

Families and neighborhoods: Jews and conversos in late medieval Ávila

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RESUMO: Usando breves estudos de caso prosopográficos de duas famílias judias (e seus parentes Conversos) ao longo de um período de dois séculos, este artigo procura ilustrar a extensão em que várias famílias judias foram uma parte importante da história social, econômica e política de Ávila. Também procuro relacionar a longa história desses grupos de parentesco à topografia urbana de Ávila e às conexões entre certos bairros e ruas, atividade comercial e padrões de habitação judaico e converso. Um estudo de caso final examina as atividades econômicas e administrativas de uma família de Conversos, a de Luis González de San Juan, em Ávila em meados do século XV.

Palavras-chave: Ávila, Conversos, Grupos de parentesco judaico, interior de Ávila

ABSTRACT: Using brief prosopographical case studies of two Jewish families (and their Conversos relatives) over a period of two centuries, this article seeks to illustrate the extent in which a number of Jewish families were an important part of Avila's social, economic, and political history. I also seek to relate the long history of these kin groups to Avila's urban topography and to the connections between certain neighborhoods and streets, commercial activity, and Jewish and Converso patterns of inhabitation. A final case study examines the economic and administrative activities of one Converso family, that of Luis González de San Juan, in mid-fifteenth century Avila.

Keywords: Ávila, Conversos, Jewish kin groups, Ávila's hinterland.

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On 26 June 1443 don Mosé Tamaño and Catalina González hired two brothers, *maestre* Ali and *maestre* Mohamad both of them Muslim carpenters, to build a partition wall in a house (essentially creating two houses where one stood) in Ávila's Cal d'Andrin (Calandrín). Both, Mosé and Catalina, swore to abide by this agreement and to the division of the house. Catalina swore to God and Santa María and the words found "in the Holy Gospels wherever they are written" and don Mosé swore in "the name of the Creator alive and true and of the law (the Torah that God gave) to Moses on Mont Sinai" (LEÓN TELLO, 1963, p. 131).

While we do not know exactly what familiar relationship existed between don Mosé and Catalina -- whether they had been married before conversion set them apart, whether they were related, or whether they divided a house that they had both inherited, -- this document provides us with a lens through which to examine the complex relationships that existed in Ávila between Jews and Christians (either with Old Christians, with members of the cathedral chapter, or with recent converts). The street of Calandrín, where the property in question was located, was a throughfare that led from the Mercado Mayor outside the city gates to the Small Market in Ávila's urban center, It was an area known for being inhabited by Jews until the 1480s. Coincidentally, 1443, the year in which the agreement was registered in the notarial record, witnessed growing pressure on Conversos, especially in nearby Toledo, at a time in which Ávila had become somewhat of a haven for Jews and Muslims in late medieval Castile.²

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Introduction

Tracing the presence of don Mosé, Catalina, and, to a far lesser extent, the Muslim carpenters' in Ávila's abundant documentation allows us to place them into a wider historical context of Jewish familiar connections and places of inhabitation within the city urban landscape. Their agreement, emphasizing the religious filiation of each as either Jewish, Christian, or Muslim, provide us a window into a series of questions or issues. First, I am

² See my two forthcoming articles in which I discuss Avila's emergence as the city with the largest Jewish population in Castile. RUIZ, Identity and Liminality, forthcoming in *Viator* and Jews, Muslims and Christians in Late Medieval Urban Society: The Case of Avila. Forthcoming in a *Festschrift for Olivia Remie Constable*.

interested in providing a preliminary prosopographical study of a select number of Ávila's Jewish families living in the city almost two centuries. While several families fit the bill (the Arrobas (Arrovas), the Cancres or Caceres, the Alvo, and other extensive Jewish kin networks living in the city and its hinterland), because of the limitations of space this article focuses on two of the city's leading Jewish families: the Tamaños, with whom this story begins, and the Amarillos.

Second, I wish to provide a glance on the close relationship between Jews and Conversos in late medieval Avila. While one dated and much critiqued historiographical position (advanced mostly by Benzion Netanyahu and his disciples) has emphasized, based on rabbinical responsa, the severing of ties between Jews and Conversos, the work of recent historians, most notably Gretchen Starr-Lebeau and others as well as the evidence from late medieval Avila, shows that this was certainly not the case.³ In the case of the two families that are the topic of these pages, one may note the manner in which all these Jewish kin groups (and economic networks) enjoyed a vigorous representation (through conversion) into the wider Christian society. Third, I would also like to briefly note the connection between religion and place of inhabitation in Ávila *before* the Catholic Monarchs's 1480 decree segregating Jews and Muslims to specific Ávila neighborhoods. Topographical information provides us with an inventory of places of residence, number of synagogues, and the close relationship that bounded Jews, Conversos, and others to the rural economy through loans, direct exploitation of the land, or as tax collectors.

Before proceeding it is necessary to acknowledge some of the limitations of this study. What we know about Jews and even Conversos is shaped by the nature of the documentation. Most of the information is conveyed to us through Christian sources. The mediation of Christian notaries, scribes, and the cathedral chapter business enterprises show us mostly

³ For the main protagonists in this old debate see Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1966), II: 398-423, and the work of some of his followers such as Haim Beinart, *Conversos on Trial: The Inquisition in Ciudad Real*, trans. Yael Guiladi (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1981). On the other side of the polemics there are the works of Benzion Netanyahu, most notably his *Los marranos españoles: desde fines del siglo XIV a principios del XVI según las fuentes hebreas de la época*, trans. Ciriaco Morón Arroyo (Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, Consejería de Cultura y Turismo, 1994) a translation of his original 1970s polemical work on the faith of the Conversos. See also Henry C. Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of Spain*, 4 vols. (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1906-07). For a recent and more nuanced view of the relations between Jews and Conversos see Gretchen D. Starr-Le-Beau's wonderful book, *In the Shadow of the Virgin: Inquisitors, Friars, and Conversos in Guadalupe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

the Jewish community's economic activities (as it does that of Conversos), delegation of the power to litigate and represent, the lending of money, renting of property, collecting taxes, and the like. In the absence of Jewish documents, we only get glimpses of the Jewish or Converso's inner life, religious practices, and some details about their interfamilial relations. Thus, our understanding of the entirety of Jewish life or of the relations between Jews and Conversos in late medieval Ávila is limited, and it forces us to extrapolate and to assume partly what the nature of their lives may have been. Moreover, while Ávila and its region have perhaps the best published documentary collection available for Castilian towns in the magnificent multi-volume *Fuentes históricas abulenses*, some of the information is available only in the form of extensive and detailed catalogues. This is particularly the case in two of the most relevant sources for Jewish and Converso life: the *Catálogo de protocolos notariales del Archivo Histórico Provincial de Ávila*, (2 vols) or the catalogue found in Pilar León Tello, *Judíos de Ávila*. Comparing the suggestive information found in some of these catalogues with the original manuscripts in either Madrid or Ávila has become impossible in the time of Covid. What I present below is a first approximation to a larger and richer history and more in the nature of a call for further research than a finished product. With these caveats 159 in mind, let us begin.

A Brief Case Study: don Mosé Tamaño and doña Catalina González

To return to the two protagonists of the 1443 agreement and to those questions that the simple act of dividing a house raises. Whether they were formerly married or siblings or had inherited the property from a common Jewish relative, Catalina's conversion led to the partition of their property. This was obviously property jointly held and now divided (because of religion) by the toil of Muslim carpenters. What could be more illustrative of the overlapping social (and economic) lives of Jews, Conversos, Christians (a Christian notary registered the agreement to make it lawful), and Muslims than this accord or of the importance of the oaths taken by don Mosé and Catalina to seal the agreement, each grounded in their individual religious beliefs?

In formalizing their arrangement, the two exchanged oaths (see above) that defined their religious identities. Catalina took an oath on the Gospels, "don oquier que son escriptas." Don Mosé Tamaño also took an oath to be faithful to the transaction: "in the

name of the Creator, alive and true, and on the law (the Torah) that [God] gave to Moses on Mount Sinai.” (LEÓN TELLO, 1963, p. 131) The Tamaños were, as shall be seen below, one of the city’s most influential Jewish families, holding important positions in the Jewish aljama in the 1480s, and mentioned prominently in Ávila’s documentation for more than two centuries. As to Catalina, someone by that same name appears owning several houses, as well as running an inn in the vicinity of the church of St. Tomé (and a few steps from the city walls and the back of the cathedral) in the 1430s. The inn was a favorite destination for royal agents who, while conducting the Crown’s businesses in Ávila, met there. Is this the same Catalina? My suspicion is that she was the same person, as there are indications (see below) that municipal and royal officials met to transact business in Jewish and/or Converso owned venues. Alfonso Sánchez de Noya, university graduate and royal judge, chose to stay in Catalina’s house and inn rather than in municipal lodgings. Was he also a Converso?

Catalina had probably become a Christian in the waves of conversion in the early fifteenth century, had a substantial fortune, and may have risen in Ávila’s society as an important innkeeper connected to royal agents (*Documentación del archivo municipal de Ávila*, vol. II, docs. 111-12: pp. 122-125; docs. 118-123: pp. 41-55, hereafter *DAMA*, vol. II). There is little one could say about the two Muslim carpenters. Beyond providing further evidence as to the Muslims almost total control of the building trade, with no surnames, single names, such as Ali and Mohamad, were quite common. An Ali Caro (one of the many identified by such name and surname) was described as a master carpenter around the same period. If they were the same person, then our 1443 carpenter belonged to one of the city’s most influential Muslim families.⁴

Families: Tamaño and Amarillo

The Tamaños had a long relation with Ávila. As far as I am able to determine, the first documentary mention of a Tamaño appears in an extensive survey of Ávila’s cathedral chapter properties in the early fourteenth century. One of the most elaborate descriptions

⁴ For the Caro family group see the path-breaking article by Ana Echevarría, “Los Caro de Ávila: una familia de alfequies y comerciantes mudéjares,” in Ana Echevarría, ed., *Biografías mudéjares. La experiencia de ser minoría: biografías islámicas en la España cristiana*, (Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Científicas, 2008), 203-232.

found in the lengthy survey is that of Yuçaff Tamaño's house. Located on the calle del Lomo (a street running between the cathedral and the city gate leading to the church of San Vicente and one of the preferred city neighborhoods), the house had easy access to San Vicente, to the "Small Market," located in the city center, and to other important civic and religious urban venues. Yuçeff's house had "good doors, a small basement, well laid floor," and other amenities. The rent paid to the chapters amounted to 40 *maravedíes* (mrs.) annually, among the highest rents paid in the neighborhood in the early fourteenth century. Laying close to the cathedral, the street housed an ancient and well-known synagogue (that of el Lomo and the city's main synagogue). The street's name appears also as a surname for Conversos later on. While the neighborhood served as the abode of many other Jews, it was also inhabited by some Christians. Among those renting properties from the cathedral in the street of el Lomo in the early fourteenth century, we find at least six other Jews (three of them women) mentioned in the census and one Christian. This was, by all accounts, a Jewish neighborhood, sitting in the shadows of the cathedral and in close economic relations with the chapter. (*Documentación de la catedral de Ávila*, 1981, pp. 424-425)

We have no further notice of the Tamaños until the end of the fourteenth century or almost half a century before the mention of don Mosé with whom this article begins. In the cathedral chapter *Libro de arrendamientos*, a survey or census listing the chapter's properties in the city and the hinterland, to whom had these properties been rented, and for how much in the years between 1387 and 1446, one finds two references to Yuçef Tamaño, a vecino. The son of don Çag Tamaño, Yuçef could not possible the same person mentioned at the beginning of the fourteenth century but clearly a relative. On 19 June 1398 (a mere seven years after the 1391 widespread violence), he agreed with the chapter on renting a house on the street de los Çapateros (shoemakers or cobblers). Payments were to be rendered in two parts: half at St John's day and the other half at Christmas and would begin four days after the signing of the contract on St John's feast day. The rent was for the amount of 50 mrs. "*en reales de platas o moneda vieja*," plus two hens annually. Not only was Yuçef a vecino and his father identified by the honorific don, but his house stood next to a store owned by the chapter and on a street close to the Small Market (the Mercado Chico) and other well know Jewish neighborhoods (Juradero, the cathedral, street of el Lomo, street of Brieva, and areas extending to the western wall of the city). One of those confirming the transaction was Mose de Muño, a vecino, who served as a witness for the transaction. Later that same day, Yuçef

reciprocated as a witness when Mose de Muño also rented a store in the same neighborhood. Both Jews had extensive family connections, lived on streets in which the chapter owned most of the houses, inhabited, although not exclusively, by Jews, and within a few steps from the city's religious and political centers (*Libro de arrendamientos de casas de la catedral de Ávila* (1387-1446), doc. 119: p. 187-188; (*Documentos de la catedral de Ávila* (1356-1400), doc. 29: pp. 79-82; doc. 634: pp. 180-183, et passim).

On 9 July 1448, five years after the agreement between don Mosé and Catalina González, Yuda Tamaño, a vecino de Ávila, paid 1,550 mrs. to two vecinos of Villatoro (a small town or village) for the purchase, transport to Ávila, and portazgo dues of three salt cargas (one carga was equivalent to nine arrobas or roughly 225 pounds or around 6 bushels) from the Salinas de Atienza. We know from other sources, and as shall be seen below, that Conversos and Jews played an active role in the distribution of salt in the region of Ávila over the next fifty years (*Catálogo de protocolos notariales del archivo histórico provincial de Ávila* (siglo XV), 2 vols. I, doc: 178: p. 70, hereafter *Catálogo de protocolos*). Another member of the kin group, Isaque (Isaac, Ysaque) Tamaño, can also be found in documents from the city's municipal archives between 1475 and 1476. The information is tangential, but convincing as to his social standing in the Jewish aljama and as an interlocutor between the Jewish community and the municipal council. On 5 April 1475 Gregorio del Peso, regidor in Avila and meeting in Ysaque Tamaño's house, confirmed receipt of a Catholic Monarchs' letter, appointing Diego de Zabarcos as one of the city's scribes. What was the regidor doing in Ysaque's house? Did a Jewish household serve as an occasional meeting place for members of the municipal council? (*DAMA*, vol. II doc. 148: 99-101)

In July of the same year, as Queen Isabella faced mounting fiscal demands to carry on her war against Portugal, she requested additional contributions from the city of Ávila. The tax assessment was to be shared by all in the city. The meeting to notify the Jews of the extent of their payments took place in the synagogue of Calandrín (the same street where don Mosé and Catalina had their house three decades earlier) on 21 July. Ysaque Tamaño and Abraham Sevillano served as the Jewish community's representatives. Similarly, on 4 April 1476, as the Catholic Monarchs forbade the Jews from hurling excommunications on each other and disturbing the *judería's* peace, Ysaque acknowledged the royal order by signing on the document's margin. Besides confirming Ysaque's social standing as representative of the aljama, the document provides a rare glimpse into the internal dissensions that plagued

Ávila's Jewish community. Finally, later that year, Ysaque Tamaño, as representative of the Jewish aljama, and don Hamad Palomo, as representative of the Muslim community, were informed that, by order of the Crown, the municipal authorities should desist on their illegal demands on Jews and Muslims for bedclothing and other clothing items (*DAMA* vol. II doc. 164: 130-135; doc. 176: 171-173; doc: 204: 242-245).

Between the mentions of Ysaque in the mid 1470s and the Edict of Expulsion in 1492, numerous other Tamaños appeared in Ávila's sources. This was particularly the case in 1483 when, in response to the Crown's request for fiscal aid for the Granada campaign, lists of all the Jews and Muslims heads of household (which also included women) were drawn to determine how to assess the tax. This document gives us a fairly accurate estimate of the Jewish population of Ávila, but it is also a veritable mine for prosopography, for identifying Jews and Muslims engaged in a diversity of trades, and for naming patterns. The list of contributing Jews (calculated at between 240s and 280s altogether or roughly over 1000 inhabitants) included five Tamaños altogether. One of them was a woman who is not identified by name but solely "as la de Yucé." Listed by name, members of the Tamaño family (assigned to different contributing units or *quadrillas*) included Mosén (see below), Don Salomón, Samuel, Yucé, and Yucé's (or don Yuçef's) wife. Out of thirty-five taxing groups or quadrillas, "la de don Yuçaf" is listed in the first quadrille, probably among the wealthiest Jews in Ávila and contributing the highest amount to the royal assessment as a whole and/or as individuals. Don Mosé Tamaño is listed with the contributors of the eleventh quadrille. Don Salomón is in the fourteenth, don Symuel or Samuel in the twenty-sixth, Yuçef Tamaño in the twenty-seventh (De tapia, *Los judíos de Ávila en vísperas de la expulsión* in Sefarad, 1997, pp. 136-178; *Documentación del archivo municipal de Ávila (1478-1487)*, vol. III, doc. 302: pp. 239-249. Hereafter *DAMA*, vol. III).

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Some of the Tamaños mentioned in the 1483 tax assessment appear elsewhere in Ávila's documentation. Mose (Mosen or Mosé), who may or, most probably, may not have been the Mosé mentioned in the vignette that opens this chapter, was a vecino and actively engaged in money lending and purchasing and selling of agricultural products. In 1480, don Mosé Tamaño appeared prominently in a royal letter. In response to a petition from doña Reyna and her son, Sento, "poor Jews of Ávila," the Catholic Monarchs granted an extension to their payment of their rather substantial debts to several of Avila's Jews. To don Mosen Tamaño, they owed the substantial sum of 3,100 *maravedís* (mrs.), to the wife of master

Symuel (Samuel) another 1,000 mrs. (is this the Symuel or Samuel Tamaño listed in 1483?), and to Abraham Sevillano 500 mrs. The mention of a Jewish woman moneylender giving a loan of 1,000 mrs., while quite common in the Middle Ages, differed with Jewish female lending practices often associated with small amounts of money rather than, as it was this case, a large sum. Neither Reyna nor Sento appear in the 1483 list, though their creditors did prominently (*DAMA*, vol. III, doc. 273: pp. 140-143).⁵

On 7 July 1485, don Mose Tamaño came to a full meeting of Ávila's municipal council to protest -- in his name and as representative of the city's Jewish aljama -- of the negative impact which the continuous levies of new taxes were having on the Jewish community. The demands for additional contributions, don Mose argued, resulted from one of the council's deputies, Diego de Gamarra, failure to pay a portion of Ávila's contributions (7,800 mrs.). The council agreed to investigate the matter, asking the Jewish community that "sy la dicha aljama fue agraviada, que se desagравie" (*DAMA*, vol. III, doc. 313: pp. 286-288). Two year later, two additional notarial records show don Mose's activities' wide range. Two Christians living in the city hinterland and acting as representatives of Beatriz Mejia, a vecina of Ávila and Diego de Zabarcos' widow, acknowledged to owe four fanegas (around 55.5 liters in Castile) of wheat and six of rye to don Mose Tamaño. We learn that this resulted from a previous loan to Diego de Zabarcos, most probably conveyed as a modest monetary loan or investment to be repaid in grain. A month afterward, another vecino of one of the villages in the city's hinterland acknowledge a debt of one *arroba* (around 25 pounds) of merino wool for which don Mose had paid 200 mrs. (*Catálogo de protocolos*, vol. II, doc. 1721: p. 469; doc.1761: p. 479).

In 1488, Yuçe, don Mose's relative, sold, together with rabbi Abraham Abenaçay, wine to Ávila's innkeepers for the very large sum of 4,500 mrs. Trading in wool, grain, and money lending, the Tamaños played an important role in the region urban and rural economy (*Catálogo de protocolos*, vol. II, doc. 1937: p. 525). Regardless of whether this don Mose Tamaño was the same individual as the one agreeing with Catalina González to partition a house (the time lapsed raises doubts as to being the same person), don Mose appears to us as a man with his fingers in many pots. He lent substantial sums to other Jews, lent money to

⁵ On Jewish women lending practices see William C. Jordan's pioneer book on *Women and Credit in Pre-Industrial and Developing Societies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993) and bibliography therein.

Christians in the countryside in return for grain, bought wool; he also served as representative of the Jewish *aljama*, litigating for relief of tax assessments. He was, together with many other relatives, also among those contribution to the royal tax assessment in 1483. He was obviously well off, had financial contacts with Christians and Jews equally, and was someone to be reckoned with in Ávila's society. On behalf of the Jewish community, he could push back against municipal violation of Jewish autonomy and customary rates of contribution.

Tamaños Crossing Over: Jews and Conversos

As was the case with almost all the important Jewish families, some members of the Tamaño family also crossed over to Christianity. Establishing a presence in Christian society may have resulted from an always difficult to gauge act of conversion, but one that also provided obvious social and economic benefits for the individual and for the family. Another article can be easily written on the large number of Conversos who lived and were active in late fifteenth century Ávila, easily identifiable by names, professions, activities, close relations with their Jewish relatives, and often even by the word *converso* added to their names in the documentation.⁶ In the case of the Tamaños one example will suffice. Between 8 July 1448 and 16 December 1450, we find 13 mentions of a Pedro González Tamaño, a *vecino* of Ávila, in the *Catálogo de Protocolos* (the extensive catalogue of notarial records). His name, as far as I know, does not appear in any of the other documentary collections. Were we to be guided by the name alone, his identification by the appellative Tamaño combined with a Christian name would identify him as a *Converso*, albeit one who wished to retain ties to his family. His economic activities make this even more certain. Of the 13 mentions two recorded Pedro González Tamaño's purchases of wine. This was certainly not a minor enterprise. On 29 July 1448, he agreed to pay 6,000 mrs. for the purchase of 300 *cántaras* (close to 5 liters per *cántara*) of wine. This is a substantial amount of money and of wine, that may indicate Pedro that he was a wholesaler and supplier, as were some of his Jewish relatives, to the city's taverns. Later that year, he purchased from the Ávila's hinterland 4 *moyos* (close to 260 liters per each *moyo*) of *mosto* (or early fermented wine) for 800 mrs. (*Catálogo de protocolos*, vol.

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⁶ See my two recent articles on Ávila: "Identity and Liminality: Jews, Conversos, Foreigners, and Muslims in Christian Ávila, 1440s-1492," forthcoming in *Viator* and my "Jews, Muslims and Christians in Late Medieval Urban Society: The Case of Avila" in *Essays in Honor of Olivia Remie Constable* (forthcoming 2021).

I, doc. 190: 73 (29 July 1448); doc. 266: 92 (24 September 1448). Besides providing information on Pedro González Tamaño's economic activities, these documents serve as a guide to the different prices (and one must assume quality) of wine served in Ávila's mid-fifteenth century pubs.

Pedro was also busy in buying and selling other commodities. Three of the extant 13 documents dealt with his purchase of salt, payments for its transportation from the salt wells of Atienza, and for satisfying taxes to bring the salt into the city. Not unlike his Jewish namesakes, Pedro had an active role in the purchase and distribution of salt. His transactions, carried out exclusively with Christians in the city's hinterland, amounted to 14 and a half fanegas of salt at a cost of 608 mrs., a *carga* for 550 mrs, and three *cargas* of salt for 1558 mrs. (*Catálogo de protocolos*, vol. I, doc. 199: p. 75; doc. 205: p. 77; doc. 218: p. 80). One additional entry show Pedro González de Tamaño's additional economic dealings. On 30 July 1448, Pedro rented weights to be used in a butcher shop owned jointly by Christian and a Muslim for a rent of 100 mrs. for a period of five months (*Catálogo de protocolos*, vol. I, doc. 192: p. 73). The other mentions describe an agreement to divide a house with someone also named Pedro González (what was it about these Tamaños and partitioning houses?), agreements with a Muslim carpenter in which our Pedro González Tamaño acknowledged debts for the work done in his house, and engaged in litigation against his name sake for payment for the construction of the dividing wall (*Catálogo de protocolos*, vol. I, doc. 175: p. 69; doc. 261: p. 91; doc. 321: p. 106; doc. 322: p. 106; doc. 355: p. 115; doc. 1007: p. 286; vol. II, doc. 1461: p. 403). Although clearly identifiable as a Christian because of his name and surname, preserving the Tamaño surname was a bow to his Jewish family and enduring connections with the Jewish community business enterprises. Were we not to have these indications, his economic activities, his purchase and distribution of salt from Atienza (a trade controlled for close to a century by Jews and Conversos) or in other agricultural products is closely in line with the activities of other Tamaños as seen above. These economic endeavors point, once again, to the close ties between both communities, but also with Christians in the hinterland, with Muslim craftsmen, and with the general Christian population at large.

The Amarillos

As the Tamaños did, members of the Amarillo family appeared in the Ávila

documentation around 1300. Unlike the Tamaños, while there were numerous references to their presence in Ávila in the second half of the fourteenth century, references to the Amarillos diminished in the late fifteenth century. Between 1297 and 1488, we encounter eleven Amarillos practicing Judaism and, at least, two others who, not unlike some of the Tamaños, had converted to Christianity, while keeping the surname Amarillo. In 1297 in one of the property transactions between the cathedral chapter and Jews, one of the adjacent houses described in the sale contract was inhabited by Leticia, the wife of Moses Amarillo. Their house was located close to the “Mercado Mayor” (the Large market) outside (but close to) the city’s walls. As discussed previously, the Mercado Mayor was, as was the case with the Small Market in Ávila’s center, a traditional Jewish neighborhood but shared with Christians and Muslims as well (*Documentación de la catedral de Ávila*, doc. 171: pp. 165-166). There was no further information on the Amarillos until late fourteenth century (1371) when a certain Çuleman appeared in the cathedral documentation as renting or owning a house in the neighborhood of Covalada in Ávila’s hinterland. Twenty-three years afterwards, the cathedral’s *Libro de arrendamientos* mentioned Abraham Amarillo, a shoemaker, who lived on the street of Juradero (within the walls, near the Small Market, and in a well-established Jewish and Converso neighborhood. In fact, Diego Díaz, identified in the rental agreement as a Converso, inhabited the same street. In a later document Abraham is also identified as the father of Çag Amarillo, allowing us for a partial prosopography of the family around 1400 (*Libro de arrendamientos de casas de la catedral de Ávila* (1387-1446), doc. 78: pp. 73-74; doc. 170: pp. 131-132; *Documentos de la catedral de Ávila* (1356-1400), doc. 37: pp. 103-105; doc. 38: pp. 105-106; doc. 40: pp. 110-113).

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Other members of the Amarillo kin group continued to live next to the Mercado Mayor outside the city walls but connected by the street of Calandrín to the Mercado Chico or small market in what is a mere ten-minute walk today. Besides Çag and his father Abraham, Hacef Amarillo lived in houses by the Mercado Mayor, adjacent to a Muslim and a Christian renter in 1405. David Amarillo, the son of Hacef Amarillo, and his wife Miora, rented a house in the square across from the Mercado Mayor, and probably close to his father’s houses, for ten years at a rent of 73 mrs. and two pairs of hens annually (*Libro de arrendamientos*, doc. 160: pp. 123-124; doc. 164: pp. 126-127). Thus, one may posit three branches of the family: one living by the Mercado Mayor, another by the Small Market (intra-muros), and yet another probably inhabiting one of the villages in the city’s extensive hinterland. Nothing seems

to indicate that the Amarillos, like the Tamaños, held positions of importance within the Jewish community or within Ávila. Their lives seem to have diminished into the fifteenth century and only two Amarillos appear in the 1483 tax levies: Symuel Amarillo, listed in the 12th quadrille, and Yento Amarillo, listed in the 18th quadrille. Their numbers pale when compared to the Tamaños (5 members of the family listed) or with nine members for the Arrobas' kin group (*DAMA*, vol. III, doc. 302: pp. 239-249). Nonetheless, the Amarillos had other strategies for surviving in the increasingly hostile climate of the waning years of the fifteenth century.

Crossing Over: The Amarillos and Conversion

168 Along the same lines as the Tamaños, some of the members of the Amarillo family converted to Christianity while retaining their surname (surnames were not yet fully fixed in this period). The Ávila documentation records, at least, three Christian Amarillos in the second half of the fifteenth century. While they do not appear to have risen to the prosperity or importance of other of the city's Conversos, they had carved a place for themselves in Christian society. On 6 October and then again on 13 October 1448, Diego Fernández Amarillo agreed with Juan González (a butcher) to name María López, Pedro Beato's widow, and Gil González Cintero as arbiters to the agreement for their marriage of their respective children, Fernando and Catalina. Everyone is identified as a vecino of Ávila. Beato, it should be pointed out, was a common surname among Conversos in late fifteenth century Ávila. Two years afterwards, Alfonso Sánchez Amarillo, together with three other Christians, all of them vecinos of El Barraco (in the city's hinterland) agreed to sell seven cargass and a half of wood to a cleric, Pedro González, the son of Diego Gonzáles de San Juan (see below), both members of a prominent Converso family (*Catálogo de protocolos*, vol. I, doc.283: p. 96; doc. 301: p. 101). These contracts were duly recorded in the notarial registers, indicating the manner in which Jews and Conversos participated in Ávila's legal culture. None of these two Christian Amarillos mentioned above seemed to have reached the social status of the remaining member of the Amarillo kin group. In a levy of *espingarderos* (a small piece of ordinance or harquebus) to serve in the Granada front undertaken in Ávila between 1489 and 1490, one of those selected from the neighborhood (*seysmo*) of San Juan was Diego Amarillo. The *seysmo* de San Juan was close to the Small Market (el mercado chico). As we have seen above,

it was a traditional Jewish neighborhood until 1480 and of Conversos afterwards. While not a knight, Diego served in an important military role and was rewarded monetarily for his contribution in the war effort as we know was the case for other espingarderos in the same cycle of recruitments (*Documentación del archivo municipal de Ávila* (1488-1494), vol. IV, doc. 362: pp. 109-112. Hereafter *DAMA*, vol. IV).

Jews and Conversos: The Gonzáles de San Juan Family

In the previous pages, we have had a glimpse at the fortunes of two Jewish families in Ávila. For two centuries, they lived, worked, and worshipped in the city. Sharing the same neighborhoods as their ancestors, sharing the streets in which they lived with Muslims, Christians, and Conversos, these two families stand for many other Jewish kin groups, the Arrobas, the Cancres, and the Alvos among them. These extended family networks provided a stable and enduring structure to the tenor of Jewish life in the city, even though, as we have seen, some members of these families converted to Christianity after 1391 and the mid-fifteenth century. That was the case with almost every Jewish familial clan in Ávila, and it may have helped, at least in Ávila, to protect the Jewish community in the city until the Edict of Expulsion. In converting, they often remained in their neighborhoods and engaged in the same businesses with which their families had traditionally been associated. Little appears to have changed in their daily lives; yet everything had. Although not a member of either the Amarillo or Tamaño kin groups, I would like to conclude this article with a brief examination of one particular successful Converso kin group, that of Luis González de San Juan. His activities and familial connections were similar to those of many other Conversos, putting to rest the idea that Jews and Conversos had severed their ties after 1391 and had followed different paths. It may have been so on some occasions, but not often. Material gains, practical considerations, and the long and enduring ties with their ancestral beliefs often trumped the requirements of their new faith.

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Between 2 March 1448 and 27 February 1451, Luis González de San Juan's name appeared in 81 notarial documents registered in the *Catálogo de protocolos*. Remarkably, his name does not appear in any of the others of Ávila's abundant documentation for the period. Luis González de San Juan was probably a recent arrival in the city, another one of those who converted either around 1391 or in the early fifteenth century. Like many other

Conversos – he had a Converso brother in Ocaña and probably a Jewish father and brother in Salamanca – he may have led a peripatetic life in search of a place in which to re-fashion his identity. In Ávila he found that place where he and his family prospered greatly. The three years for which his administrative activities and business transactions are recorded paint a vivid portrait of his connections to Jews, other Conversos, and to Christians. One revealing document allows us to place him firmly in the Converso ranks. On 20 August 1449, Luis González de San Juan gave a power of attorney to his brother, a vecino of nearby Ocaña, to litigate against (and collect from) Salamon’s son, Abraham their share in Salamón Abenhubor’s inheritance. Abraham, together with his now deceased father, were vecinos of Salamanca (*Catálogo de protocolos*, vol. I, doc. 652, p. 193). With an established Jewish family, in what was probably their original place of residence, Luis and his brother had converted to Christianity, though still claiming rights to the property of their Jewish relatives.

170 In the mid-fifteenth century, Luis must have been clearly close to sixty years old as the documents show that both his son and two grandsons were already adults in 1450 (there may have been other children and grandchildren who, either did not make into the extant documentation or who I am unable to identify). As to the ties to his son and grandsons, we know of the relation from direct documentary references such as: “Diego González de San Juan, son of Luis González de San Juan” and so forth. Luis kept an extremely busy life in Ávila, and his activities covered a wide range of economic and administrative spheres. At least twenty of the extant notarial agreements show him as a money lender. Between April 1448 and June 1450, Luis loaned money (in one case grain) to sixteen people living in Avila’s hinterland. As it is obvious from the location they inhabited and other clues, they were farmers. Three additional debt acknowledgements described Luis’ loans to Jews in Avila. Four others included two Ávila Christians (perhaps Conversos?) and two men from Santo Domingo de la Calzada. Most of the loans given to inhabitants of Ávila’s hinterland consisted of modest amounts below 75 mrs. Two belonged in the range of 100-200 mrs, while only one, a loan for 450 mrs., represented a significant sum. We have evidence from the area of Burgos that Jews were often engaged in the lending of small sums to farmers to tie them up around harvest time. This was also the case with Conversos, as it is clearly seen here (Archivo histórico nacional. Clero, carpeta 355, no. 5; Ruiz, 1994, pp. 307 et passim; *Catálogo de protocolos*, vol. I, 84: p. 46; doc. 101: p. 49; doc. 132: p. 57; doc 294: p. 99; docs. 295, 296: p 100; doc. 365: pp. 117-118; doc. 375: p. 120; docs. 406: and 407: p. 128; doc.508: p. 155; doc.

515: p. 157; doc. 524: p. 159; docs. 991 & 992: p. 282; doc. 1116: p. 314).

Luis's loans to Jews in the city, though small in numbers, involved a more considerable amount of money than that lent to countryside Christian farmers. One of the loans amounted to 600 mrs., the other to 700 mrs. He also served as co-signer for a substantial loan of 7 *doblas de oro* to Yuçe Cerrullo, Sento's son (*Catálogo de protocolos*, vol. I, doc. 242: p. 86; doc. 268: p. 93; doc. 280 & 286: p. 97-97). A large number of the remaining mentions of Luis González de San Juan in the *Catálogo de protocolos* show him as receiving power of attorney to litigate or to act as an agent in collecting dues on the traffic of salt, royal taxes in Ávila's countryside, or in other legal businesses. For example, Luis' numerous ties (legal and economic) to Pedro Guillén de Sevilla, a royal agent, farmer or administrator of the salt wells at Atienza, and a Converso, show his place in Ávila's economic and social life. Besides his role in the salt wells at Atienza and in securing a share for the Crown in the extraction and sale of this commodity, Luis González de San Juan had responsibility for collecting royal dues in the city's hinterland, and of collecting dues for the *alcabala* or sales tax on the sale of bread and fish in the city and its region. Clearly, most of his business focused on food stuff and on its sale throughout Ávila and its hinterland.⁷

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In 1450, a Diego González de San Juan is identified as Luis' son and a money lender as well. One of his loans was to Ali Caro, master carpenter and member of the most important Muslim family in Ávila. Is this the same Ali, a carpenter, who built the partition in don Mosé Tamaño and Catalina González with which this article begins? Altogether there are thirty (30) mentions of Diego González de San Juan in the *Catálogo de protocolos*. They detail his activities as a money lender, royal agent, and being given power of attorney to litigate for others. His activities followed closely on those of his father as described above (*Catálogo de protocolos*, vol. I, doc. 859: p. 248; vol. II, doc. 1451, p. 400). Notably, while still following closely on his father's interest in the trade of salt and in money lending, Diego was also responsible for collecting ecclesiastical dues (*votos*) in the countryside. Although not as numerous as those of Luis, references to Diego signaled a higher social standing and the opening of new economic enterprises. His loan to a regidor for 1,000 mrs., his taken of servants (or apprentices) for as much as 10 years, his renting of houses on the rua de

⁷ There are close to twenty documents detailing his labor as a tax collector and royal agent. There are too numerous to include in the references, but they can be found in the *Catálogo de protocolos* between Vol. I, doc. 65, p. 39 and vol. II, doc: 1495: p. 412.

los Caballeros (of the Knights) from a Jewish widow Mazelia and her son Mosé for 350 mrs. annually seem to indicate his enhanced social standing. More significantly, beyond his investments in the countryside, he had large quantities of wood, tiles (3,000), and bricks (3,000) that may reflect his growing footprint in the city's countryside, as well as in the building trade (see, inter alia, *Catálogo de protocolos*, vol. I, doc. 483, p. 145; doc. 696: p. 204; doc. 710: p. 339; vol. II, doc. 1450: p. 400; doc. 1482: p. 409; doc. 1521: p. 418). It should not surprise us, therefore, that between 1453 and 1474, Diego González de San Juan appears prominently as an official of the city's municipal council. Whether as procurator in charge of the city's pine forests or as procurator and representative of Ávila's dependent towns, that is, as the voice of the taxpayers living in the city's countryside, Diego appears in documents that address the relations of the city with the princess and, by 1474, Queen of Castile, Isabella I (*DAMA* [1256-1474], doc. 66: pp.139-141; doc. 79: pp. 166-173; doc. 80: pp. 174-178; doc. 91: pp. 209-212; doc. 96: pp. 220-223 et al).

172 We know that Diego had, at least, two sons: Juan González de San Juan (whom we met before in dealings with one of the Amarillo Conversos) and Pedro González de San Juan. Both followed, more or less, on the same business trajectories as their father and grandfather, but with some meaningful differences. Juan continued the family's tradition of purchasing wood and lending money. As to the latter, payments due to Juan were almost exclusively in grain, revealing him as someone with an important role as a grain merchant. There is the possibility that he was, not unlike members of the urban ruling elites in early fourteenth century Ávila and Burgos, engaged in the accumulation of rural holdings (RUIZ, 1994, pp. 238 ff.; *Catálogo de protocolos*, vol. I, doc. 486: p. 149; docs. 595 & 596: p. 178; doc. 806: p. 234; doc. 909: p. 261; doc. 933: p. 267; vol. II, doc. 1602: p. 439 et passim). As to Pedro, we also find him (probably still a very young man, purchasing wood and grain, serving as an arbiter for disputes, lending money. By 1450, however, the document identifies him as a cleric. That year, he rented the "benefice of *El Barraco, de los frutos de pan e vino e menudos*," paying the very large sum of 6,700 mrs. for the position (*Catálogo de protocolos*, vol. I, doc. 331: pp. 108-119; doc. 566: p. 170; doc. 1137: p. 320). In this, Pedro followed a path common to other Conversos: from intense participation in business, money lending, and as royal or municipal administration to the Church, a secure way of establishing the legitimacy of their conversion.

Conclusion

For close to two centuries, enduring kin groups provided the patterns for Ávila's Jewish life. With no reported violence against Jews in 1391 or against Conversos in the 1440s, the city, with the largest Jewish population in fifteenth century Castile, became a refuge from the growing hostilities widespread through most of Castile. The Tamaños and the Amarillo, as did other large Jewish and Muslim family groups, lived in close proximity to Christians, Conversos, and Muslims. Inhabiting (until 1480 when the Catholic Monarchs forced Jews and Muslims to relocate to segregated neighborhoods) streets that connected the Small Market in the center of the city to the Large Market, just outside Ávila's gates, or the street of El Lomo or Brieva, linking the Small Market to the cathedral, their commingling with religious others and their close economic ties to the cathedral chapter (from whom they rented most of their residences) and with the city's hinterland (where they collected rents, lent money, bought grain and salt) gave Ávila a rather different feel than other towns, such as Burgos, Seville, and others. Elsewhere Jewish communities were erased by the violence of 1391. That was certainly not the case in Ávila. These two families described above and others like them developed strategies for the future. Conversion, whether heartfelt or prompted by material considerations, was a way to have feet in both camps. This became even clearer when, after the Edict of Expulsion in 1492, Jewish families transferred their properties to Christian relatives before leaving *Sefarad* (RUIZ, 2021b, forthcoming).

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In addition, the González de San Juan Converso family case study offers a lens through which to see the ability of the kin group to gain a foothold in Ávila's society. Although Salamanca was probably their place of origin, by the mid-fifteenth century, coinciding with attacks on Conversos in Toledo and elsewhere, they established a strong presence in Ávila. Engaged in economic pursuits that paralleled those of Jews and Conversos in the late Middle Ages, the González de San Juan family members had as many dealings with Jews and other Conversos as they did with Christians or Muslims. There was no sharp distinction between the two groups nor a severing of relations because of conversion. At most, there may have been a partition wall, as was the case, though not the only one, dividing the same house into the abodes of a Conversa and a Jewish man. From tax farmers, money lenders, businessmen engaged in the trade of essential commodities, the González de San Juan rose to the ranks of municipal officials and members of the clergy, claiming a secure place within Christian society.

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