

THE VENETIAN JEWISH ANTHOLOGY: LITURGICAL MUSIC

1. Introduction (J. Malino)
2. Presentation to the NEH Institute by Rabbi Elia Richetti (**to be submitted by Luis**)
3. Musical database: to date (**to be submitted by Luis**)
4. Future additions to the database (J. Malino)
4. Miscellaneous notes from discussions with Rav Richetti (J. Malino)

1. Introduction

A unique feature of the Venetian Ghetto was the density of its Jewish ethnic diversity. A significant aspect of this diversity was reflected in its many synagogues. Although only five synagogues remain in the Ghetto today, they provide ample evidence of this diversity, two being Italian Ashkenazic, one Italian, and two Sephardic (one Levantine and one Ponentine). The musical and liturgical traditions of these synagogues have evolved over time, and there is little possibility of recovering this history fully. In its place, the Venetian Jewish Anthology has set out to harvest the liturgical musical traditions from various communities across Italy, particularly those in the Veneto, whose diversity is akin to the diversity once apparent in Venice itself. To date, the focus is on Torah and Haftarah cantillation, and the music of the Pesach Seder. To this we hope to add selections from the nusach for weekday, Shabbat and festival liturgy. To preface the musical databases we have included the musical presentation to the NEH Institute by the chief rabbi of Venice, Elia Richetti. The musical recordings, which follow this presentation, were also contributed by Rav Richetti who possesses a beautiful voice, a broad knowledge of Italian liturgical music, and a great delight in sharing his knowledge. Following the recordings are miscellaneous notes on Italian liturgy and music compiled from several interviews with Rav Richetti.

2. Recordings (Luis)

3. Recordings (Luis)

4. Future Recordings

We hope to be able to get permission from Francesco Spagnola, an expert on Italian liturgical music to include materials already recorded digitally. In addition, we hope to digitize the cassette recordings made by Rav Richetti of the liturgical nusach for Trieste and Milan. We also hope Enrico Frank will share his knowledge of nusach.

5. Miscellaneous notes from interviews with Rav Richetti (J. Malino)

Rav Richetti has served in Trieste, Milan and Venice. His maternal grandfather was a rabbi in Cuneo, Gorizia, Ketchkemet (Hungary), Gorizia (for a second time), Verona and Milano. In response to a query about the permissibility of driving in order to attend schul on Shabbat, Rav Richetti's grandfather's responded: "It is forbidden to drive on Shabbat, but it is an obligation to come to schul."

During 1958-61 Leo Levi made a series of recordings of selections of nusach from the major Italian communities. Francesco Spagnola has a CD of this. Rabbi Richetti believes that Levi made a big mistake (or perhaps he had no choice) in only recording selections, since it makes it very hard to tell whether a nigun which appears only once does so because it is unique to a community or simply because it was only recorded in one community.

The music of Rome has been recorded and includes musical notations.

Rav Richetti believes this music is really Spanish, although the Roman Jews believe it to be Italian.

Choir music has not been retained, because there has been no way to preserve the multiple parts, except in the case of Trieste where it was common for the congregation to sing in three voices.

In the Italian tropes, the zakef katon and the re'via vary according to their position in the sentence.

The Megillot are sung but there is no precise trope. This means that there is no way to abstract any regular musical system other than the sof pasuk.

The music of the different communities was affected by external music—as it was in the Arab world. Sometimes it's evident, since the tunes don't fit the liturgy at all. In the case of Pagliacci, there may have been reverse influence, since the nigun that resembles some of its music predates the opera by centuries.

The rabbi made the following observations in response to questions:

Many names we associate with Italy are Italianized versions of Ashkenazic names, e.g., *Luzzato* comes from *Lausitz* (Austria), *Morpurgo* comes from *Mauberg* (sp.?) once in Austria but now in Croatia and called Maribor (sp.), *Ottolenghi* comes from *Oettingen* (Germany), and *Diena* comes from *Die Jena*.

Each year a "Lunario" is produced for all the Jewish communities in Italy. It is necessary to distinguish where there are synagogues, where there are communities and where there are rabbis. Casale, Ancona, Mantova, Pisa, Napoli, Parma, Modena, Merano, Vercelli have communities and synagogues but no rabbis. Bologna, Ferrara, Firenze (Siena), Genova (La Spezia), Livorno, Padova, Verona Torino, Trieste (Gorizia) have synagogues, communities and rabbis (except for Verona which has no minyan.) Lots of small schuls around Torino have no communities or rabbis. Milano has 18 schuls for 6400 people (large Chabad presence) Rome has 10 schuls with 15,000 people.

There are rabbinical colleges (mostly for advanced Jewish education) in Rome, Torino and Milano. The original rabbinical school in Padova (Where Shmuel David Luzzato taught) moved to Rome then Firenze and then back to Rome. There was a great deal of communication among the yeshivot in France, Italy and Germany. The Italian way of putting on tefillin is referred to as Rashi's.

Judging from transliterations into Italian, all the Venetian communities would have pronounced Hebrew the same way, which is roughly what we think of as Sefardic/Italian. This pronunciation may have included a “d” sound for tav (only without dagesh) and “gn” sound for ayin as in Chaim Yagnkel. It is important to distinguish this pronunciation from the mizrahi pronunciation of Oriental Jewish communities (Egyptian, Persian, Iraqi) (Yemen has unique nusach) (The rabbi speculates that just as there was an amah kodesh and amah hol, and a shekel kodesh and shekel hol, there may have been hol and kadosh pronunciations of Hebrew.)

Yiddish would have been known only by some of the Italian Ashkenazic Jews, and would likely have been pronounced like central Ashkenazic Yiddish. Examples of Yiddish slang still in use suggest this.

The German Jews who first came to Venice would have been the Italian Ashkenazic Jews with Verona-like traditions. The “Italian Jews” would have come from Mantua and Italian communities closer to Rome. In Gorizia, there used to be different tunes to Hallel for each day of Pesach but no one remembers them.

There are vernacular versions of Had Gadya in Venice, Rome, Florence (and many other Italian towns) and Tripoli (Arabic). In Piemonte, the goat isn’t small, but rather gets drunk.

There was a 1609 Venice Haggadah that contained Italian translation written with Hebrew characters. The art shop in the Ghetto is doing a facsimile. An original is at the Jewish Theological Seminary.

The 1711 Mahzor has an Italian translation of Pirkei Avot.

Despite being under the Habsburg Empire for most of its history, Trieste (at least Jewishly) was always an Italian town. Its Jewish population was small until the city itself grew enormously in the 19th century. At that time, the Jewish community grew to 6,000. There was an Italian Ashkenazic schul (called Sinagoge Numero Uno) that became Sephardic. Synagogues number two and three (Grande and Picola) shared a building and were Italian Ashkenazic. Outside the Ghetto there was a Sephardic schul called Scola Vivante.

