

Interactions Between Jews and Christians in Later Medieval Provence*

DANIEL LORD SMAIL

Harvard University
Department of History
Robinson Hall
Cambridge, MA 02138
smail@fas.harvard.edu

Abstract: this study uses an extensive body of archival evidence from Latin-Christian sources to explore economic and social interactions between Provençal Jews and Christians. Evidence discussed in section one indicates that the city's Jewish and Christian communities interacted to a significant degree, and not just in the domain of moneylending. Data derived from a network analysis suggests that Jews were prominent in providing brokerage services. In the second section, analysis of a small sample of Jewish estate inventories indicates that the material profiles of Jewish and Christian families were very similar. In the third section, an analysis of a register of debt collection shows that Jews were involved in credit relations at a rate that was proportional to their population. Jewish moneylenders filled an economic niche by providing Christians with the liquidity to pay off structural debts generated by the political economy of rents and taxes.

Keywords: Jews, Jewish-Christian interactions, medieval Provence, Marseille, credit and debt, brokerage, network analysis, material culture

Until the final expulsion of Jews from Provence in the year 1501, the county harbored one of the oldest communities of Jews found anywhere in medieval Europe.¹ We find traces of Jews in the Provençal archaeological record from the Roman world, and several passages from Gregory of Tours' *History of the Franks* make mention of the community in Marseille.² In the twelfth century, Benjamin of Tudela passed through Provence,

¹ Danièle Iancu, ed., *L'expulsion des Juifs de Provence et de l'Europe méditerranéenne (XVe-XVIe siècles): exils et conversions*, Collection de la Revue des études juives 36 (Paris: Peeters, 2005).

² Bernhard Blumenkranz, "Les premières implantations de Juifs en France, du Ier siècle au début du Ve siècle," *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 113, no. 1 (1969): 162–74; Bernhard Blumenkranz, *Juifs et chrétiens: patristique et Moyen Age*, Collected studies ; CS70 (London: Variorum reprints, 1977); Norman Roth, *Medieval Jewish Civilization: An Encyclopedia*, Routledge Encyclopedias of the Middle Ages ; v. 7 (New York: Routledge, 2003), s.v. "Provence, French," pp. 533-537.

pausing to visit the venerable Jewish communities of Arles and Marseille.³ Noël Coulet, one of the leading authorities on the Provençal Jewish community, has noted that we have very little information regarding the formation of the community, and surname studies provide fewer clues than we might have hoped for.⁴ The few Jewish surnames based on place names that do exist, however, point to local origins, which supports the idea of a continuous and longstanding Jewish presence in the county. By the fourteenth century, we find significant Jewish populations in Provençal cities, towns, and villages.⁵ After 1306, the Jewish population of Provence, some 10,000 to 15,000, was augmented by exiles from the kingdom of France.⁶ In major Provençal cities, Jews accounted for as much as 5 to 8 percent of the population, and throughout most of the fourteenth century, Jews could be found in small towns and villages as well.⁷

Historians have been studying the Jews of Provence for over a century, using Hebrew sources in libraries and archives as well as notarial sources and other administrative records typically kept in Latin.⁸ Contracts preserved in notarial registers are especially rewarding. The departmental archives of southeastern France hold around 15,000 notarial registers, typically one hundred folios in length. If we assume that each register averages one hundred legal acts, there may be as many as 1.5 million extant notarial contracts from the region.⁹ References to Jewish actors and individuals are

³ Benjamin of Tudela, *The World of Benjamin of Tudela: A Medieval Mediterranean Travelogue*, ed. Sandra Benjamin (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1995). In Benjamin's terminology, "Provence" extended into what is now considered eastern Languedoc, that is to say the lands west of the Rhône River. Thus, in his own mind, he had arrived in "Provence" upon reaching Montpellier and Lunel.

⁴ Noël Coulet, "Frontières incertaines: les Juifs de Provence au Moyen Âge," *Provence historique* 35 (1985): 371–72.

⁵ Danièle Iancu, *Provincia judaica: dictionnaire de géographie historique des juifs en Provence médiévale*, Collection de la Revue des études juives 48 (Leuven ; Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2010).

⁶ For a discussion of population estimates, see Juliette Sibon, *Les juifs de Marseille au XIVe siècle* (Paris: Cerf, 2011), 24.

⁷ Coulet, "Frontières incertaines." Perspectives on the activity of Jews in the village of Trets may be found in John Drendel, "Jews, Villagers, and the Count in Haute Provence, Marginality and Mediation," *Provence historique* 49 (1999): 217.

⁸ The sources are briefly discussed in Louis Stouff, "Isaac Nathan et les siens. Une famille juive d'Arles des XIVe et XVe siècles," *Provence historique* 37 (1987): 499–512. On the value of Latin archival sources for studying Jewish history, see Noël Coulet, "Juifs et justice en Provence au XVe siècle: un procès et un pogrom à Aix (1425-1430)," *Michael: On the History of the Jews in the Diaspora / מאספ לתולדות היהודים / מיכאל בתפוצות* 7 (1976): 9.

⁹ Robert Henri Bautier and Janine Sornay, eds., *Les Sources de l'histoire économique et sociale du Moyen âge, tome 1, vol. 2, Archives ecclésiastiques*,

scattered everywhere across this body of material. Juliette Sibon's research on the Jewish community of Marseille provides a useful sense of numbers: an appendix to her *thèse*, recording the names of the Jewish individuals she encountered between 1289 and 1417, runs to 1,500 entries.¹⁰ These sources have supported an impressive body of scholarship on the Jewish communities of Provence and on Jewish-Christian interaction.¹¹

What do archival sources tell us about economic and social exchanges between Jews and Christians in Provence? Just as important, what don't they tell us? In the first section below, I use notarial sources from the city of Marseille to explore economic and social interactions between Jews and Christians. At first blush, this evidence appears to indicate a world of two cultures largely isolated from one another except in the domain of moneylending, where there is substantial evidence for consumer loans provided by Jewish creditors to their Christian debtors. But notarial sources provide at best a partial perspective onto the societies from which they derive. Inspired by the methodology adopted by Elisheva Baumgarten in *Practicing Piety in Medieval Ashkenaz*, this section deploys an anti-positivist methodology—reading between the lines, if you will—in an effort to reconstruct the array of social and economic interactions between Jews and Christians that leave few systematic traces in the archival record.

The second section features seven post-mortem or estate inventories of Jewish households from Marseille between 1346 and 1412. These sources allow us to come at similar questions from the bottom up, by entering Jewish dwellings and comparing their material culture to that revealed in inventories of the dominant Christian community. The third section, finally, returns to the question of Jewish involvement in relations of credit and debt. This section uses quittances and records related to debt collection to argue that the most significant form of indebtedness was structural, not voluntary, in origin. Structural debt was generated primarily by Christian institutions or individuals, not by Jews. Given the prominence of structural debt, the consumption and distress loans given

communales et notariales; Archives des marchands et des particuliers (Paris: Editions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1968), 1141–1385.

¹⁰ Juliette Sibon, “Les Juifs de Marseille au XIVE siècle” (Thèse de Doctorat d’Histoire médiévale, Nanterre, Université de Paris X – Nanterre, 2006), 544–643. A modified version of her thesis was published under the same title in 2011. In the notes below, the two versions are distinguished by the use of italics in the title.

¹¹ A partial bibliography can be found in Danièle Iancu-Agou, “The Jews of Provintzia, through the prism of the studies carried out in the South of France (Aix school and NGJ Montpellier), 1960-2010,” *Imago temporis: medium Aevum*, 2011, 93–96. Given the richness and importance of this scholarship, it is a surprising to find how little the region figures in non-Francophone studies of Jewish-Christian interactions in later medieval Europe, especially in English-language historiography, apart from the influential work of Joseph Shatzmiller. A recent book-length study of Jewish-Christian relations in medieval Europe, for example, mentions southern French Jewry in a single paragraph. See Jonathan M. Elukin, *Living Together, Living Apart: Rethinking Jewish-Christian Relations in the Middle Ages*, Jews, Christians, and Muslims from the Ancient to the Modern World (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), 100.

by Jewish moneylenders to their Christian clients appear in a very different light. Such loans provided debtors with the liquidity needed to manage structural debt. Following the insights of Laurence Fontaine, loans were a key element in a system used by poor people for managing risk and uncertainty.¹²

To understand Jewish-Christian interactions, in Provence and elsewhere, context is essential. It can be rewarding to enter the Provençal archival record, pull out all the sources touching on Jews, and read them for what they say about the Jewish community. But to understand interaction, nothing gathered in this way will be meaningful in the absence of comparison. To offer a simple illustration of the point, it is impossible to know how to interpret the presence of books in post-mortem inventories left by Jews without knowing how common it is to find books in those left by Christians. The arguments offered throughout the sections that follow are grounded in a methodology of baseline comparison.

Social and Economic Integration

In the thirteenth century, the county of Provence, in concert with trends sweeping across all regions of Mediterranean Christendom, became thoroughly notarized.¹³ Men and women relied on public notaries for drawing up legal contracts ranging from loans, commercial contracts, and house sales to last wills and testaments and dowry acts. By the middle of the fourteenth century, prominent individuals in cities such as Marseille were participating in dozens or even hundreds of notarial acts over their life spans. Women appear less often than men, and some of the poorest or most marginal individuals doubtlessly never participated in any notarial business. Even so, people other than prominent men show up surprisingly often in notarial and other administrative sources. Young maidservants, for example, were actors in labor contracts.¹⁴ Field laborers, fishermen, and fishwives took out consumption loans. Whenever recent immigrants arrived in town and cities, they rented rooms or houses and met and married local men

¹² Laurence Fontaine, *The Moral Economy: Poverty, Credit, and Trust in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

¹³ For Provence and neighboring regions, see Roger Aubenas, *Étude sur le notariat provençal: au Moyen Âge et sous l'Ancien Régime* (Aix-en-Provence: Éditions du Feu, 1931); Paul Louis Malaussena, *La vie en Provence orientale aux XIVe et XVe siècles un exemple: Grasse à travers les actes notariés*, Bibliothèque d'histoire du droit et droit romain ; t. 14 (Paris: Librairie générale de droit et de jurisprudence, 1969); Lucien Faggion, Anne Mailloux, and Laure Verdon, eds., *Le notaire entre métier et espace public en Europe, VIIIe – XVIIIe siècle* (Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l'Université de Provence, 2008). In general, see Kathryn Reyerson and Debra A. Salata, eds., *Medieval Notaries and Their Acts: The 1327-1328 Register of Jean Holanie* (Kalamazoo, Mich: Medieval Institute Publications, 2004).

¹⁴ Francine Michaud, *Earning Dignity: Labour Conditions and Relations during the Century of the Black Death in Marseille*, Studies in European Urban History (1100-1800) 38 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016).

and women.¹⁵ In network diagrams based on notarial sources it is certainly the case that the prominent nodes are occupied by prominent individuals. Yet a range of more marginal actors appear along the edges of those diagrams.¹⁶ The notarial sources from a given jurisdiction, in short, will capture a significant spectrum of the population of that jurisdiction.

Because Jews were active members of the communities in which they lived, they show up frequently as contractors and participants in Provençal notarial registers. Globally, they may appear at a rate roughly half of what one might anticipate based on the Jewish proportion of the local population. By way of example, the city of Marseille in the fourteenth century had a population of perhaps 25,000 in 1300, declining to 10,000 in 1400.¹⁷ Jews may have constituted 10 percent of the overall population and probably appear as contractors in about 4-5 percent of all notarized acts. It is important to note that the Jewish "contractor rate," by which I mean the percentage of acts involving a Jewish contractor in either position in a contract, may have been highly variable from location to location in Provence.

In any given locale, moreover, the Jewish contractor rate also varied considerably from one type of act to another. For example, Jews were named as procurators in 3.9 percent of a sample of 578 notarized acts of procuration extant from the city of Marseille in the years from 1337 to 1362 (Table 1), ie. a little less than half of what one might expect. Since procurators were required most often in situations where litigants needed expert pleaders in court, one explanation for the shortfall lies in the probability that Jews had their own court and therefore used Christian courts less often than did Christians.¹⁸ In

¹⁵ Daniel Lord Smail, "Accommodating Plague in Medieval Marseille," *Continuity and Change* 11, no. 1 (1996): 11–41.

¹⁶ See, for example, Emma Rothschild, "Isolation and Economic Life in Eighteenth-Century France," *The American Historical Review* 119, no. 4 (2014): 1055–82; Kate Davison, "Early Modern Social Networks: Antecedents, Opportunities, and Challenges," *The American Historical Review* 124, no. 2 (2019): 456–82.

¹⁷ Daniel Lord Smail, "The General Taille of Marseille, 1360-1361: A Social and Demographic Study," *Provence Historique* 49 (1999): 473–85.

¹⁸ There is little concrete evidence in Latin Christian sources for the existence of a Jewish court in Marseille, though indications for the existence of legal contracts in Hebrew in Jewish households is very suggestive. Hebrew responsa analyzed by Shlomo Pick indicate the existence of Jewish courts elsewhere in Languedoc and Provence; see Shlomo H. Pick, "The Jewish Communities of Provence before the Expulsion in 1306" (Ramat-Gan, Bar-Ilan University, 1996), 250–62. Pinchas Roth discusses an important case, the Ibn Tibbon scandal, that was heard before a Jewish court in Marseille in 1255: Pinchas Roth, "Legal Strategy and Legal Culture in Medieval Jewish Courts of Southern France," *AJS Review* 38, no. 2 (2014): 375–93. Beyond Provence, see Rena N. Lauer, *Colonial Justice and the Jews of Venetian Crete* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019); Rena N. Lauer, "Jewish Law and Litigation in the Secular Courts of the Late Medieval Mediterranean," *Critical Analysis of Law* 3, no. 1 (2016).

sharp contrast, no Jew makes an appearance in any of the forty-seven apprenticeship contracts from the same period, either as a master or an apprentice. This is not because Jewish artisans did not have Jewish apprentices; instead, such contracts, if they existed, were handled by Jewish scribes.¹⁹ As this suggests, the variation in the Jewish contractor rate in the dozens of different contract types is meaningful. Jews used the services of Christian notaries in distinctive ways, and these patterns of use carry subtle clues about the domains of activity where Jews and Christians tended to interact.

Type of act	No. of acts	Total contractors	Jewish Actors		
			Expected	Actual	% of acts
Loan (creditor)	778	774	77	341	44.1
Loan (debtor)	778	773	77	24	3.1
Quittance (creditor)	709	696	70	85	12.2
Quittance (debtor)	709	689	69	60	8.7
House sale (seller)	243	231	23	15	6.5
House sale (purchaser)	243	232	23	4	1.7
Procuration (creator)	578	570	57	18	3.2
Procuration (agent)	578	562	56	22	3.9
Sale credit (debtor)	373	371	37	38	9.9
Sale credit (creditor)	373	371	37	10	2.7
Apprenticeship	47	47	5	0	0

Table 1: Proportion of Jewish contractors in select categories of notarized acts (Marseille, 1337-1362). The column "Expected" records the number of Jewish actors we might expect to find if Jews amounted to 10 percent of the city's population and used notarial services at the same rate as did Christians.²⁰

Also illuminating is Jay R. Berkovitz, *Law's Dominion: Jewish Community, Religion, and Family in Early Modern Metz* (Boston: Brill, 2019).

¹⁹ As indicated by Joseph Shatzmiller, the corpus of Hebrew sources from medieval Europe does not appear to include apprenticeship contracts; see Joseph Shatzmiller, "Apprenticeship or academic education: the making of Jewish doctors," in *Schüler und Meister* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 503. Examples of such contracts, drawn up in Hebrew by rabbis acting as notaries, are extant from mid-sixteenth-century Rome; see Kenneth R. Stow, *The Jews in Rome*, 2 vols., *Studia Post-Biblica* Vol. 48 (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1995). Inventories from Marseille sometimes refer to writings in Hebrew, such as the phrase "Item unam parvam capcietam infra quam reperte fuerunt plures scripture judayce et christiane," which appears in the inventory of Astrug Mosse, discussed below, on fol. 4v.

²⁰ Minor discrepancies in the number of acts and contractors arise from the fact that some names are unreadable. This table does not record the *total* number of contractors, since in many cases, the field in which the contractors were named includes

Where credit relations are concerned, the results of a survey of 6,840 notarial acts, drawn from a sample of sixty-nine notarial registers from Marseille between 1337 and 1362, are unambiguous: Jews were involved to a very significant degree in moneylending.²¹ They appear as creditors in loan contracts at a rate more than four times higher than we would expect based on the proportion of Jews in the population. At the same time, Jews were significantly under-represented as debtors in loan contracts, appearing three times less often than predicted. As this indicates, the flow of this form of voluntary credit moved primarily from Jews to Christians.²²

At first blush, the Marseille evidence appears to confirm a conclusion drawn by the historian Richard Emery in his 1959 study of the Jews of Perpignan. Analyzing the degree to which Jews were associated with loans as opposed to other types of notarial acts, Emery argued that "the evidence is overwhelming that this rather substantial group of Jews supported itself by moneylending, to the virtual exclusion of all other economic activities."²³ A good deal of research on Provence has supported the first element of Emery's claim: Jews were often involved in moneylending.²⁴ The prominent role of Marseille's Jews in the consumer-loan business was noted by Édouard Baratier in his study of the commercial history of later medieval Marseille and has been amply confirmed by Juliette Sibon.²⁵

more than one person, such as a husband and wife. Instead, it records the presence of one or more Jews among the contractors. By way of example, on 9 April 1343, Mosse Maurelli, his wife Dulcia, and their two sons, Samiel and Abraham, received a loan of 15 florins from Guilhem Christiani and his sister Dulcelina (ADBR 381E 393, fol. 130v). This act is counted in the table as one Jewish contractor (debtor) and one Christian contractor (creditor).

²¹ Specifically, the contract known in the singular as *mutuum*.

²² As indicated in the previous footnote, there are some loans from Christians to Jews. Loans between Christians are very common; loans between Jews uncommon.

²³ Richard Wilder Emery, *The Jews of Perpignan in the Thirteenth Century; an Economic Study Based on Notarial Records* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 25.

²⁴ In addition to works cited elsewhere, see Christian Castellani, "Le rôle économique de la communauté juive de Carpentras au début du XVe siècle," *Annales: histoire, sciences sociales* 27, no. 3 (1972): 583–611; Monique Wernham, *La communauté juive de Salon-de-Provence d'après les actes notariés 1391-1435* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1987). For comparison, see Sarah Ifft Decker, "Jewish Women, Christian Women, and Credit in Thirteenth-Century Catalonia," *Haskins Society Journal: Studies in Medieval History* 27 (2016): 161–78.

²⁵ Sibon, *Les Juifs de Marseille*, 33–96. The historian Julie Mell has argued that Marseille's Jews, at least in the thirteenth century, were little involved in the practice of money-lending: "...documentary evidence strongly contradicts the conventional image of the medieval Jew as the money-lender." Mell's larger goal is to demonstrate that most

The second element of Emery's claim—namely, that Jews were rarely involved in other economic activities—is much more doubtful. Emery appears to have assumed that the distribution of notarial acts provides an accurate proxy for an entire array of economic exchanges. This is decidedly not the case, as a thought experiment involving the Christian population will make clear.

The rare surviving household account books kept by Christians often indicate revenue sources that rarely show up in notarized contracts.²⁶ To take an example, the household account book kept by Laureta Bonaffazy for the years 1404-1407 lists revenue from the sale of wine and hazelnuts and from lease rents.²⁷ Sales of both wine and hazelnuts are not common in notarial contracts; typically, they show up only when the products were designated for export. Laureta's business activities, in short, would never appear in notarial sources. House leases could be notarized, but the number of lease contracts extant from Marseille is small and probably reflects no more than a tiny fraction of the rental market (most leases, it seems, were arranged on an oral basis). Let us imagine that Laureta also made several loans and that these loans are extant—a scenario that is not improbable, since women often appear as creditors in loan contracts.²⁸ On the basis of the loans, we could *not* conclude, as Emery did for the Jews of Perpignan, that Laureta supported herself by moneylending to the exclusion of other economic activity.

More than a century of scholarship on Provence has described an array of Jewish economic activities in sectors other than moneylending.²⁹ Given the richness of this scholarship, there is little need here to do more than summarize the state of the knowledge in the field. To begin with, many Christians relied heavily on Jewish medical services—and we know this despite the fact that notarized contracts of healing are rare.³⁰

Jews did not in fact lend money and that Christians were frequently involved in the business. These are important and accurate claims, but they should not be taken to minimize the degree to which some Marseille Jews (at least by the fourteenth century) were involved in consumer loans. See Julie Mell, *The Myth of the Medieval Jewish Moneylender* (New York, NY, U.S.A.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 2:136.

²⁶ Noël Coulet, “Les livres de raison en Provence au Moyen Âge,” *Provence historique* 54 (2004): 293–306; Marie Rose Bonnet, *Livres de raison et de comptes en Provence: fin du XIVe siècle-début du XVIe siècle* (Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l'Université de Provence, 1995).

²⁷ AD Bouches-du-Rhône 5G 775, fols. 90r-100v.

²⁸ Much of the substantial literature on this subject has been explored and summarized in William C. Jordan, *Women and Credit in Pre-Industrial and Developing Societies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993).

²⁹ The genealogy extends back to Adolphe Crémieux, “Les Juifs de Marseille au Moyen Âge,” *Revue des études juives* 47 (1903): 62–86.

³⁰ In general, see the discussion in Sibon, *Les Juifs de Marseille*, 389–426. Monica Green and I have shown how reliance on Jewish medical expertise extended to midwifery; see Monica Helen Green and Daniel Lord Smail, “The Trial of Floreta d’Ays

In addition, Jewish physicians were prominent throughout Provence as medical examiners in court.³¹ Jews artisans also monopolized the coral-working industry in Marseille as they did throughout the Western Mediterranean.³² Here again, notarial acts are extremely imperfect records for assessing the degree to which Jewish artisans earned their income through coral working. In the sample of acts from mid-fourteenth-century Marseille, for example, one finds only a single act in which a Christian purchased coral from a Jew; in other decades, the harvest is similarly meager.³³ As Sibon has noted, a great deal of our knowledge about the Jewish coral-workers of Marseille, at least in administrative sources in Latin, derives from the chance survival of a single court case from the year 1380.³⁴ In all such cases, we necessarily rely on notarial and other administrative sources for information about Jewish economic activity; it is not the case that such activity is completely invisible. The point is that the serial data are seriously skewed toward loan contracts, and records preserve only fragments of Jewish economic activity not related to moneylending.

One of the most interesting forms of Jewish economic activity can be found in the domain of brokerage and auctioneering services. As Maurice Kriegel has suggested, Jews were prominent as brokers throughout the Western Mediterranean.³⁵ In this capacity, they served as intermediaries in trade and credit relations. John Drendel, in his study of a Jewish family from a village in Upper Provence, argues that the socially marginal position of Jews made it easier for them to serve as brokers between individuals at the top and the bottom of the Christian social hierarchy.³⁶ Direct evidence for the role of brokers in facilitating economic transactions, unfortunately, is hard to find in notarial contracts, which typically preserve only the details of the final contract. Notaries were uninterested

(1403): Jews, Christians, and Obstetrics in Later Medieval Marseille,” *Journal of Medieval History* 34 (2008): 185–211.

³¹ Joseph Shatzmiller, “The Jurisprudence of the Dead Body: Medical Practition at the Service of Civic and Legal Authorities,” *Micrologus* 7 (1999): 223–30.

³² Sibon, *Les Juifs de Marseille*, 112–22. For recent work on this theme, see Anna Rich, “Coral, Silk and Bones. Jewish Artisans and Merchants in Barcelona between 1348 and 1391,” *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 53 (January 2009): 53–72.

³³ AD Bouches-du Rhône 391E 11, fol. 32r, 14 May 1337; a merchant named Raynaudus de Astegiis purchased coral from Bondavin.

³⁴ Sibon, *Les Juifs de Marseille*, 112. On the Hebrew side, the role of Jews in the coral-working trade also appears in the account of Mordacays Joseph from the year 1374–75, also discussed by Sibon.

³⁵ Maurice Kriegel, *Les Juifs à la fin du Moyen Age dans l’Europe méditerranéenne*, Hachette littératures (Paris: Hachette, 2006), 86–88.

³⁶ Drendel, “Jews, Villagers”; Fred Menkès, “Une communauté juive en Provence au XIVe siècle: étude d’un groupe social,” *Le Moyen Âge* 26, no. 2 (1971): 277–230; Fred Menkès, “Une communauté juive en Provence au XIVe siècle: étude d’un groupe social (suite et fin),” *Le Moyen Âge* 26, no. 3 (1971): 416–50.

in reporting the oral negotiations, often conducted in inns or similar public spaces, that preceded the contract.³⁷ We do see Jews from time to time in their role as auctioneers, where they assisted a predominantly Christian population with the complicated tasking of liquidating surplus household goods, such as during the estate sales occasionally sponsored by heirs or guardians after taking up an inheritance.³⁸

Yet it may be possible to use notarial evidence to assess the brokerage activity of Jews in an indirect manner. Every notarial act lists the names of the individuals involved in the act, including not only the contractors but also property lords, guarantors, witnesses, and so on. In the sample of 6,840 notarial acts mentioned earlier, it is possible to identify 9,450 individuals, including 332 Jews (3.6 percent) and 9,118 Christians, excluding the witnesses. Many of these individuals appear in more than one act. Each unique individual can be rendered as an actor in a network, where the act itself is understood as evidence for the existence of a social or economic relationship between the participants in the act. Drawing edges between unique individuals results in a network diagram of social relations in the city in the mid-fourteenth century. These data then make it possible to calculate the centrality of a given individual or class of individuals to the network of relations, an index known as "betweenness centrality."³⁹ The resulting statistics (Fig. 1) indicate that Jews and Christians had similar betweenness-centrality profiles.

³⁷ Kathryn Reyerson, in this vein, has pointed to the significant overlap between innkeepers and brokers in Montpellier; see Kathryn Reyerson, *The Art of the Deal: Intermediaries of Trade in Medieval Montpellier* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 167–81, esp. 175.

³⁸ In Marseille and probably in Provence as a whole, estate auctions were not very common, compared notably to the Crown of Aragon where estate sales were quite normal. One estate sale in Marseille took place in 1401; see AD Bouches-du-Rhône 355E 309, fols. 78r-79v. The auctioneer was not named, but it is noteworthy that Jews were prominent among the list of buyers. As this suggests indirectly, Jews also played a prominent role in the second-hand trade, an adjunct to their work as brokers.

³⁹ For a discussion of the index, see Ulrik Brandes, "A Faster Algorithm for Betweenness Centrality," *The Journal of Mathematical Sociology* 25, no. 2 (2001): 163–77.

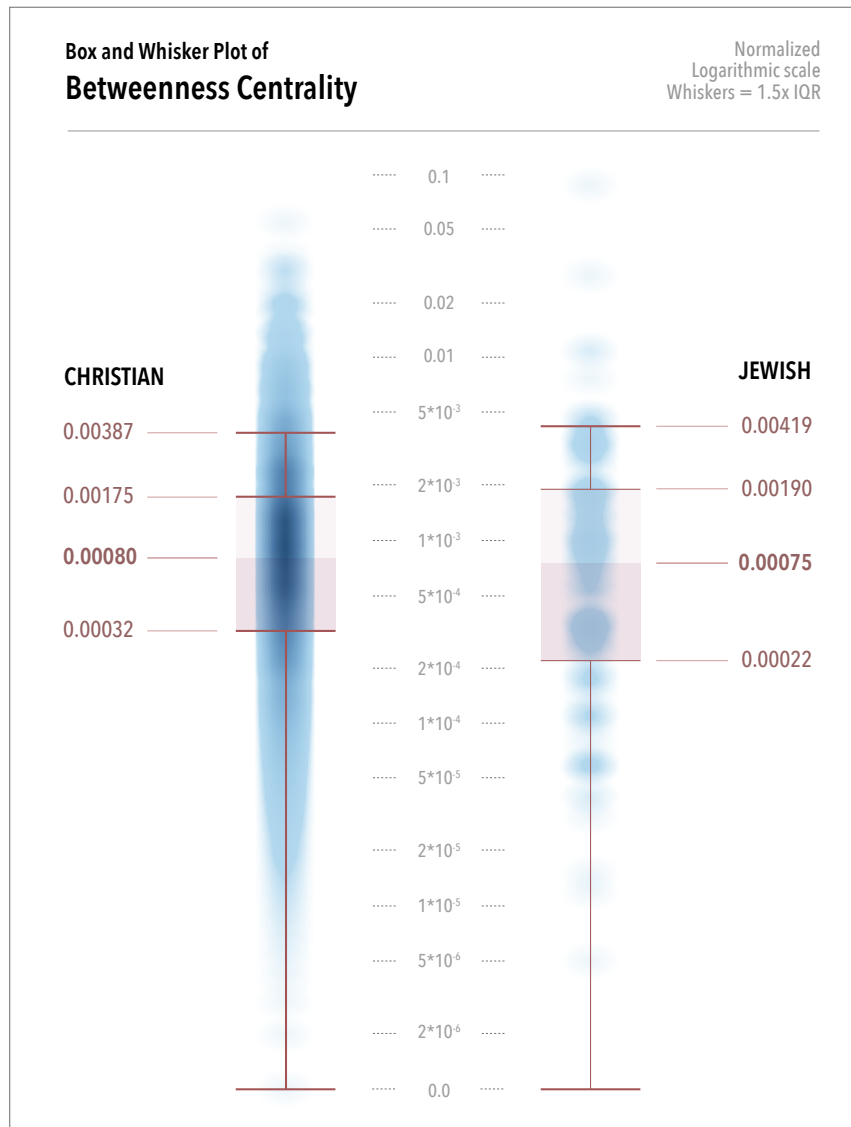


Figure 1: Box-and-whiskers plot showing the normalized betweenness centrality for the nodes of a network composed of the individuals included in the dataset, split by religious affiliation. Betweenness centrality measures the degree to which nodes stand between each other, with high scores indicating those in positions that bridge structural gaps in the network. It therefore can serve as a proxy for the importance of certain individuals in a social network. The similarity of the distributions for Jews and Christians suggests that members of both groups were equally important. The plot uses a logarithmic scale, with the whiskers extending to 1.5 times the interquartile range. Figure prepared by G. Pizzorno.

This is suggestive: given the fact that Jews and Christians did not interact in important domains such as kinship relations, we might have expected the small population of Jews to have a low index of betweenness centrality relative to Christians. The prominent activity of Jews as brokers, including their activity as moneylenders, auctioneers, and resellers, may have compensated for their relative isolation in other domains.

As moneylenders, physicians, midwives, coral workers, brokers, and auctioneers, Jews regularly provided services to the dominant Christian population. Jews, in turn, relied heavily on Christian expertise and Christian provisioners.⁴⁰ Again, notarial sources, for the most part, provide only fragmentary clues about the extensive array of interdependencies that typified social and economic interactions between Jews and Christians. To take an example, both Christians and Jews in later medieval Marseille needed to put bread on the table every day. Since much of the land surrounding the city was dedicated to the production of wine, most of the city's grain arrived on ship and was sold at one of the two grain markets. There, people purchased grain in bulk and were taxed on milled grain. Bread dough was fermented and kneaded at home in great troughs, and, when the dough was ready, it was carried to communal ovens on bread peels for baking. Jews, who were even less likely than Christians to have their own sources of grain for household consumption, necessarily interacted with Christians while acquiring milled grain and possibly while baking.⁴¹ These interactions were far more common than moneylending, though few of the stages were ever recorded in writing. Occasionally, we get glimpses of the activity. In a notarial register from 1359, for example, we find back-to-back contracts in which two Jews acknowledged debts of 72 solidi to a Christian woman for the purchase of 6 bushels of grain each.⁴² Clearly, these represent the tip of a hidden iceberg of economic relations.

What can be said about grain can be said about other goods and commodities, including barley, figs, nuts, cheeses, fabric, thread or yarn, work-horses and mules, hides, and so on. Where labor or professional services are concerned, the Jewish community had some expertises to draw on: among the professions held by Jews listed by Sibon, and also appearing in sources I have consulted, we find a parchment maker, a bookbinder, a tanner, and a chaplet-maker, along with several goldsmiths, corders, grocers, tailors, masons, butchers, and dyers. There are dozens of brokers or auctioneers, coral workers,

⁴⁰ For recent perspectives on this long-standing theme, see Elka Klein, “Les juifs et la société chrétienne à Barcelone au Moyen Âge,” *Annales du Midi* 118, no. 255 (2006): 437–40; Rena N. Lauer, *Colonial Justice*.

⁴¹ Louis Stouff has indicated the existence of several Jewish bakers in Marseille during the middle of the fourteenth century, so it is possible that Jews preferentially baked bread prepared at home in these ovens. See Louis Stouff, “Les Juifs et l’alimentation en Provence à la fin de la période médiévale,” in *Armand Lunel et les Juifs du Midi*, ed. Carol Iancu (Montpellier: SUP, 1986), 142.

⁴² AD Bouches-du-Rhône 381E 81, fol. 128v (21 Feb. 1359) and fol. 129v (1 Mar. 1359).

physicians, and surgeons. But even though the list is impressive, it lacks a range of essential trades, such as farrier, shoemaker, candler, miller, fisherman, ironsmith, locksmith, cooper, and unskilled agriculture laborer, suggesting that Jews had to rely on Christians for these services.

Finally, as we have seen, Jews did rely on Christians or Christian institutions for some legal services. From Joseph Shatzmiller's studies of Manosque and Marseille, it has long been known that Jews appear frequently in Provençal courts. They also used Christian notaries for family-related acts, including testaments, dowries, and estate inventories.⁴³ In the sample from Marseille from 1337 to 1362, such family-related acts are admittedly rare. Among the three hundred dowry acts, only three involve Jews. Similarly, there are only two Jewish testaments compared to around two-hundred-and-fifty Christian testaments.

In sum, notarial sources and other administrative acts reveal a complex picture. With the exception of loan contracts, quittances, and sale credits, Jews did not use notarial services at the same rate that Christians did. As a result, notarial registers give the impression of a community apart, connected to the dominant Christian population primarily through the act of moneylending. But although the importance of moneylending should not be minimized, there is a good deal of evidence pointing indirectly to a significant degree of Jewish-Christian interaction. Many Jews were active in professions other than moneylending, and in several of these, notably medicine, coral-working, and brokerage, Jews interacted frequently and directly with members of the dominant Christian population. By the same token, all Jews relied to greater or lesser degrees on Christian provisioners and service providers. Although little of this kind of small-scale economic activity was notarized, documents themselves, coupled with the extrapolations we can draw from them, make it possible to assemble a picture of two communities with regular socioeconomic interactions.

The Material Culture of Jewish Households

Even though Provençal Jews did not regularly employ Christian notaries for family-related contracts on a regular basis, we do find such acts from time to time. These acts include dowries, testaments, guardianship procedures, and post-mortem inventories. Unusual in the fourteenth century, such acts become a little more common in records of the fifteenth century. Where Jewish-Christian interactions are concerned, post-mortem inventories, though rare, are especially valuable, for they make it possible to assess the degree to which the contents of Jewish households departed from the material profile characteristic of the households of the dominant Christian population. Up to this point, we have been approaching Jewish-Christian interactions from a bird's-eye perspective. Inventories make it possible to ask similar questions but to look for answers coming from the bottom up.

⁴³ Among other sources, see Noël Coulet, "Testaments juifs d'Aix-en-Provence," in *Minorités juives, pouvoirs, littérature politique en péninsule ibérique, France et Italie au Moyen Âge; études offertes à Béatrice Leroy*, ed. Jean-Pierre Barraqué and Véronique Lamazou-Duplan (Biarritz: Atlantica, 2006), 295–307.

Thousands of household inventories are extant from later medieval Europe. The majority of these are probate or post-mortem inventories compiled by Christians during the process of transferring estates from decedents to heirs. In Provence and elsewhere, post-mortem inventories were often compiled by members of the family rather than officials of the court. But other kinds of legal proceedings, including criminal prosecutions and lawsuits arising from insolvency, were also capable of generating inventories. To date, the majority of the known inventories of Jewish property from later medieval Europe were generated in coercive contexts.⁴⁴ Given the situation, it is reasonable to doubt whether the resulting inventories provide an accurate picture of the profile of Jewish possessions. The inventories of Jewish households extant from medieval Marseille are remarkable because they are ordinary post-mortem inventories compiled by members of the family.

By way of introduction, let us walk through the inventory of the estate of Mosse Creguti, a Jew of Marseille who died in November of 1405.⁴⁵ On Friday, the 20th of that month, his adult sons Salvat and Astruguet appeared in court to announce that their father had died intestate, leaving the two young men as presumptive heirs. But Salvat and Astruguet announced that they wished to repudiate the estate since they had heard that it was burdened with debts. The following Tuesday, their mother Arfila appeared in court, observing that the now-abandoned estate was indebted to her in the amount of 40 florins for her dowry. She produced a notarial instrument drafted forty-five years earlier, on 7 July 1359. A guardian, the physician Abraam de Mayranicis, was appointed to represent the abandoned estate in court. On Thursday, Abraam appeared in court to announce that he had compiled the inventory and to request permission to have the inventory entered into the court register. Arfila then noted that her late husband Mosse had been indebted to two Jews, Gardet and Abrahamet de Bederrida, and also to a Christian named Durant Mersier. All three were summoned by a crier to appear in court, although none chose to respond—which was entirely normal, as it happens. The estate, barely adequate in value to compensate Arfila for her dowry, was then transmitted to her without contest.

The inventory begins with a description of the family's house, located in the Great Street of the Jewry and surrounded on one side and on the back by houses belonging to Christians. The family paid an annual ground rent of 100 solidi to the property's Christian

⁴⁴ By way of example, see Wilhelm Volkert, "Das Regensburger Judenregister von 1476," in *Festschrift für Andreas Kraus zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Pankraz Fried, Andreas Kraus, and Walter Ziegler, *Münchener Historische Studien. Abt. Bayerische Geschichte* 10 (Kallmünz: Lassleben, 1982), 115–41. This register arose when seventeen Jewish men were prosecuted for ritual murder. My thanks to Andreas Lehnertz for drawing this register to my attention. See also Ryan Low, "Jewish Households," in Daniel Lord Smail, Gabriel H. Pizzorno, and Laura K. Morreale, eds., *The Documentary Archaeology of Late Medieval Europe* (henceforth "DALME"). Retrieved from <http://dalme.org/collections/jewish-households/> 1 Dec. 2020.

⁴⁵ This inventory was edited by Juliette Sibon (thèse, 2006), and has been republished, with corrections, at <https://dalme.org/collections/records/b3ebf506-da2e-47a5-9a73-06fb4c51c1ab/>

lord, a rather sizable amount by city standards and suggestive of relative poverty.⁴⁶ The impression of poverty is bolstered by the contents of the house, which included several shabby sheets and tablecloths, a single bed for the entire household, a coffer containing only a single comb, a handful of wooden bowls and trenchers, and a very limited array of cookware, including a small cauldron, a cooking pot, two mortars, and a two-footed cooking support. A small bowl or basin was out in pledge with another Jew named Leo Vide for a sum of 3 grossi. Abraam also noted a chicken cage with three hens and a rooster. Reading the inventory, one does not detect the existence of rooms: kitchen things are jumbled with bedroom things and storage vessels. It is quite possible that the family lived in a one-room house. Given that her dowry dated to 1359, it seems likely that Arfila and her late husband were well over sixty years of age at time of his death.

Juliette Sibon has shown that Mosse was a tailor. Little was left of his craft apart from a pair of shears, although the card and the comb listed in the inventory would have been useful for anyone who worked with fibers. Also missing are the articles of jewelry mentioned in Arfila's dowry contract, suggesting that these had been sold off to pay for expenses. The only reasonably attractive items in the house were a painted chest or box and two earthenware bowls. The earthenware bowls were also described as "painted," a word that may refer to lusterwares from Bejaia, Murcia, Valencia, or Florence.⁴⁷ The only articles of clothing mentioned in the inventory were two mantles made of cheap burel cloth. The inventory includes a single agricultural implement, a hoe (*ayssata*) described as "old," which, somewhat curiously, was listed after the bed. The inventory ends with a reference to a vineyard. The absence of any wine-making equipment and any tools apart from the hoe suggests that Mosse and Arfila no longer worked the vineyard themselves. Ownership of vineyards was common in Marseille inventories, Christian and Jewish alike.

With a very few exceptions, the articles found in the house of Mosse and Arfila are indistinguishable from those found in Christian households. It is true that Mosse's inventory is very rudimentary, but inventories of six other Jewish households from Marseille amply confirm this point.⁴⁸ The inventory of Astrug Mosse from 1397, for example, has all the appurtenances of the typical Massiliote house: a bread-kneading trough and a bread peel, caskets and chests, baskets designed for the grape harvest, a writing desk, a balance, a copper lamp, a sword, a battle-mace, and so on. Bearing in mind that the sample is small, Jewish inventories suggest that Jews were assimilated into Provençal material culture to a very significant degree. In an even more interesting way, it appears that Jews and Christians *thought* about material culture in much the same way. The descriptions of household objects provided by Abraam and other Jewish compilers of

⁴⁶ The amount of the ground rent, typically, was inversely proportional to the value of the house and the wealth of the family.

⁴⁷ Véronique Abel, Florent Parent, and Marc Bouiron, eds., *Fouilles à Marseille: objets quotidiens médiévaux et modernes* (Arles: Édition Errance, 2014).

⁴⁸ Sibon discusses several inventories and transcribes four of them in her thesis, Sibon, "Les Juifs de Marseille," 749–55. Editions of the inventories of Astrug Mosse (1397), Bonafos Bonet of Lunello (1348), Fossa (1412), and Mosse Creguti (1405) have been published, with facing-page images, on the DALME site.

inventories are almost entirely indistinguishable from those found in Christian inventories.

Having said this, several features of the inventories do gesture to items that were unique to Jewish households. This includes legal documents and books written in Hebrew. Some of the more unusual items include a Jewish women's head covering known as an *oralh* which appears in the inventories of Astrug Mosse and of Fossa, and may well be the item referred to as an *oran* in the inventory of Mosse Creguti. The inventory of Fossa also includes two objects called *tibia*, made of silk, and used for decorating oralhs. One of the most unusual objects, found in the inventory of Bonafos Bonet, who died in the plague of 1348, is a cloak dressed up with a ruby-red lining made of sendal, squirrel fur, and "tassels which are called *rapra*."⁴⁹ The latter word is unique in a corpus of more than one hundred and sixty Christian and Jewish inventories from Marseille and could conceivably refer to tzitzit. One of the most unusual items in Astrug's house was a set of seven ostrich eggshells, intended for fashioning into decorative objects. Ostrich eggshells, like *rapra*, are found nowhere else in the Marseille corpus. There is nothing particularly Jewish about ostrich eggshells, of course, so their appearance here may simply be random. Even so, it is tempting to imagine that they arrived via exchange routes connecting the Jews of Marseille with their counterparts in communities in North Africa.

But these are exceptions that prove the rule: for the most part, the differences between Jewish and Christian inventories are minimal.⁵⁰ The distinctive feature of Jewish households, in fact, probably lay less in types of objects than in proportions of objects. Objects identified as children's things, for example, seem to have been more common in Jewish than in Christian households. In general, books are far more common in Jewish households. Strikingly, they appear even in poor households such as that of Mosse Creguti, the inventory of whose goods included "three parchment books written in Hebrew." The inventories of Jewish households in Aix-en-Provence edited by Ryan Low demonstrate that a high rate of book ownership was not confined to Marseille's Jewish community.⁵¹ Conversely, Jewish households typically seem to have been characterized by a small range of kitchen equipment, including the entire absence of spits. The otherwise well-appointed house of Bonafos Bonet had no kitchen equipment whatsoever.⁵²

⁴⁹ AM Marseille 1 II 44, fol. 56v.

⁵⁰ This point has also been made by Flora Cassen in her analysis of the inventory of a Jewish household from Genoa in 1592; see Flora Cassen, "The Sausage in the Jews' Pantry: Food and Jewish-Christian Relations in Renaissance Italy," ed. Hasia R. Diner and Simone Cinotto (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 2018), 27–49, esp. 33–38.

⁵¹ See above, n. 44.

⁵² Sibon has suggested that the doubling of certain items such as mortars or cooking pots in Jewish households indicates a desire to avoid the mixing of foodstuffs; see her thèse, pp. 408-409. Although this may be the case, it is important to note that

One of the interesting features of Mosse Creguti's inventory lies in the fact that he apparently owned very little junk. Astrug Mosse's house, in sharp contrast, had a great deal of oddments stored in an attic room upstairs.⁵³ It is worth taking a moment to inspect Astrug's junk carefully, noting the absence of any spatial principle of categorization:

Next, two small earthenware jars. Next, a certain number of coral branches. Next, a copper casserole. Next, a rod with its balance. Next, a grill. Next, a frying-pan. Next, a writing desk. Next, a small mat and a bench. Next, a lock. Next, an iron hook. Next, a tub. Next, a copper mortar with a pestle. Next, another small copper mortar. Next, two copper lamps. Next, a silk *tamem*.⁵⁴ Next, a sword. Next, a battle-mace. Next, a small kettle in so-so condition. Next, a kettle. Next, a copper cauldron. Next, a hook. Next, an adze.

The presence of these oddments, and the place where they were stored, suggest that Astrug or another member of his family engaged in pawnbroking, and that the items had been abandoned by their former owners. Alternatively, they arrived via inheritance or legacy or some other form of inter vivos exchange, and had been temporarily stored in the attic. Either way, what is important is that Astrug was unusual: the presence of a junk room is more typical of Christian than of Jewish households, bearing in mind the small size of the sample.

Stepping back for a moment, it is worth asking why Arfila and Abraam sought to file an inventory of the estate in a Christian court. As noted earlier, the use of Christian legal institutions was becoming increasingly common among Provençal Jews in the fifteenth century. Such use was partly driven by legal and economic entanglements. In this particular case, Mosse's two adult sons were apparently concerned about accepting an estate that was potentially burdened by debts, since they could become liable for all the estate's debts, including not only their mother's dowry but also other debts owed by their father. A plausible assumption is that by abandoning the estate to their mother, they managed to stiff the three other creditors to the estate. Since one of those creditors, Durant Mercier, was a Christian, the procedure had to be executed in a Christian court. The cross-cutting web of credits and debts that bound Jews to Christians gradually pulled Jews into Christian courts even for family-related business such as the compilation of a post-mortem inventory.

What do we learn from the close examination of Jewish household inventories in context? In particular, do inventories suggest that Jews constituted a community apart from Christians? As noted earlier, Jewish inventories do display some distinctive qualities, but these are minor when compared to the extensive areas of overlap. The

Christian kitchens frequently contained more than one of the same type of cooking implement.

⁵³ Daniel Lord Smail, "The Postmortem Inventory of Astrug Mosse, a Jew of Marseille (1397)," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 111, no. 3 (2021): 338–46.

⁵⁴ Possibly a garment.

fundamental similarity in material profile is important because it suggests the degree to which material culture was an engine of interaction. If you owned a cask for storing wine or an oil lamp for lighting the table, for example, you necessarily had to deal with coopers and oil-merchants. When the bedsheets became too tatty for use, Christians and Jews sold them to the same ragpicker. Such examples could be multiplied endlessly.

Finally, even if the material profile of Jewish households was distinctive in small ways, there are few reasons for thinking that Jews were *more* distinctive than any other sub-group. Though the claim awaits analysis, it is very likely that the material profile of households of urban, suburban, and rural Christians differed from one another just as much as those of Jewish and Christian households. The same can be said households oriented toward seafaring or land-based professions, or the households of manual laborers, artisans, merchants, and nobles. A prominent example is afforded by the fact that the devotional aids found in Christian households varied in distinctive ways according to socio-professional status. Lower status households tended to have paternoster beads and nothing else, whereas elite households sometimes displayed devotional images, retables, relics and reliquaries and sometimes no paternoster beads at all.⁵⁵

Credit Relations

The individuals responsible for compiling post-mortem inventories were attentive to all the assets associated with an estate, including credits and debts of various types. The inventory of the physician Crescas Roget (1397), transcribed and analyzed by Sibon, provides an excellent example, for it closes with a long section listing the names of debtors. The list runs to twenty-seven names and includes both Christians (21) and Jews (6).⁵⁶ Inventories also provide evidence for loans guaranteed by means of pledges or oral promises. In the section on credits in the inventory of Crescas Roget, for example, two of the loans to Jews were secured on pledges. In other cases, notably the inventory of Astrug de Aubenas (1369), items listed as belonging to the decedent were described as being out in pledge. Bearing in mind the small size of the sample, inventories suggest that Jews were somewhat more active in pawnbroking than Christians. The inventory of Mayer, son of the late Joseph Astrug (1346), stands out in this regard, for according to Sibon, the estate's assets include fifty-one loans secured on pledges.⁵⁷ Christian inventories also provide ample evidence for the practice of lending on pledges, however, and the difference between Jews and Christians in the matter of pawnbroking is one of degree, not of kind.

⁵⁵ Daniel Lord Smail, *Legal Plunder: Households and Debt Collection in Late Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), 79–85.

⁵⁶ Sibon, “Les Juifs de Marseille,” 731–32, 857–58. The phrase is *Sequentur nomina debitorum et debentum*. One of the debtors is identified, unusually, as “Chiquo,” which I have counted as a Christian name although it is difficult to know for sure.

⁵⁷ Sibon, 750. The edition provided in the appendix is not complete.

Loans of this kind, along with shop credits, can be thought of as voluntary extensions of credit. But moneylending was not the only source of debt. At any given moment, a high proportion of the outstanding debts in any given region was structural in nature. The workings of the political economy, for example, generated debt in the form of unpaid taxes and back rents. Other sources of structural debt include delayed wage payments and criminal fines. In practice, structural debt and voluntary debt were tightly linked: the necessity for taking out a loan arose precisely because debtors needed cash to repay the debts they had incurred through taxes, rents, and fines.⁵⁸

Jews, as we have seen, were prominent in the sphere of voluntary credit. Were they equally prominent as creditors in the separate sphere of structural debt? To assess the degree to which Jews participated in credit relations as a whole, we have to factor in both kinds of credit. The existence of a common notarial act, the quittance, provides a useful measure. A quittance is a type of contract by means of which a creditor acknowledged the cancellation of a debt. Quittances could arise from many different kinds of debts, not just voluntary loans. Nearly 700 are extant from Marseille between 1337 and 1362 (see Table 1). Jewish contractors appear in these acts in both positions (creditor and debtor) at rates that are proportional to their percentage of the city's population (Fig. 2).

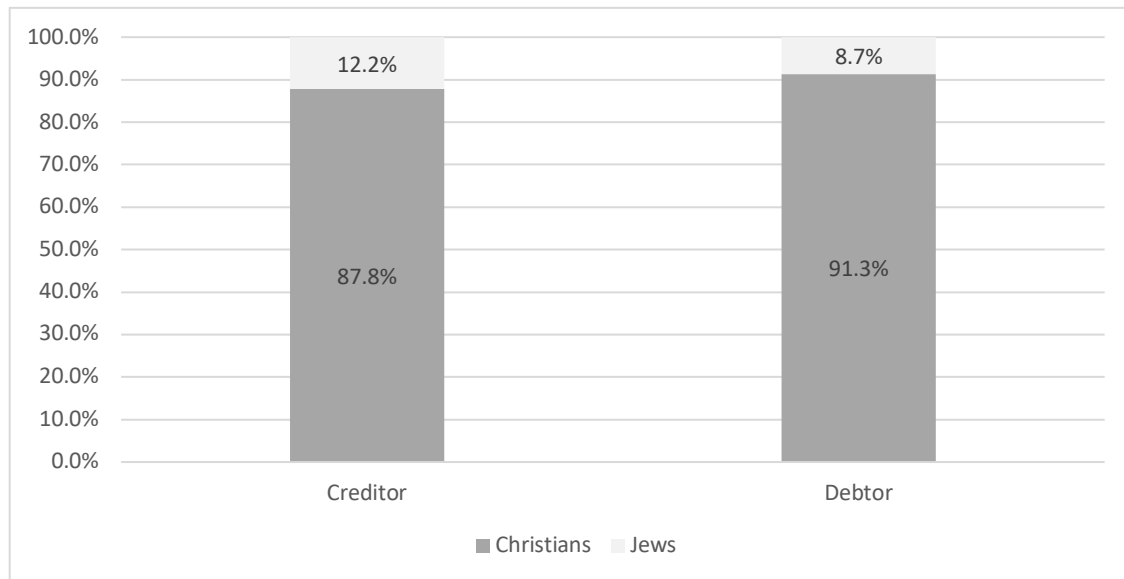


Figure 2: Jews and Christians as actors in quittances, Marseille, 1337-1362. This figure is drawn from the data presented in Table 1.

⁵⁸ See the second chapter of Daniel Lord Smail, *The Consumption of Justice: Emotions, Publicity, and Legal Culture in Marseille, 1264-1423* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).

Even quittances are skewed toward credits issued on the basis of written contracts, however, and thus undercount the volume of structural debt. For this reason, it is important to develop another approach. One measure is provided by the rate at which Jewish and Christian creditors participated in the extended process of debt collection. The vast majority of debts, both structural and voluntary, were paid on time or within an allowable delay; only a small percentage of debts ever proceeded to the final stage of debt collection. If we assume that the rate of insolvency was independent of the faith of the creditor—if we assume, in other words, that debts to Jewish creditors became terminally insolvent at the same rate as debts to Christian creditors—we can use the percentage of Jews and Christians who show up in records of debt collection as a proxy for the ratio of Jewish to Christian creditors in the overall credit market. Records arising from judicial proceedings for debt collection, unfortunately, are scarce. The following discussion is based on the analysis of a single court register from Marseille, covering a six-month period from the fall of 1361 to the spring of 1362.⁵⁹ Because the sample is small, these findings should be considered preliminary.

The process of asset seizure, in Marseille as elsewhere in Europe, unfolded over a series of stages.⁶⁰ Most cases were initiated with the issuance of citation to appear in court. In December of 1361, for example, a Marseille woman who made headdresses went to court to request that a crier be sent to one of her clients to order her to pay an overdue bill of 8 solidi for four headdresses. In cases of any duration, the initiation would have been followed by a series of court appearances during which some debtors contested the existence of the debt. If the creditor's claim proved to be legitimate, the process ended either with a payment of the debt or the seizure of some of the debtor's assets. In some cases, the final stage records the results of the public auction where the assets were sold to the highest bidder.

The register lists 350 entries over a period of six months. Each entry typically records just one stage of any given process. In some cases, however, the register records two or three entries arising from the same debt. By eliminating the duplicates, we arrive at a total of 307 unique actions. In most cases, the entries give no indication about how the debts had come into existence. The ones that do are instructive. The single largest category consists of back rents owed to property lords. We also find overdue rents arising from leases on houses, overdue rentals of animal labor, unreimbursed purchases of various kinds, unpaid salaries, and court fines. In other words, instances of involuntary credit predominate in those cases where the source of the debt is given. Only a small number, less than 10 percent, appear to have originated in a notarized loan or other notarized contract. The sums range from 5 shillings, about a day's wages for an agricultural laborer, to 100 florins, about 2 years' wages.

To the extent that records of asset seizure provide a convenient proxy for the total volume of credit, both voluntary and involuntary, it is meaningful to find that Jews were

⁵⁹ AD Bouches-du-Rhône, 3B 51.

⁶⁰ See Julie Claustre, ed., *La dette et le juge: juridiction gracieuse et juridiction contentieuse du XIIIe au XVe siècle (France, Italie, Espagne, Angleterre, Empire)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2006).

involved in asset seizure at a rate roughly half or a third of what we would expect based on the proportion of Jews in the city's population (Fig. 3).

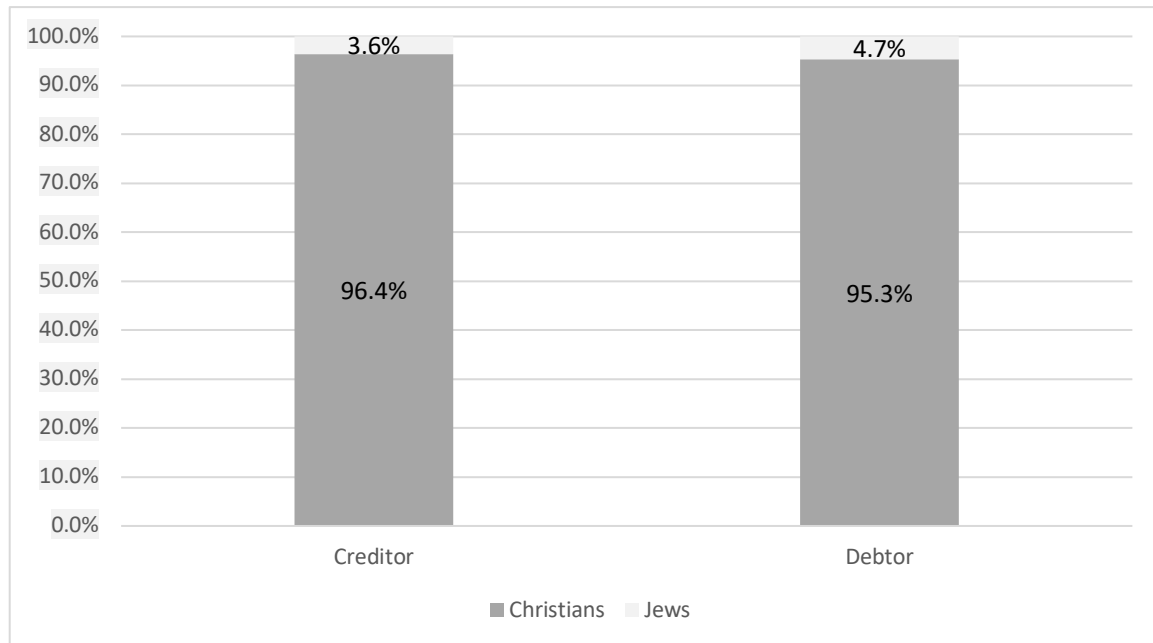


Figure 3: Asset seizure in Marseille, 1361-1362, by religious affiliation. This figure is based on a dataset of 307 unique actions for asset seizure in AD Bouches-du-Rhône 3B 51, fols. 1r-47v.

These findings come with several important caveats. First, as a rule of thumb, Provençal Jews were less insistent than Christians on pursuing debts in arrears. Christians may well have preferred Jewish lenders precisely because they knew that Jews would be less likely to pursue overdue debts in court. Thus, it is possible or even likely that the figure undercounts the overall percentage of Jewish creditors. Second, notarial contracts related to the seizure of immovable property for debt suggest that Jewish creditors, at least in Marseille, were somewhat more likely than Christians to seize real estate.⁶¹ Since this particular court focused on movable goods, it is possible that the data underrepresent the involvement of Jews in credit relations. Regardless, these findings suggest that although Marseille's Jews were prominent in the subset of credit relations that involved lending with interest, their presence was far less significant in the broader economy of

⁶¹ Of the sixty-six contracts of *extimatio* or of a similar type that are extant from Marseille in the years 1337-1362, twenty-eight (42 percent) were undertaken in favor of Jewish creditors. A similar situation prevailed in the Crown of Aragon; see Michael Schraer, "Credit and Land: The Jews of Zaragoza 1383–1400," in *Land and Credit: Mortgages in the Medieval and Early Modern European Countryside*, ed. Chris Briggs and Jaco Zuijderduijn (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 149–79.

debt in the city. It was Christians, and Christian institutions, that generated the most substantial volume of the terminal debts that led to court actions and asset seizure.

Conclusion

Provençal archives contain a wealth of information about Jews and Jewish-Christian interaction in the later middle ages. One type of serial source, notarized loans, indicates that Jews were prominent among the population of moneylenders. The "myth of the medieval Jewish moneylender" is no myth, at least where Provence is concerned. But to conclude from this that Jews were almost wholly dependent on moneylending as a source of revenue, as did Richard Emery, is to overlook the extensive evidence for Jewish economic activity other than moneylending. Christians relied on Jews for brokerage services, medical care, moneylending, and a range of artisanal activity such as coral-working. Jews, in turn, were dependent on Christians for many services. The resulting interactions can also be approached by examining the contents of Jewish households as listed in post-mortem inventories, where we find that the material horizons of Jews were very similar to those of Christians.

Even though Jews were prominent in lending, moreover, this does not mean that the economy of credit was dominated by Jews. A substantial volume of debt in a city such as Marseille was structural in origin. Jewish moneylending played an essential role by providing debtors with the liquidity they needed to manage their structural debts. The analysis of the register of asset seizure indicates that Christians, owing to their prominence in the domain of structural credit, were much more likely than Jews to pursue debtors in court, a process that often led to asset seizure.

Notarial and administrative records are nearly silent on the thought-worlds that lay behind legal actions and social interactions. For this reason, we cannot know what Christian debtors felt about the Jews in their communities. It is possible or even likely that debtors, subjected to the humiliating process of asset seizure but sensitive to the risks associated with bad-mouthing their Christian superiors, chose to divert their animosity onto the stereotype of the Jewish usurer. What the evidence suggests is that such beliefs, if they existed, were a distortion of a world in which the most significant volume of debt was generated by the political and household economy and had little to do with religious affiliation.