio per quodvis futurum tempus dicto domino Thomae vel eius heredibus et successoribus causa praefatae administrationis inferre possent, ob hanc itaque causam praefata Magnifica domina Beatrix, qua supra nomine, et domina Anna cum voluntate et consensu dictae dominae Beatricis matris, tutricis et curatricis sue ibi praesentis, sponte, non vi, dolo aut aliquo alio metu circumventi, sed de mera sua voluntate ac animi sui certa scientia fecerunt et faciunt pacto speciali domini Thomae Gomes, ibi praesenti, stipulanti et acceptanti pro se, heredibus successoribus qui sunt finem, remissionem, quietationem, absolutionem generalem et generalissimam de omnibus et singulis negociis per eundem dominum Thomam nomine ipsius dominae Beatricis et heredum suprascriptorum gestis, actis, factis, procuratis et negociatis huic retro usque ad praesentem diem, tam modis et formis desuper expressis quam aliter, quomodocumque et qualitercumque, simul vel divisim, in quocumque loco et forma, de spectantibus et pertinentibus ad ipsam Magnificam dominam Beatricem quam ad ipsos heredes. Et pro ipsis negociis sic gestis ab omnibus et quibuscumque quantitativis rerum bonarum et denariorum huic usque perventis ad manus ipsius domini Thomae spectantibus et pertinentibus dictae Magnificae dominae Beatrici suo nomine proprio et tamquam tutrici et curatrici dominarum Annae et Beatricis, vel alterius ipsarum, coniunctim aut divisim, vel ad heredes et hereditatem dictorum dominorum Francisci et Didaci quomodocumque et qualitercumque et ex quavis ratione vel causa quae dici vel excogitari possit. Et hanc praesentem finem, remissionem generalem et absolutionem dicta Magnifica domina Beatrix quo supra nomine et domina Anna fecerunt et faciunt, quoniam dixerunt et confessae fuerunt suprascriptum dominum Thomam Gomes ipsis, ut supra dictum est, tradidisse bonam, veram et rectam rationem omnium factorum, gestorum, actorum per eum et folium administrationis suae supradictae usque

in praesentem diem et reliqua omnia in manibus ipsius domini Thomae existentia de suo computu ac ratione fuisse et esse realiter et cum effectu data, tradita et consignata per eum praefatae Magnificae dominae Beatrici tutrici et administratrici. Rationem dantes praefatae domina Beatrix tutrix et curatrix dominarum Annae filiae suae et Beatricis neptis suae ac administratrix omnium bonorum praedictarum ac dicta domina Anna executionem sibi dicto nomine reddite et assignate rationes administrationis ac reliquorum praestationis ut supra cassantes et annullantes omnes et singulas scripturas, publicas et privatas, instrumenta, litteras missivas et cambia, partitas librorum et banchorum, processus testium depones omniaque alia et singula probationum genera cum quibus praefata Magnifica domina Beatrix, quo supra nomine, et domina Anna filia sua, aut alia persona earum nominibus quovis modo, colore et ingenio eundem dominum Thomam Gomes vel eius heredes et successores tam in iudicio quam extra molestare, perturbare et inquietare possent. Vocantur ab eodem domino Thoma Gomes se contentas et satisfactas et pro maiore cautela, securitate et satisfactione dicti domini Thomae Gomes antedicta Magnifica domina Beatrix agens quo supra nomine promisit et sic se et dictam dominam Annam filiam suam et dominam Beatricem neptem cum omnibus suis et earum bonis obligando et dicta domina Anna sub eadem obligatione promisserunt manutenere et conservare indemnem eundem dominum Thomam Gomes ab omni persona quae ipsum aut eius heredes et successores contra formam praesentis instrumenti tum in iudicio quam extra molestare praetenderet. Item dictus dominus Thomas parte ex altera, quia dixit et confessus est hinc retro usque ad praesentem diem pro omnibus et singulis suis provisionibus et premio quas et quod a dicta Magnifica domina Beatrice ac heredibus praedictis habere debebat causa et occasione laborum quos ipse passus est in regimine et administratione praedictis se fuisse et esse satisfactum et plene solutum. Idcirco dictam Magnificam dominam Beatricem et heredes praedictos absolvit, quietat et liberat promittens eis, hanc ob causam, se nihil amplius petiturum esse. Insuper dicta Magnifica domina Beatrix quo supra nomine et domina Anna filia sua pro maiori vigore praesentis contractus et cautela dicti domini Thomae renunciaverunt exceptione non sic facti et non sic celebrati praesentis contractus et instrumenti reique non sic gestae fari quo privilegio exceptione doli, mali, actionis in factum, conditum indebitum et sine causa quam metus causa et iniusta vel simulata causa omnibusque aliis exceptioni suo iuri, beneficio et legum ac statutorum auxilio sibi et dictis dominabus Annae et Beatrici aut earum alteri, quomodolibet competenti et competituro. Quae omnia et singula

praedicta praefata Magnifica domina Beatrix, quo supra nomine, et domina Anna ibi praesentes promiserunt perpetuo habere rata, grata et firma et contra formam praesenti contractus per sese aut aliquas alias interpositas personas numquam venire, sub poena reficiendi omnes et singulas expensas ac damna quas et quam dictus dominus Thomas vel eius heredes et successores causa praesentis instrumenti non observati per dictam Magnificam dominam Beatricem aut dominas Annam et Beatricem quovis modo, colore et ingenio pati possent. Rogantes me notarium praesentis instrumenti ut de praemissis unum sibi publice conficerem instrumentum. Acta sunt haec Racusii. In domo praefatae Magnificae dominae Beatricis de Luna sub die, mense, anno et indictione quibus supra. Praesentibus ibi Magnifico domino consule causarum civilium comunis Racusii ser Ioanne Marini de Gozze et Nicolao Pasqualis praesentibus testibus ad praemissa vocatis habitis specialiter atque rogatis.

Appendix 2. Document drafted on 20 September 1552 by which Beatrice de Luna terminates her partnership with Guillaume Fernandes and João Miques (*Diversa Notariae*, vol. 112, ff. 90r-91v).

Die XX Septembris 1552.

Magnifica domina Beatrix de Luna relicta quondam Magnifici domini Francisci Mendes agens ad infrascripta nomine et tamquam tutrix et administratrix et administratrix dominae Beatricis filiae quondam Magnifici domini Didaci Mendes dixit, confessa fuit et declaravit qualiter praefatus quondam dominus Didacus in ultimo suo testamento constituit ipsam dominam Beatricem commissariam et executricem cum amplissima libertate exigendi, recuperandi, negociandi ac administrandi omnia bona sua una cum domino Gulielmo Fernandes et domino Ioanne Mecas, remanente tamen eadem domina Beatrice pro principali ultra dictos dominum Gulielmum et dominum Ioannem. Et haec omnia constare dixit per testamentum dicti quondam Magnifici domini Didaci Mendes conditum Anversae et rogatum ac approbatum per egregium virum dominum Gulielmum Strit notarium publicum dictae civitatis sub die XXVIII Junii 1543, ad quod relatio habeatur. Et cum sit quod praefata domina Beatrix de Luna una cum praedictis domino Gulielmo et domino Ioanne exegerit ac recuperavit magnam quantitatem pecuniarum et aliarum rerum in partibus Anversae positae in comitatu Barabantiae, Lugduni, Galliae, Italiae, Hispaniae et plurium aliorum locorum, quarum pecuniarum et rerum magna pars exacta, recuperata negociataque fuit per dictum dominum Gulielmum Fernandes, nomine quo vocatur in testamento dicti quondam domini Didaci et uti procuratorem praedictae dominae Beatricis tutricis et executricis testamenti quondam domini Didaci ac etiam uti procuratorem predicti domini Ioannis Mecas nominati in testamento suprascripto. De quibus denariis hic ut sequitur per dictum dominum Gulielmum exactis, administratis et negociatis ipse dedit et reddidit bonum et legalem computum praefatae dominae Beatricis de Luna tamquam tutrici et administratrici bonorum dominae Beatricis Mendes cui iuridice tales computus per se reddi debebant. Et quicquid in eius manibus de predicto computu inveniebatur eodem dominae Beatricis tamquam tutrici et administratrici dictae dominae Beatricis neptis suae ac suis bonorum plene solutum et consignatum esse. Et quamvis sub die quarto mensis Augusti nuper decursi praefata Magnifica domina Beatrix de Luna fecerit dicto domino Gulielmo finem, remissionem et absolutionem ipsumque de omnibus pecuniis ab eo receptis et negociatis pro

computu dictorum domini Francisci et Didaci Mendes ac eorum heredum et pro dicta domina Beatrice de Luna quietavit. Secundum tali quietationem apparet per unum publicum instrumentum sub predicto die IIII Augusti celebratum in civitate Venetiana per egregium virum dominum Paulum Leoncinum publicum notarium dictae civitatis ad quod habeatur relatio. Nihilominus quoniam in dicto instrumento non fuit expressum quod dicta quietatio sibi facta intelligatur et sit etiam facta pro illis pecuniis exactis, negociatis per dictum dominum Gulielmum nomine quo intervenit et vocatus est in testamento dicti quondam domini Didaci Mendes idcirco praefata domina Beatrix cupiens obviare quibuscumque litibus quae propter omissionem dictae particularitatis nasci possint, pro maiori delucidatione veritatis et ut satisfaciat desiderio et iustae petitioni praedicti domini Gulielmi declaravit et declarat se velle quod dicta quietatio sibi facta sibi facta per superscriptum dominum Paulum Leoncinum extendatur ad omnia alia negocia per dictum dominum Gulielmum gesta, facta et procurata in nomine quo vocatur in testamento dicti quondam domini Didaci et quatenus opus est de novo ipsum quietat et absolvit ab omnibus pecuniis per eum in dicto nomine exactis et negociatis ac a quibuscumque aliis negociis per eum administratis, pro quibus vocavit et vocat ab eo se fore et esse integriter satisfactam. Promittens dicta domina Beatrix pro se et dominae Beatrice nepti sua hanc ob causam nec ipsum dominum Gulielmum nec eius heredes et successores aliquo futuro tempore numquam per se aut alias interpositas personas molestare, sub poena reficiendi omnes expensas et damna quas et quae propter hoc pati posset, casu quo praesens instrumentum in aliqua parte non esset observatum. Acta sunt haec Racusii in domo praefatae dominae Beatricis de Luna, sub die, mense, anno, indictione simillimis quibus supra, praesentibus ibi Magnifico ser Ioanne Marini de Goze, consule causarum civilium comunis Racusii et Nicolao Pasqualis praesentibus testibus ad praemissa vocatis habitis specialiter atque rogatis.

Appendix 3. Document drafted on 20 September 1552 by which Beatrice de Luna terminates her partnership with Christopher Manuel (*Diversa Notariae*, vol. 112, ff. 93v-94r).

Die XX Septembris 1552

Magnifica domina Beatrix de Luna relicta quondam Magnifici domini Francisci Mendes Lusitana, Racusii nunc moram agens. Agens ad infrascripta suo nomine proprio quam tamquam tutrix et curatrix generalis ac legitima administratrix personarum et bonorum dominae Annae Mendes eius filiae legitimae et naturalis ex dicto quondam Magnifico domino Francisco Mendes marito suo et dominae Beatricis Mendes eius neptis et filiae ac heredis quondam Magnifici domini Didaci Mendes iam fratris dicti quondam domini Francisci Mendes ac Magnifica domina Anna filia et heres suprascripti quondam Magnifici domini Francisci iam adulta, cum voluntate, consensu et expressa licentia dictae dominae Beatricis matris, tutricis et curatricis suae. Ambae ibi praesentes dicentes qualiter dominus Christophorus Emanuelis a nonnullis annis citra exegit de computu ac ratione dictarum dominarum Beatricis de Luna et dominae Annae filiae suae nominibus quibus supra nonnullos pecuniarum summas et quantitates, quas quidem pecunias exigit Venetiis, Ferraria, Lugduni, Germaniae, Racusii et in aliis pluribus locis et partibus. Quas quidem pecunias omnes realiter et cum effectu dictus dominus Christophorus dedit, tradidit et consignavit praefatae dominae Beatrici ac de illis sibi veluti legitimae administratrici bonorum predictorum semper reddidit bonum, verum et legalem computum sicuti bonos viros decet facere. Propterea praefata domina Beatrix de Luna ac domina Anna filia sua volentes resecare omnes et singulas lites, quaestiones et differentias quae inter ipsas aut earum heredes ex una et eundem dominum Christophorum ac eius heredes ex altera causa praedictarum pecuniarum per eum exactarum quovis modo, colore et ingenio per quodvis futurum tempus nasci possent, sponte, non vi, dolo, mina vel aliqua alia fraude circumventa, sed de mera sua liberalitate et animi sui certa scientia de omnibus et singulis pecuniis per dictum dominum Christophorum hinc retro usque ad praesentem diem in quavis orbis parte recuperatis et exactis fecerunt et faciunt dicto domino Christophoro ibi praesenti, stipulanti et acceptanti finem, remissionem, quietationem generalem et generalissimam ac pactum perpetuum, ne ulterius quicquam non possit, cassantes et annullantes omnes et singulas scripturas publicas et privatas, instrumenta, processus, litteras cambiarum, partitas

librorum, litteras missivas ac partitas bancharum omniaque alia et singula probationum genera cum quibus dictae partes eundem dominum Christophorum aliquo modo molestare, perturbare et inquietare possent, vocatas ab eo se contentas et satisfactas. Rationem dantes omnibus et singulis exceptionibus, beneficiis et privilegiis tam de iure quam secundum statuta sibi competentibus et competentibus quibus possent per sese aut alias interpositas personas venire contra formam ipsius instrumenti absolutionis et finis remissionis. Acta sunt haec Racusii in domo praefatae Magnificae dominae Beatricis de Luna sub die, mense, anno, indictione et millesimo quibus supra, praesentibus ibi Magnifico viro ser Ioanne Marini de Gozze consule causarum civilium comunis Racusii et Nicolao Pasqualis praesentibus testibus ad praemissa vocatis, habitis specialitque rogatis.

Appendix 4. Document drafted on 20 September 1552 by which Beatrice de Luna terminates her partnership with Lope de Probenzo (*Diversa Notariae*, vol. 112, ff. 94r- 94v).

Die dicta.

Magnifica domina Beatrix de Luna relicta quondam Magnifici domini Francisci Mendes agens ad infrascripta tam suo nomine quam tamquam tutrix et curatrix generalis ac legitima administratrix personarum et bonarum dominae Annae Mendes eius filiae legitimae et naturalis ex dicto quondam Magnifico domino Francisco Mendes marito suo et dominae Beatricis Mendes eius neptis et filiae ac heredis quondam Magnifici domini Didaci Mendes iam fratris dicti quondam domini Francisci Mendes ac Magnifica domina Anna filia et heres suprascripti quondam domini Francisci iam adulta cum voluntate, consensu et expressa licentia dictae dominae Beatricis Mendes tutricis et curatricis suae, ambae ibi praesentes dicentes qualiter descriptus vir dominus Lopes de Provera incipiendo ab anno 1543 nuper decurso in voluntate et mandato suprascriptae Magnificae dominae Beatricis exegit tam in partibus Italiae et Galliae quam Hispaniae et Germaniae multas et varias pecuniarum summas et quantitates a variis et diversis personis et segnanter a domino Gulielmo Ferando uno ex administratoribus rationis dictae dominae Beatricis et insuper cum idem dominus Lopes pro computu praedictae rationis multa mercimonia emeret ac vendideret et in huiusmodi suo regimine et administratione quandoque contigerit dare pecunias ad cambium et ab aliis datas exigere et recuperare. Pro quibus rebus quandoque occurrit facere varias scripturas et instrumenta, de quibus omnibus et singulis supradictis rebus, actionibus, negotiationibus et traficis praenotatus dominus Lopes semper dedit ac reddidit bonum, verum ac legalem computum praefatae Magnificae dominae Beatrici, tutrici et administratrici principali. Et quoniam tam praefata domina Beatrix, quo supra nomine, quam ipsa domina Anna desiderant obviare omnibus et singulis litibus, differentiis et controversiis quae quovis modo, colore et ingenio causa negotiorum suprascriptorum tam praefato domino Lopes, quam eius heredibus et successoribus per sese aut quasvis alias interpositas personas inferri possent, idcirco dicta domina Beatrix quo supra nomine et domina Anna cum voluntate, consensu et expressa licentia dictae dominae Beatricis matris, tutricis et curatricis suae, sponte de sua mera propria voluntate et ex animi sui certa scientia de omnibus et singulis negociis praedictis per eundem

dominum Lopes hinc retro usque ad praesentem diem administratis nomine quo supra dictum est, fecerunt et faciunt praedicto domino Lopes ibi praesenti, stipulanti et acceptanti pro se et heredibus successoribusque suis finem, remissionem, quietationem generalem ac generalissimam ac pactum perpetuum de ulterius quicquam non petendo cassantes et annullantes omnes et singulas scripturas publicas et privatas, instrumenta, litteras missivas et cambia, partitas librorum et bancorum, processus testium depines omniaque alia et singula probationum genera cum quibus dictum dominum Lopes quovis modo, colore et ingenio molestare, perturbareque possent. Et hoc ideo fecerunt et faciunt quia dicta domina Beatrix quo supra nomine et domina Anna confessae fuerunt se fuisse et esse a praefato domino Lopes integre solutas et satisfactas de omnibus et singulis negociis per eum gestis hinc retro usque ad praesentem diem et pro maiori robore praesens contractus praedicta domina Beatrix quo supra nomine et domina Anna renunciaverunt exceptioni non sic facti et non sic celebrati contractus et instrumenti reique non sic gestae fare qui privilegio exceptionem doli, mali, actionis in factum, conditum indebitum et sine causa quam metus causa ex iniusta vel simulata causa omnibusque aliis exceptioni suo iuri, beneficio et legum ac statutorum auxilio ipsis dominae Beatrici quo supra nomine et dominae Annae quomodolibet competenti ac competituro. Quae omnia praedicta dictarum domina Beatrix et domina Anna promiserunt perpetuo habere rata, grata et firma et contra formam praesentis contractus numquam venire per sese aut alias interpositas personas. Acta sunt haec Racusii in domo habitationis praefatae dominae Beatricis sub die, mense, anno, indictione et millesimo quibus supra, praesentibus ibi ser Ioanne Marini de Goze consule causarum civilium comunis Racusii et Nicolao Pasqualis praesentibus testibus. Rationem dando.

Appendix 5. A request that Isaac Ergas and Abner Alfarin submitted to the government of Dubrovnik to officially accept business dealings with Gracia Mendes. The request was accepted on 22 September 1552 (Cons. Rog., vol. 51, ff. 125v-126v; M. Orfali, »Doña Gracia Mendes and the Ragusan Republic«: p. 201).

Illustrissimi Signori, Abner Alferi, et Isach Ergas fattori della Signora Beatrice de Luna fanno intender a Vostre Signorie Illustrissime come pochi giorni sono che per parte della detta Signora Beatrice fu supplicato alle Signorie Vostre se degnassero accommodare detta Signora nel pagamento della dohana per le robbe quale s'havessero da questa citta tragere per le parti de Levante secondo la forma della sua supplica. E non havendo mai havuto alcuna risoluzione conforme al desiderio loro hano nuovamente voluto ritornare al conspetto loro, e supplicarle si degnino ascoltar la questa loro supplica e quando per aventura, vi fusse cossa, qual ad essi non sodisfacesse, piacerebbe alle Signorie Vostre di volere fare la taxa, ed dichiarire quello vorrano che faci, accio concluso lo transito con Vostre Signorie possiamo attendere a negoziare.

Nota della Dohana, quale s'offerisce pagare:

Prima che per ogni cassa de panni di seta detta Signora non habbi pagare che ducati 4 1/4 per cassa o siano condutti per navigli Raugii o forastiri.

Per ogni balla de cremesi debbia pagare ducati dua.

Per ogni balla de panni sirrata, e de qualunque altra sorte di mercatantie quali si conducessero d'Italia ducato uno.

Per ogni balla di zambelloti overo mocaiari ducato uno.

Per tutte le altre mercatantie quali venissero di Levante ducato uno per cento secondo la valuta ordinaria della dohana.

E che il dacio delle robbe, quali se condurano, non s'habbi pagare alli Signori Dohanieri ch'in termino di sei mesi, doppo che le robbe serano ne dohana spedita, offerendo sempre dare la plegiaria sicura.

Item che nella Dohana, le sia dato e concesso uno magazzino per repaire le robba sua, col debito pagamento, e che non se gli habbi pigliare.

Item che gli agenti di detta Signora dappoi ch'haverano respedita le robbe loro venute d'Italia et pagato il transito della dohana bissognandoli possono caricare per mare, per quale si voglia parte senza veruno impedimento, e senza ch'habbino pagare altro dacio, che questa e detto de sopra.

Item che le Signorie Vostre se contentino di firmare la presente gratia, per spacio de cinque anni, et tanto piu e meno secundo a quelli parera.

Et accio le Signorie Vostre conoschino che la detta Signora Beatrice a perservirsi di questa schala nel passo delle robba, offerisse quondove non mandasse le robbe sue per questa citta, in questi cinque anni, pagare 500 ducati, quali habbiano essere per conto della dohana, per le quali offerisce dare la securta o qui nella citta o in Ancona, secondo ad essa meglio parera, o vero che se si possino prevalere nelle robbe quali havra in Dohana.

Oltra le cosse supra scritte, li presenti fattori offerescano alla Signorie Vostre di non mancare di far' ogni opera con tutti gli amici loro, de ridurli a questa schala, accio che la Dohana delle Signorie Vostre ne cavi quello utile maggiore, che sara possibile. Et alle Signorie Vostre supplicano per presta resolutione accio possino risponder alla Signora loro pregando tutta via l'omnipotente Iddio che Vostre Illustrissime Signorie conservi, prosperi e felicit.

Die vii Decembris 1552 Georgius Lughignich custos dohanae magna coram magnifico domino rectore Seraphino Marini di Bona et suo consilio deposuit qualiter ipse habuit a suprascriptis Abner Alfari et Isach Ergas factoribus D. Beatricis de Luna securam pignus pro ducatis auri quingentis iuxta formam suprascriptam.

Appendix 6. A letter that Gracia Mendes addressed to the Ragusans on 9 November 1554 requesting additional guarantees of the safety of her goods and agents (*Cons. Rog.*, vol. 52, ff. 155r-155v; J. Tadić, *Jevreji u Dubrovniku*: pp. 430-431).

Illustrissimi et molto Magnifici Signori. Le grate accoglienze che da Vostre Signorie Illustrissime furono fatte l'anno passato nel passare nostro in Levante per cotesta inclita città, m'hano dato sicurtà di domandarle ogni gratia rendendomi certa che nelle cosse giuste non mi habbino di manchare. Con questo animo dunque sono comparsa denanzi quelle facendoli intendere come io ho da negoziare in Italia e for d'Italia con diverse persone, con le quali, benchè in sin qui non habbi havuto tale differenza che me havessero possuto deviare dalle facende et impedire le mie facultà di pottere andare per tutti i luoghi dove mi è trovato comodo traficarle, non dimeno perchè nel advenire potra insurgere qualch'uno, che per l'absentia mia di tali luoghi con favori, o con qualche altro mezzo volesse impedire le mie robbe e facultà che passano per cotesta vostra illustre città, il che gran disturbo alle cosse mie daria, oltra ch'admettere simili impeditioni, saria cossa pocco raggionevole, sendo io qui in Constantinopoli apparecchiata rendere conto e rispondere à ciascuno, chi contra di me aggravare si volesse, et havendo modo per la gratia de Dio com' à ognuno è noto, de sotisfar ogni gran summa de dinari, quando per la giustitia fusse condannata. Impero prego Vostre Signorie Illustrissime siano contente concedere à tutti li mei beni, robbe, facultà, et anche alla facultà delli miei di casa, che pasassero da quale si voglia luogo per la vostra città, uno salvo condotto generale, in modo che nesciuno magistrato ad istanza di persona alcuna le possi sotto alcuno quesito colore sequestrare, impedire o in qualche modo molestare, perch'altrimente io sarei forzata mutare cotesta scala, e fare passare le mie robbe per altri luoghi, dove di tali sospetti e impeditioni serei sicura. E impetrando questa gratia, mi confermerano la securtà, ch'io tengo ne' Vostre Signorie Illustrissime con accrescerme l'animo di non negoziare per altra via, che per cotesta, come in sin qui ho fatto, e farò nel advenire se da Vostre Signorie non mi serà devietato, alle quali mi ricomando pregando Dio le conservi perpetualmente nel stato loro.

Appendix 7. A letter the Ragusan government addressed to Gracia Mendes, dated 24 July 1557. The government appeals to Gracia for a loan of 3,100 ducats for the *harach* ambassadors (*Let. Lev.*, vol. 26, f. 215v).⁵³

Dona Beatrici a Luna hebreia

Molto Magnifica Signora. La consideratione delli pericoli quali giornalmente intervengono a quelli portano denari per viaggio a Pera che per obviar' li si fatti inconvenienti habbiamo terminato servirse de Vostra Signoria sendo certi non mancara gratificarne, pero havendo di provvedere alli nostri oratori Signor Marino Pietro de Crieua e Signor Pasquale Dam. di Benessa ambasatori delle presenti de ducati soltanini⁵⁴ 3100 habbiamo voluto ricorrere da Vostra Signoria con pregarla se degni volere accomodare li predetti oratori nostri della ditta somma de dinari accio possino supplire al bissogno nostro et dandoli se fara fare la ricevuta, qual ogni volta ne sera presentata offeriamo incontinente accettare e pagare.

E per fare il debito nostro, quivi habbiamo voluto tali dinari pagar alli sui agenti in questa città, quali essi non hano voluto pegliare tenendoli piu securi presso di noi, sin tanto haverano altro aviso da Vostra Signoria et quando a lei trovasse meglio haverli nella città de Venezia le faremo paremente nel ditto luogo pagare dove andare debbiano alo risico nostro, sicome ancora per ciò detti sui agenti le scriverano. De questo favore Vostra Signoria sera certa che teneremo perpetua memoria de quale ne dimostaremo la pariglia dove mai se ne rapresenti l'occasione. E Dio la conservi e prosperi.

⁵³ This letter was delivered to Gracia by the Ragusan *harach* ambassadors Crieua and Benessa: ... *ve mandamo una lettera diretta alla Signora Beatrice della Luna, nella quale pregamo sua Signoria voglia scrivere de ducati de soltanini 3100 quali habbiamo voluto pagare quivi alli sua agenti, ma non gli hano voluto accettare trovandoli in pottere nostro piu sicuri...* (from the government letter to the *harach* ambassadors Marin Crieua and Pasko Bennesa, 24 July 1557; *Let. Lev.*, vol. 26, f. 215).

⁵⁴ These were Ottoman gold ducats known as *soltanini*.

Appendix 8. The petition Gracia Mendes submitted to the Ragusan authorities for the renewal of her business contract under the same terms via the Ragusan port. The petition was approved on 9 July 1562 (Cons. Rog., vol. 56, ff. 110r-110v).

La gratia che si domanda dalla Illustrissima Signoria di Ragusa, et ch'habbino per huomo mio a Raugia Isach Ergas Abenazo, e che sia ben visto da loro Illustrissime Signorie e che l'accordo ch'Alfarini et Ergas a nome mio fecero con loro Segnorie nella fine del anno 1552 per 5 anni che se compiranno l'anno 1557, nel quale tempo si torno a rinovare per altre 5 anni, che si compiranno alla fine di questo anno de 1562 per in fin al quale tempo la Illustrissima Signoria e satisfatta delli ducati 500 che detti Alfarini et Ergas se gli obligarno per ogni 5 anni che renderebbe quella schala, siano contente farmi gratia de rinovare e confirmare detto accordo per altri 5 anni con li medesimi patti et conditioni.

E quanto alla fideiussione delli 500 ducati perche io non mi trovo a Racusi in persona a satisfattione della Illustrissima Signoria la supplico siano contente farla pigliare da me o di Yocef Nasi in Constantinopoli per notaro pubblico. E questo s'intende dalla nova rafermatione inanzi, perche in questo anno del 1562 ch'è l'ultimo delli 5 del secundo contratto la Illustrissima Signoria come de sopra se dice è sodisffatta e debbe riconoscere a detto Isach Ergas Abenazzo per huomo mio in loco de detti Alfarini et Ergas.

E sapendo io che la Illustrissima Signoria se contenta de confermare detto accordo, nella persona del detto mio huomo, senza accettare in Ragusi altro hebreo da tenere questo carico, faro che la schala sia provvista de robba, come per il passato, e di vantaggio, con l'aggiuto di Dio ch'anchora che l'obligatione fu di ducati 500 per 5 anni la Illustrissima Signoria sa bene quanto piu hano cresciuto le datti in detto tempo.

De piu lo supradetto Isach Ergar Abenazzo promette che la Signora Beatrice servira alla Illustrissima Signoria come lei fara venire tutte le robbe sue per questa schala e di piu dara opera che la natione hebreo s'habbi servire di questa schala.

Appendix 9. A letter the Ragusan government addressed to Gracia Mendes, dated 2 October 1562. The authorities respond to Gracia's advocacy of the safety of the Jewish merchants in Dubrovnik (*Let. Lev.*, vol. 29, ff. 30v-31r).

Dona Gratia Nancy Constantinopoli

Molto Magnifica Signora, per mani di Isach Ergas Abenazzo familiare di Vostra Signoria li giorni prossimi passati ricevemo le di Vostra Signoria di XXV Agosto prossimo passato, scritte nel fatto della sua petitione a noi mandata dalli nostri oratori essistenti presso la porta, la quale da noi se per dimostrarsi cortesi verso Vostra Signoria quanto per significare alli mercatanti, che da noi non manca farli ogni agevolezza nelle cosse della dohana, fu da noi con buona anima accettata, e sicome noi, si nel carezzare Misser Isach suo, quanto nel ricevere li mercatanti hebrei et darli parte et li dispositioni, non manchammo dal ardito ufficio nostro per osservare quanto nella detta sua lettera se contiene, cossi sperammo che lei non mancara di confortare li mercatanti hebrei a frequentare questa schala, con segnificarli che da noi siano ben ricevuti, trattati et con la maggiore celerità sera possibile ispediti, sicome la isperienza tale cossa dimostrara, pregando Vostra Signoria a dare opera, che la promessa da lei fatta, se ponghi ad essecutione e che li mercatanti se servino di questa schala secondo la sua promessa. E altro occorendo Racusii die 2 ottobre 1562.