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Revisiting History, Rethinking Identity: Some Cabo Verdean Profiles in Afro-Jewish Journeys

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ABSTRACT

Religious diversity dates to the founding of Cabo Verdean society by Portuguese explorers in the mid-15th century. Increasing anti-Semitism that claimed Iberia beginning in the last decades of that century propelled a disproportionate number of Jews to join Catholic Portuguese migrants emigrating (for their own reasons) to the previously-unoccupied islands of Cabo Verde. Centuries later, another "wave" of Jews fleeing persecution—this time, in Morocco—reached Cabo Verde. In this article, I profile several living Cabo Verdeans with Jewish ancestry, to sample the variety of ways in which diasporic Cabo Verdeans themselves understand and experience their intriguing Afro-Jewish heritage.

KEYWORDS

Afro-Jewish history; Cabo Verde; diaspora; Iberian peninsula; Inquisition; Morocco; Portugal

"Well, all the Jews in Cabo Verde have died. But many, many Jews came to the islands and married Cabo Verdeans, and had children with Cabo Verdeans. So although they've all died, they mixed with us, and they are part of us."

– Germano Almeida[1]

Introductory thoughts

Africans and Jews

Until recently, this unlikely pairing has received scant attention in both Africanist and Jewish studies scholarship. Over the past decade-plus, scholars have begun confronting that neglect and are now writing

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[1]Conversation, Mindelo, São Vicente, Cabo Verde, April 4, 2007; translation from Portuguese into English by AG.

a new story—or rather, many new stories—of past and current relations between Jews and Africans (and their diasporic descendants).[2]

This article revisits an intriguing but little-known outpost of Atlantic history in order to rethink the impact of historical memory on contemporary experiences of identity. Several hundred years after Jewish practice was effectively suppressed by the Catholic church, what does it mean for living Africans to discover (or acknowledge) that they (or their friends or neighbors) are descendants of former Jews forced to convert to Christianity? After sketching briefly the historical backdrop to the Jewish history of the Cabo Verde islands, the article addresses this question by offering profiles of three Cabo Verdeans who are currently embarking on their own distinctive Afro-Jewish journeys.[3] The article concludes by addressing some implications that the Cabo Verde case may hold for expanding the scope of border theory.

How might African-Jewish relations be understood? In different eras—and, no doubt, responding to changing political and cultural contexts—people have evoked several metaphorical tropes. Addressing just the twentieth/early twenty-first centuries, Greenberg suggests that successive cohorts of North American Jews and African Americans have gravitated toward three distinct models of thinking about their interrelations, which she summarizes pithily (and provocatively) as:

- People now in their 50s and 60s: "We're such good friends."
- People now in their 30s and 40s: "Why do they hate us?"
- People now in their 20s: "What black-Jewish relations?"[4]

The stark contrast distinguishing these three paradigms occurring even in a relatively constricted time and place implies a wide range of experiences that characterizes relations among Jews and Africans/Afro-descended peoples across diverse historical eras and cultural spaces.[5] Cabo Verde represents

[2]The new scholarship includes: Marla Brettschneider, *The Jewish Phenomenon in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Politics of Contradictory Discourses* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2015); Marla Brettschneider, Edith Bruder, and Magdel LeRoux, eds., *Africana Jewish Journeys: Studies in African Judaism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019); George E. Brooks, Jr., *Eurafricans in Western Africa: Commerce, Social Status, Gender, and Religious Observance from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003); Edith Bruder, *The Black Jews of Africa: History, Religion, Identity* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2008); Nathan P. Devir, *New Children of Israel: Emerging Jewish Communities in an Era of Globalization* (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 2017); Richard Hull, *Jews and Judaism in African History* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Weiner, 2009); Daniel Lis, William F. S. Miles, and Tudor Parfitt, eds., *In the Shadow of Moses: New Jewish Movements in Africa* (Los Angeles, CA: African Academic Press, 2016); Peter Marks and José da Silva Horta, *The Forgotten Diaspora: Jewish Communities in West Africa and the Making of the Atlantic World* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011); William F. S. Miles, *Afro-Jewish Encounters from Timbuktu to the Indian Ocean and beyond* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 2014).

[3]I follow the orthographic preference of the government of Cabo Verde in using Portuguese spelling for the nation's name and people, rather than the anglicized "Cape Verde/Cape Verdean."

[4]Cheryl Greenberg, "Black-Jewish Relations: Why Should We Care?" (talk presented at Temple Habonim, Barrington, RI, February 9, 2014).

[5]For another thoughtful discussion of the history of these relations, see Toby Green, "Beyond Culture Wars: Reconnecting African and Jewish Diasporas in the Past and the Present," in *African Athena: New Agendas*, eds. Daniel Orrells, Gurminder K. Bhambra, and Tessa Roynon (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2011), 139–55.

a unique case with its own internally diverse history, complemented by a multiplicity of individual experiences.

In this article, I profile several of the hundreds of people I have gotten to know during my research with citizens of, and migrants from, the island nation of Cabo Verde, an archipelago located some 350 miles off the coast of Senegal, and independent from Portugal since 1975. I present these brief biographies to exemplify the variety of ways in which diasporic Cabo Verdeans themselves both speak to, and speak against, common images of Jews and of African immigrants in the U.S. While I present these individuals to represent three levels of engagement with Judaism, their unique experiences are by no means fully replicated by others who share some (but not all) of their biographies.

Research methods

Buttressed by pathbreaking work by historians who have uncontestably documented the presence of Jews across Cabo Verde's history, we are now in a position to inquire into the consequences of that history for the lived experiences of Cabo Verdeans today.[6] As I am an anthropologist and not a historian, this is not a work *of* history. However, it is a work rooted *in* history, for I am working with a group of people who themselves are rethinking their own insertion into particular historical streams.

I have been in conversation with Cabo Verdeans on and (mostly) off the islands since 2006.[7] My *in situ* research has occurred in four countries (especially the U.S. and Portugal; also Cabo Verde and France). I join chat groups, Facebook pages, and other online spaces to read and sometimes participate in conversations among and with diasporic Cabo Verdeans around the world (the U.S., Cabo Verde, Portugal, Brazil, the Netherlands, the U.K., Italy, and elsewhere). I began this research with a year living in Lisbon (July 2006–August 2007). I am now working primarily in the New England states of Massachusetts and, especially, Rhode Island, where I have lived since May 2016. I have conducted my research in English (my native language), Portuguese (a language in which I have a passable level of competence), Cabo Verdean Kriolu (a language I am actively studying), and French (a language in which I have near fluency). I supplement my ethnographic engagement with a continual reading of historical and contemporary accounts and documents.

[6]For the earliest periods, see Tobias Green, "Masters of Difference: Creolization and the Jewish Presence in Cabo Verde, 1497–1672" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Birmingham, 2007); on Moroccan Jews in Cabo Verde, see Ângela Benoliel Coutinho, "Descendentes de Judeus em Cabo Verde no Século XX Colonial" [Descendants of Jews in Cabo Verde in the Colonial 20th Century], *Expresso das Ilhas* 810, June 7, 2017, http://www.expressodasilhas.sapo.cv/opiniao/item/53544-descendentes-de-judeus-em-cabo-verde-no-seculo-xx-colonial.

[7]Alma Gottlieb, "Two Visions of Africa: Reflections on Fieldwork in an 'Animist Bush' and an Urban Diaspora," in *The Restless Anthropologist: New Fieldsites, New Visions*, ed. Alma Gottlieb (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 81–99.

Ethnographically, I use the classic mixed methods of formal interviews, informal conversations, and participant-observation. I join in public events such as festivals, parades, political marches, concerts, award ceremonies, fund-raising dinners, museum exhibits, lectures, book signings, synagogue services, and community Passover Seders. At more intimate levels, I participate in birthday parties, cooking sessions, family visits, graduation parties, funerals, doctors' visits, kitchen chats, gossip sessions, Jewish conversion rituals, family-based Jewish and Christian holiday celebrations, temple services, and Sabbath meals. I have also participated in and presented talks at Cabo Verdean studies conferences along with Cabo Verdean scholars.

Since 2014, I have been a member of the Annual Joint Cape Verdean-Jewish Passover Seder Organizing Committee, a group that hosts a large community Seder in Boston every spring. Since 2016, I have also been a member of the Executive Board of Cape Verdean-American Community Development (CACD), a non-governmental organization based in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, which is dedicated to serving and improving the lives of Cabo Verdeans in Rhode Island and beyond; for this organization, I attend board meetings, help write grant proposals, and help out with renovation and other occasional tasks. In that multi-layered role, I participate in community activities, research Cabo Verdean activism, and help promote the welfare of Cabo Verdeans (with and without Jewish ancestry) in and beyond Rhode Island.

Who are Cabo Verdeans?

When we read or hear about "the Cabo Verdean community," we might easily imagine a homogeneous group. Certainly, a great deal unites Cabo Verdeans both on and off the islands. Language (Kriolu), food (*cachupa/manchupa* [a popular stew], *kuskus* [a local preparation of couscous]), musical genres (*morna, funana, coladeira, tabanka* [four local musical styles]), dance styles (*batuka* [a West African-influenced dance style], *mazurka* [a Polish-influenced dance style]), drinks (*grogue, ponche* [two strong, locally made, alcoholic beverages]), clothing style (*panos* [from a locally made, West Africa-influenced print fabric]), memories of hardship, and tight-knit families disrupted by diasporic travels are just some of the strong links that regularly keep Cabo Verdeans remarkably connected across multiple continents.

However, beneath these shared experiences lies significant diversity. Levels of education and income, island of origin, and racialized identity are three prominent factors that divide the experiences of Cabo Verdean families and individuals. Here, I focus on another source of diversity that, while less commonly discussed—indeed, frequently hidden—nevertheless has a deep and enduring impact on the Cabo Verdean experience: religious history.

It used to be thought that all Cabo Verdeans were Catholic. In recent decades, some Protestant and independent churches have gained influence on the islands. Less publicly recognized is that religious diversity dates to the founding of Cabo Verdean society, when the islands were (re)discovered and first settled by European explorers and traders, followed by Africans brought by those Europeans.[8] Although some West African and ancient Phoenician sailors knew of the islands, at the time of their rediscovery by European explorers in 1456, the archipelago was apparently empty of human habitation.[9] Following this rediscovery, increasing anti-Semitism that claimed Iberia beginning in the last decades of the fifteenth century helped create a situation whereby the first Europeans to begin settling on the islands were disproportionately Jewish.[10]

In 1492, Spain issued an Edict of Expulsion that required all Jews either to leave Spain or convert to Catholicism. Initially, thousands of Spanish Jews crossed the border into Portugal. Four years later, pressured by Spain, Portugal's king announced his own Edict of Expulsion. Rather than forcibly convert to Catholicism or be killed, thousands of Jews (both Spanish- and Portuguese-born) left the Iberian peninsula. New navigational technologies (largely developed with intellectual knowhow of Arabs and Jews) allowed European mariners to sail the world, and the new religious exiles took advantage of these innovations. Following developing maritime itineraries gave these Jews a tempting, and often (but not always) effective, means to avoid persecution and death at home. Their land and sea routes allowed them to reach many destinations across Europe (including Amsterdam, London, Italy, and southern France), the Near East (especially Istanbul), and the Americas (including Brazil, Mexico, Jamaica, Curaçao, and North America).[11] The more prosperous among these travelers

[8]In this article, I focus on Judaism as an early source of religious diversity in Cabo Verde. Africans arriving on the archipelago (mostly, but not exclusively, as slaves) also brought local/indigenous and/or Islamic religious traditions. The creative ways in which African religious practices combined with Judaism and Catholicism to create the religious landscape of the first generations of Cabo Verdeans—on some accounts, the first modern, "Creolized" population—merit further scholarly attention; Toby Green, "Building Slavery in the Atlantic World: Atlantic Connections and the Changing Institution of Slavery in Cabo Verde, Fifteenth–Sixteenth Centuries," *Slavery & Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies* 32, no. 2 (2011): 227–45.

[9]Some contemporary Cabo Verdeans suspect African habitation at the time of Portugal-backed rediscovery of the archipelago, suggesting genocide of African inhabitants by the first European settlers. Although early colonial histories of several Caribbean islands provide tragic examples of this disturbing scenario, to date no archaeological or archival evidence supports this theory for Cabo Verde; cf. Melanie Newton, "The Race Leapt at Sauteurs: Genocide, Narrative and Indigenous Exile from the Caribbean," *Caribbean Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (2014): 5–28; Jeffrey Ostler, "Genocide and American Indian History," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedias* (March 2015), http://americanhistory.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.001.0001/acrefore-9780199329175-e-3 (accessed February 25, 2019).

[10]Green, "Masters of Difference."

[11]Historical scholarship on this long, global diaspora includes Matt Goldish, *Jewish Questions: Responsa on Sephardic Life in the Early Modern Period* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); Ron D. Hart, *Sephardic Jews: History, Religion and People* (Santa Fe, NM: Gaon Books, 2016); Stanley M. Hordes, *To the End of the Earth: A History of the Crypto-Jews of New Mexico* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2005); Jonathan I. Israel, *Diasporas within a Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews, and the World Maritime Empires, 1540–1740* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2002); Philip Morgan and Richard Kagan, eds., *Atlantic Diasporas: Jews, Conversos, and Crypto-Jews in the Age of Mercantilism, 1500–1800* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); Jonathan Ray, *After Expulsion: 1492 and the Making of Sephardic Jewry* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2013).

forged remarkably international trading networks; some of their social/trade networks persisted in one way or another across the next five centuries. Much less known is that a small but adventurous group of Jews fleeing the anti-Semitism enveloping Iberia joined the Portuguese sailors traveling to the newly rediscovered islands of Cabo Verde.

We know now that the early generations of European colonizers of the Cabo Verde islands included a disproportionately large number of either practicing Jews or new converts from Judaism to Catholicism (*Novos Cristãos*, or "New Christians"). Some of these refugees would have left Portugal or Spain hoping to continue openly practicing the religion of their ancestors. Others had already converted to Christianity—some, in full faith; others, continuing to illicitly follow at least some Jewish practices.[12] Still others may have become more secular, neglecting both old (Jewish) and alternate (Christian) religious options.[13]

In any case, the Inquisition that claimed Iberian institutions and minds alike exceeded its originating peninsula.[14] That expansion included spies sent to Cabo Verde to report on signs of Jewish practice. Religious refugees in Cabo Verde (as elsewhere across the expanding Portuguese empire) found it impossible to maintain Jewish practices and, ironically, ended up converting (at least in name) to the same Christianity they had tried to avoid adopting in Iberia. As with mainland Portugal, the resultant society became dominated by the Catholic church—which, being state-sponsored, became the sole religion allowed. Consequently, although many Cabo Verdeans with early roots in that era likely have Jewish ancestors, most living descendants of these early-arriving Jewish and "New Christian" migrants from Iberia remain unaware of that distant Jewish ancestry. As one such person told me, "There are certain things [Jewish practices] that could have been a signal [of Jewish ancestry], but they weren't talked about—it's one of those things. Maybe the old ones would not talk about certain things because of being afraid of being persecuted… so it just stayed taboo… the first ones [Jewish migrants from Iberia]… [it's] not that they didn't know of these practices, but… if they exposed themselves, then they would run the risk of being persecuted."[15]

During the nineteenth/early twentieth centuries, another group of Jews fleeing persecution—this time, in Morocco—also found their way to Cabo Verde. They may have known of Jewish networks from earlier eras. Either way, this "second wave" offered a new layer of Jewish identity to these sociologically unique islands. Because of the relatively recent era in which

[12]David M. Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit: The Religion of the Crypto-Jews* (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996).

[13]José Faur, *In the Shadow of Modernity: Jews and* Conversos *at the Dawn of Modernity* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992); David Sorkin, "The Port Jew: Notes towards a Social Type," *Journal of Jewish Studies L* 1 (1999): 87–97.

[14]Toby Green, *Inquisition: The Reign of Fear* (New York, NY: Thomas Dunne Books, 2007).

[15]Luís Faria, conversation in Providence, RI, October 1, 2011.

this second migration stream occurred, today's descendants of these Moroccan migrants usually know much about their Jewish ancestry. The Moroccan-Jewish ancestry of a recent Cabo Verdean prime minister, Carlos Wahnon Veiga (currently, the Cabo Verdean ambassador to the U.S.), further publicized this component of the nation's history (Figure 4).

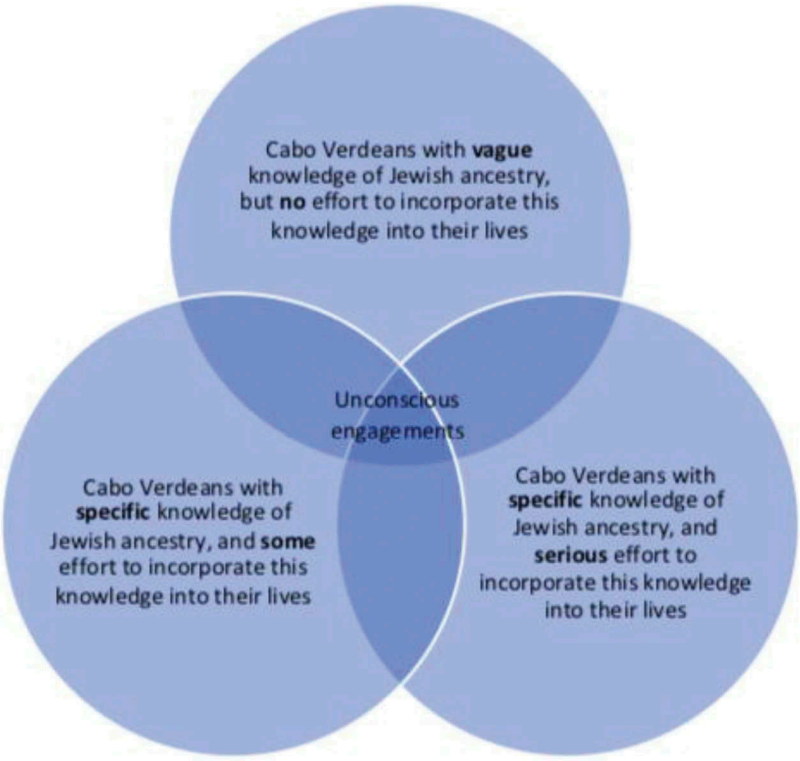

Figure 1. Three orientations of Cabo Verdeans regarding their Jewish ancestry.

With these concealed, diverse yet lasting ties, how do living Cabo Verdeans themselves (both on and off the islands) evaluate their Jewish ancestry? Parallel to the efforts of many Brazilians and other Latin Americans currently rediscovering their Jewish heritage,[16] many Cabo Verdeans are increasingly curious to chart and reclaim the submerged yet historically critical Jewish component of their family's and/or island's identity. Many are seeking out both their Jewish family history and their peers with Jewish ancestry; some are finding their way to

[16]For a few sources of recent scholarship on the new interest in Latin America's Jewish heritage, see Ruth Behar, *An Island Called Home: Returning to Jewish Cuba* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009); Jane Gerber, ed., *The Jews in the Caribbean* (Liverpool, England: Liverpool University Press, 2014); Jeffrey Lesser and Raanan Rein, eds., *Rethinking Jewish-Latin Americans* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008); María Elena Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions*: Limpieza de Sangre, *Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008).

adopting Jewish ritual practices. In the following, I explore the contemporary aftermath of the intriguing, 500+-year story of the partly conjoined Jewish-Cabo Verdean diaspora.

My research has focused on a range of individuals, including those who know they have Jewish ancestry; those who suspect Jewish ancestry and are actively pursuing the question; and those who have no known Jewish ancestry but find themselves intrigued by the fact that other Cabo Verdeans have such family histories. To be sure, all of their experiences are unique. Yet it is helpful to group them into loosely defined subgroups. For didactic purposes, I propose a three-part Venn diagram (Figure 1).[17]

This mode visualizes three kinds of experience regarding knowledge of Jewish ancestry. Members of the first group (*A*) have a vague sense that there may once have been Jews in their families, but they have made no efforts to incorporate this knowledge into their daily lives. Members of the second group (*B*) have more specific knowledge of the Jewish component of their family history and have made some efforts to incorporate their knowledge into their daily lives. Members of the third group (*C*) take those efforts far more seriously, incorporating Jewish practice systematically and reflectively into their lives.

In reality, these three groups are not entirely distinct, hence my decision to visualize their relations via a Venn diagram with partly overlapping circles. At the center of this Venn diagram lies a nexus of what we might term "unconscious" Jewish engagements linking members of all three groups. I begin with these engagements.

Unconscious Jewish engagements

Q: Do you eat pork?

A1: I try to stay away from pork—I'm not a big pork person.[18]

[17]With its circular design, this model might remind readers of the commoner *core/periphery* model. That conceptual framework aptly illuminates some questions concerning global Jewish practice; William F. S. Miles, "Concentric Circles of Jewish/Israelite Identity in Sub-Saharan Africa," in *Africana Jewish Journeys: Studies in African Judaism*, eds. Maria Brettschneider, Edith Bruder, and Magdel LeRoux (Newcastle upon Tyne, England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019), 106–22. However, its implied hierarchy of values masks subtle nuances that can make life at a subjective level feel quite different from the broad *have/have not* dichotomy undergirding the *core/periphery* model. In African Judaism, a core/periphery model assumes only mainstream Judaism as the "core," while all diversions from rabbinically approved orthodoxy remain on the "periphery." Instead, I inquire into which "orthodox" practices individuals have adopted/ignored/rejected, and why. Starting from this more value-neutral perspective allows us to "get into the heads of the natives"—always the anthropologist's goal. This methodological strategy also has a political payoff. Rather than replicating an unconscious *West is best* mentality that may unintentionally creep into a *core vs. periphery* model, when we take an inductive approach, so-called *core*—read, Western/White—practices no longer dominate conceptually, or politically, over supposedly "peripheral"—read, non-Western/non-White—practices. Eschewing those seductive ranked dichotomies allows us to approach the possibility of valuing ethnographic practices distinct from "orthodoxy," and allowing theoretical innovations to emerge from spaces otherwise relegated to the "periphery" (cf. John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Theory from the South; Or, How Euro-America is Evolving toward Africa* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011).

[18]Interview, Roxbury, MA, March 4, 2014.

A2: It is a meat that isn't very healthy. I avoid it.[19]

A3: I tried abstaining from pork for a year-and-a-half but then found the call of bacon a bit too tempting. Turkey bacon isn't as tasty. But that's the only pork I eat—I don't eat any other pork.[20]

A4: The real *cachupa* [the quintessential Cabo Verdean stew that typically includes chunks of pork] doesn't contain pork!… [I]t's the Portuguese who introduced pork into *cachupa* and brought pigs to the islands. Otherwise, the islands wouldn't have pigs, just fish. The best *cachupa* I ever had was always with fish! That's how my grandmother made it…. That's how I make it here [in his Cabo Verdean restaurant in Paris]….[21]

In these statements (and many others like them that I have recorded), each response to the question, "Do you eat pork?" evokes a particular rationale that implies an individual decision. Yet, collectively, they suggest a different biography.

Cabo Verdean cuisine combines Portuguese and West African culinary traditions, relying on foods introduced early on from both regions—including the Portuguese practice of raising domestic pigs. Indeed, in small villages across rural Portugal, an annual pig-killing event (*matança*) traditionally served as the center of the ritual calendar.[22] Today, mainstream Portuguese cuisine still revolves heavily around pork, which appears (sometimes furtively) in one form or another in nearly all Portuguese dishes, from soups to desserts.[23] The fact that so many Cabo Verdeans with whom I have spoken either avoid pork entirely, or eat it only selectively or occasionally, suggests that earlier generations of Jewish family tradition underlie, perhaps unknowingly, what appears a personal choice.

This case of daily *habitus* shaped by abandoned religious traditions is joined by many others.[24] In my research among Cabo Verdeans, I have observed multiple quotidian and ritual activities alike that strikingly resemble Jewish practices, while often unacknowledged as such by those who practice them. For example, Gershom[25] told me that his Cabo Verdean-American father, Jorge (both of whose parents had emigrated to the U.S. from Cabo Verde), grew up in New Bedford, Massachusetts, always having a large meal every Friday night,

[19]Interview, Lisbon, June 2, 2007; translation from Portuguese into English by AG.

[20]Interview, Dartmouth, MA, March 5, 2014.

[21]Interview, Paris, October 30, 2010; translation from French into English by AG.

[22]Denise Lawrence, "Menstrual Politics: Women and Pigs in Rural Portugal," in *Blood Magic: The Anthropology of Menstruation*, eds. Thomas Buckley and Alma Gottlieb (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), 117–36.

[23]Philip Graham, "365 Days of Pork Surprise," in *The Moon, Come to Earth: Dispatches from Lisbon* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 12–16.

[24]On "habitus," see Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984 [1979]).

[25]Some personal names used in this article are pseudonyms.

prepared by his mother. Gershom remembered his mother asking his father the meaning of that tradition. Gershom reported that his father had offered no explanation, other than to say that he thought his own mother, Catalina, who maintained the tradition, was a little bit crazy. Gershom is convinced that his father likely has Jewish ancestry dating back to the days of the Inquisition, but that he had no knowledge of his Jewish ancestry: "It's just too far back for family memories to have been maintained," he surmised. But the large Friday dinner every night, clearly reminiscent of the Jewish Sabbath dinner, provided sensory/somatic knowledge otherwise suppressed by collective memory.[26]

The end of the life cycle also reveals Jewish ritual practices in many Cabo Verdean households—again, often unrecognized as such. For example, Jeanne, a Cabo-Verde-born woman living in Rhode Island, described the casket style for family funerals during her early years on her home island of Santiago: "It's a simple, light wood, with no decorations at all. The only thing on the outside is simple handles for carrying the coffin."[27] Although this casket style resembles the common Jewish predilection for using a simple pine box (or no casket at all), rather than the highly ornate caskets used by many Portuguese and Cabo Verdean Catholic families, Jeanne was unaware of the likely Jewish origins of her family's funeral practice.

Beyond the coffin style, the funeral ritual practice (called *nodjadu*) that is common in Cabo Verde bears many similarities to common Jewish funeral customs. For example, some Cabo Verdean mourners cover mirrors during the prescribed mourning period, paralleling Jewish practice. The Jewish schedule of mourners quietly receiving visitors ("sitting *shiva*") for seven days also finds a parallel in many Cabo Verdean families. Davida, a Cabo Verdean woman born on the island of Santa Antão but now living in Rotterdam, recalled her family's mourning customs from her childhood: "When someone died, for seven days, people came to your house, and after one year, they all came together again." Until recently, Davida was unaware that her family's funeral schedule replicated the classic Jewish mourning week (*shiva*). Yet somehow, for reasons she couldn't explain, as a child Davida resisted practicing Catholic ritual:[28]

AG: Were you raised as a practicing Catholic?
Davida: Yeah, yeah.
AG: You were baptized in the church?
Davida: I'm baptized, yes, yes. Only I didn't want to do the Communion, I didn't want to do that…. It didn't feel right for me. As a child!

[26]Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992 [1941/1952]).
[27]Interview, Pawtucket, RI, April 26, 2014.
[28]Interview, Rotterdam (via Skype), January 31, 2015.

Recently, Davida accidentally confirmed the Jewish identity of her ancestors. On a trip to Portugal, she visited a synagogue displaying information about the nation's Jewish heritage. One exhibit included a list of common surnames found among many Portuguese Jews and their descendants. Included in this long list was the surname of her maternal grandfather, Coelho. She had previously heard that the name "Coelho" had Jewish associations, but had somehow never connected it with her grandfather. On her return to Rotterdam, she queried her mother:

> I told her about the Jewish museum, and I said, "[The exhibit had a list of] Cape Verdean names, [and] they all were Jewish names." And then she told me that her father told her as a child that they were from Jewish blood… but [that] she wasn't allowed to talk about it.

I asked Davida, "Do you remember your reaction when you heard this?"

> *Well*, I thought, *Couldn't you have told me earlier?* Because I'm sure that I mentioned [to my mother] sometimes [something] about the name "Coelho" [being a Jewish name]! And since I knew it was a Jewish name, I had this [vague] idea that we must be Jewish, or something. But that's since 2000—something [that I'd heard this about my grandfather's name being Jewish]. She kept me waiting a long time!

David then launched into a narrative rooted in mystical connections. She had somehow long "known" that she has Jewish ancestry—although, to date, she has been unable to definitively verify this "knowledge" through conventional means such as oral history, archival records, or genetic tests. But a mystical sense of Jewish identity pervades her spiritual life. Nevertheless, having been raised as a Catholic, she also retains reverence for Jesus Christ. With this spiritually mixed background, she has found herself drawn to an informal "Jews for Jesus" group. She visits Israel twice a year, where she is affiliated with such a group. Indeed, she has recently decided to emigrate from the Netherlands to Israel (to "make *aliyah*" [claim Israeli citizenship as a Jew]) through that nation's "right of return," which grants citizenship to those with proven Jewish ancestry in the maternal line. To that end, Davida has recently gone on a fact-finding trip to Cabo Verde in search of authoritative proof of Jewish ancestry through her mother.

Another Cabo Verdean woman had a strikingly similar reaction to Davida's on learning of her Jewish family. In recounting the moment when she verified her Jewish ancestry from her father, she said:

> If you remember people lighting candles on Friday nights, that was one of those things where my father was, like, "Oh, yeah, I remember that!" [I thought] like, *You could have told me when I asked you the first time*![29]

[29]Anna Delgado, "Tracing Family History," talk at Rochambeau Library (in series "Virtual Cape Verde"), Providence, RI, May 31, 2014.

Again, the penchant for secrecy, even within the family, suggests a deep-seated fear of discovery that has haunted Cabo Verdeans with Jewish ancestry across many generations.[30]

A large set of common family surnames implies another component of Cabo Verdeans' lives that have a probable but largely unrecognized Jewish source. Abundant Sephardic oral history suggests that, following the late-fifteenth-century laws that expelled all Jews from Spain and Portugal, many of the classic Jewish surnames such as Cohen and Levi/Levy (Alves) were supplanted by names rooted in the natural world—both trees and mammals—by Jews who opted to remain in Iberia and convert to Catholicism. Indeed, re-naming to conceal previous Jewish identity became a potential means to survive (although the engine of the Inquisition continued to seek out such families for persecution for some 300 years).[31] Today, very common surnames in Cabo Verde (as well as Portugal and elsewhere in the Lusophone world) include "tree/plant names" such as Carvalho (oak tree), Figueira (fig tree), Lima (lime tree), Pereira (pear tree), Pinheiro (pine tree), Oliveira (olive tree), Rosa (rose), and Silva (thicket, woods); and "animal names" such as Cabral (goat), Coelho (rabbit), Leão (lion), Lobo (wolf), and Pinto (baby chicken).[32]

Many Cabo Verdeans bearing these surnames likely have ancestors who adopted them soon after the Edicts of Expulsion were issued to hide their Jewish identity and remain safe in Spain or Portugal. Later, they would have decided to flee Iberia because of continuing persecution by the Inquisition of "New Christians" bearing such names. Yet, given the remoteness of the historical era during which these events transpired, few living Cabo Verdeans who carry such names recognize Jewish ancestry in their genealogies.[33]

What (if any) is the significance of the seemingly "Jewish" practices I have outlined earlier (and others), if the contemporary generations who perpetuate them remain largely unaware of their religious origins?

[30]For another perspective on the role of fear in Cabo Verdean history, see Tobias Green, "Fear and Atlantic History," *Atlantic Studies* 3, no. 1 (2006): 25–42.

[31]On the long reach of the Portuguese Inquisition, see Toby Green, "Policing the Empires: A Comparative Perspective on the Institutional Trajectory of the Inquisition in the Portuguese and Spanish Overseas Territories (Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries)," *Hispanic Research Journal* 13, no. 1 (2012): 7–25; on the Iberian Inquisition shaping the past half-millenium, see Thomas Kirsch, *The Grand Inquisitor's Manuel: A History of Terror in the Name of God* (New York, NY: Harper, 2008).

[32]For surnames commonly found among Sephardic and "New Christian" families, see Yoram Zara, "Sephardic Surnames," n.d., https://www.sephardim.co (accessed February 25, 2019).

[33]Despite their common appearance among Sephardic families, these and similar names (see Note 32) do not guarantee Jewish ancestry. One reason is that many if not all of these names were also found (if far less commonly) among Christian families in Portuguese before the Inquisition, and some families with these names may fully lack Jewish ancestry (Lúis Batalha, personal communication, Lisbon, 2007). Other Cabo Verdeans whose ancestors were enslaved by European slave traders may have been compelled to adopt such surnames from their "owners"; in these cases, the names would represent legal but not biogenetic descent (Ibid.). That said, the question of the religious orientation of slave owners in Cabo Verde is too complex (and fraught) to consider here; for one source, see Eli Faber, *Jews, Slaves and the Slave Trade: Setting the Record Straight* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1998).

An earlier generation of anthropologists might have called the ritual and naming practices I have just summarized "retentions" or "survivals" (or, more specifically, "Africanisms"). Introduced by early Africanists such as W. E. B. DuBois, St. Clair Drake, and Melville Herskovits, the concept of "retentions" or "survivals" reached its heyday in the 1970s, especially in the context of African Americans' linguistic, musical, artistic, and religious practices deriving from their ancestors' lives in Africa. While the notion of "retentions" or "survivals" understandably gained political ground in some circles, including the Black Power movement of the 1960s, most anthropologists have challenged it as, at best, inadequate, for a variety of theoretical as well as historical/empirical reasons. Nevertheless, some contemporary scholars continue to draw on the concept, with the Internet expanding its reach among bloggers and others.

In the context of Cabo Verde, the notion of unconscious "survivals" is decreasingly relevant precisely because many contemporary Cabo Verdeans are now (re)discovering their traceable Jewish ancestry and exploring its significance for their lives. If, until recently, engagements with earlier Jewish practice existed only at the unconscious levels, many Cabo Verdeans today are actively exploring those foundations. For insights into the meanings that these practices hold for increasing numbers of Cabo Verdeans, let us begin with a conversation during which one Cabo Verdean immigrant in the U.S. recognized for the first time the Jewish history of two "personal" practices.

In Rhode Island, Alessia had prepared a traditional afternoon snack of tea and sweet couscous (*kuskus*) for Teresa, a mutual Cabo Verdean friend, and me.[34] As we enjoyed the tasty dish, Alessia explained how she had prepared it. The ingredients she listed included Morton's kosher salt—which remained on the table at which we were seated. Alessia cast a glance at the characteristic navy blue cardboard box: it sported a large "Jewish star" on its front panel.

"That reminds me of the Jewish stars on some of my jewelry," Alessia said…. "I probably still have some… from when I was a baby…. [I]n my family, on the seventh day of a baby's life, we always put a belt around the baby's waist. It had a few charms on it—maybe three or four, or even five. One was always a Jewish star."

"But what makes it a *Jewish* star?" Teresa asked.

"It has to be six-pointed," Alessia replied. "At least on São Vicente [the Cabo Verdean island on which Alessa was born and raised], we made a very clear distinction between a five-pointed star and a six-pointed star. We called the six-pointed one, *estrela de Judeu*—star of the Jew[s]."

"Wow, really?" Teresa shook her head in amazement. "In my family, we tied a six-pointed star onto a waistband for a baby, too. Or it might be

[34]Conversation, Pawtucket, RI, July 23, 2014.

a bracelet or an anklet for an older child, or even an adult. But I had no idea that it had anything to do with Judaism!"

Teresa added that she had also given what she now knew to be a "Jewish star" to both her children when they were babies.

Alessia added that, back in Cabo Verde, a six-pointed "Jewish star" always appeared around Christmas time in her family's home. Either one hung on the wall inside the door, or (more intriguingly) it dangled from their Christmas tree, or both. Teresa expressed further amazement: her family had the same practice as well. Moreover, Teresa claimed that many Cabo Verdeans across the archipelago hung a six-pointed star somewhere in their home during the Christmas season. Once again, she had no idea of this custom's Jewish origins.

A highly educated woman (bearing three advanced degrees, including one from Portugal), Teresa found herself compelled to reflect on this revelation of an intimate family practice whose origins were, until that moment, entirely unknown to her. She speculated aloud with us how this ignorance could have been perpetuated. At least at the level of her immediate experience, she thought it had to do with the power dynamics of her parents' marriage. Teresa said that she and her siblings often found themselves caught between their father's secular orientation and their mother's religiosity. But her father was the dominant partner in the marriage, and her mother rarely insisted on religious customs being practiced—and when she did, she never explained them, to avoid irritating her husband. Teresa thought this explained her ignorance of the Jewish origins of her own six-pointed star charm.

By contrast, Alessia appeared proud of her knowledge of the Jewish origins of the six-pointed star, and she saw this knowledge as part and parcel of a generally cosmopolitan outlook. She attributed this orientation to having grown up on the Cabo Verdean island of São Vicente, whose port city of Mindelo attracted people from around the world in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—including many Jews. For her part, Teresa left the conversation avowing interest in these new revelations about her family's suddenly complicated religious history.

Such personal revelations have occurred during many conversations I have had with Cape Verdeans. Each story contains its biographical particularities, yet all share some sense of amazement at the moment of discovery.

Once Jewish ancestry emerges as likely or even certain, what do Cape Verdeans do with the knowledge? For people such as Teresa who suddenly learn of a new religious component to their family history, the answer to that question must unfold slowly across future days and months of reflection. A few years after that kitchen conversation, for example, Teresa joined a Planning Committee that organizes an annual Passover Seder held in Boston uniting Cabo Verdeans and U.S.-based Jews; she recently recruited Alessia to join her on the committee.

In recent years, many more Cabo Verdeans have begun exploring the Jewish heritage of their nation, their families, or both, seeking out their Jewish family history (for intellectual discovery) and/or their peers with similar backgrounds (for socioreligious engagement). If Teresa and Davida are in the early stages of discovering—or verifying—their Jewish ancestry, others have made the decision to engage actively with that religious heritage at one level or another. Some of these Cabo Verdeans (as with Alessia) grew up knowing of their Jewish ancestry, whereas others (as with Teresa and Davida) have only recently become aware of this component of their identity, whether they are still living on the islands or have joined the diaspora. While some Cabo Verdeans do not alter their daily lives, for others, a range of behavioral changes may result, from contemplating adopting particular Jewish practices, to (tentatively) trying out some Jewish practices, to (actively) adopting some practices.

Conscious Jewish engagements

> I just remembered something. My mother had a torn picture… of her grandmother… when I was a teenager…. I was just learning about the Star of David from my friends, and I remembered this picture that was torn of my grandmother… she had a Star of David on…. And my mother said, "Yeah, my father's family was Jewish." And I completely forgot about that [photo until now]. – Eva[35]

> My mom says she wants to have a *sheeva*, or a *shiva*—am I saying that right? She said that's, like, one of the only Jewish customs she will follow. She loves that. – Leila[36]

The two women quoted in these epigraphs were born in the U.S. to (respectively) one or both parents of Cabo Verdean ancestry. Both grew up in households that effectively considered themselves Catholic. Both knew of Jewish ancestors; neither has yet incorporated much Jewish practice into her life. But Leila, the younger of the two, exhibited an active curiosity. During our conversations, she pressed me to confirm the Jewish origin of some practices she had already tentatively identified as Jewish. Still in high school, she evinced interest in undergoing a formal conversion to Judaism (notwithstanding that her Jewish ancestry stemmed from her mother's side):

> [A]fter discovering that I was of Jewish ancestry, I really would like to convert to the religion. Because I feel like there's [a] religion for everybody, and Catholicism just isn't mine. Like, I don't—it's like, I've been in Catholic school my whole life, but when I read the Bible, the only one [book] that interests me is the Old Testament. The New Testament, I find, is a little dressed up and ornate. And [in] Mass—I just don't feel connected with God. But I always felt really intrigued

[35]Interview, New Bedford, MA, June 19, 2014.
[36]Interview, Roxbury, MA, July 1, 2014.

> reading the Old Testament and doing the Passover thing. So, I kind of feel like a lot of Cape Verdeans are starting to realize that.

This young woman currently attends a college with a predominantly Jewish student population.

For other Cape Verdeans, the discovery of Jewish ancestry does not produce new *spiritual* habits or realignments. Rather, some come to associate life habits as influenced by having been brought up by those with particular daily practices passed down across generations of Jewish families. Even when religious practice was long ago extirpated (whether by the Inquisition in Portugal or Cabo Verde, or from more recent efforts to squelch Judaism), this group of Cabo Verdeans insists on identifying continuities with daily life habits taught by grandparents to parents to children.

Marco, a businessman I met in Praia (the capital city of Cabo Verde), showed up fifteen minutes early to pick me up one day. Apologizing, he explained that his father—a successful businessman descended from a long line of successful businessmen—had always taught him that being on time guarantees success in the business world. Without prompting, Marco began our conversation by chuckling, "That's how I know I'm Jewish. My father taught me that Jews are always on time." Regardless of the accuracy of such a broad claim, Marco found it important to assert the Jewish foundation of this life habit.

Many other Cabo Verdeans insisted to me that they acquired a lifelong love of learning in general, and reading in particular, from relatives descended from Jews. I have collected dozens of stories of adults who have made difficult, life-changing decisions organized around giving their children the advantages of an American education. These include women who sent their children to live in the U.S. and be raised by grandparents, and women who themselves emigrated, while lacking English and good job prospects—all so that their children might attend U.S. schools. Given the language gaps, the second group of women enrolled in English language classes as soon as they could—to improve their own life chances, to serve as role models to their children, and to help their children strengthen their English skills. In many cases, these individuals explicitly connected their extraordinary motivation to pursue an education, both for themselves and for their children, with the common Jewish value of learning that they claim they inherited from their own families. Although racism as an attitude and a structure of power still constricts the options of many Cabo Verdeans in the U.S., the number of Cabo Verdeans who have overcome the extraordinary obstacles in their path for the sake of educating their children is notable, with a rising, robust, Cabo Verdean American middle and upper-middle class composed of doctors, nurses, lawyers, professors, financial advisors, writers, filmmakers,

musicians, and businessmen and -women, now fully emerged in the North American diaspora.

As they gain access to information (significantly enabled by the Internet), some Cabo Verdeans with Jewish ancestry are trying out strands of Jewish practice in their life. Some men try on the ritual skullcaps known in Hebrew as *kippahs* (and in Yiddish as *yahrmulkes*) at appropriate times; some try out ways to observe the Sabbath; some begin wearing a Jewish star, or displaying a menorah on their mantelpiece; some begin reading books about Jewish history and display the books on their coffee tables; some begin blogging about this newfound knowledge, to try out their new identity in a more public setting. One couple recently traveled to Israel to visit their daughter—a nun posted by the Vatican to Jerusalem—and returned with a newfound passion for all things Jewish, support for the Jewish state of Israel, and a heap of books to feed their growing curiosity about Judaism.

A small but growing number of Cape Verdeans is becoming more comprehensively committed, either by formally joining a synagogue and considering themselves fully practicing Jews, or by becoming actively committed in Jewish political affairs. For example, Oitavo, raised in Lisbon, recently moved to another European capital city to become a representative of Israel to the EU. In the following, I profile another Cabo Verdean who has gone to extraordinary lengths to convert to Orthodox practice.

An Orthodox Jewish convert

Gershom defines himself as a Cabo Verdean, although he was born in the U.S., and with mixed ancestry—his father's parents were born in Cabo Verde, while his mother was a member of a local Native American group. Growing up, he was raised as a Christian. He went to a private Catholic school for his entire primary and secondary education (kindergarten through twelfth grades) and then attended a Jesuit college.

In graduate school, Gershom met a Russian American woman of secular Jewish background. After marrying and becoming parents of twins, they faced decisions about where to send their daughters to pre-school. They categorized their choices as threefold: sub-par public schools, Catholic private schools, and Jewish private schools. Both were passionate supporters of a strong education, and neither considered the public school options viable. Having a loose identity as a Jew (albeit secular), Gershom's wife felt uncomfortable sending her daughters to a Catholic school. Although not having been raised as a practicing Jew, she opted for the Jewish "day school" as the least problematic of the locally available options. Gershom—who had never felt at home in the church (for reasons to emerge as follows)—had no objections.

As toddlers, their daughters began bringing home Hebrew prayers, Jewish holiday traditions, and Jewish food preferences. Gershom and his wife decided to get ahead of their children's knowledge. By the time the girls were in elementary school, the couple had taken a more serious interest in Jewish education. When the girls were in the third grade, one worksheet especially caught Gershom's attention. Discussing the Jewish approach to spirituality, the worksheet emphasized that Jews pay more attention to actions than to thoughts. Gershom had learned the opposite in Catholic schools and churches, where he was continually told that thoughts count more than deeds—a dictum that had never made sense to Gershom. That teaching had joined several other key components of Catholicism—including the conviction that all non-Catholics would automatically go to Hell after death—to make Gershom feel uneasy with Christianity throughout his childhood. The Jewish inversion of Catholicism's "thoughts-deeds" maxim made much more sense to him. From the moment of reading that school homework assignment of his daughters, Gershom decided to undergo formal conversion to Judaism.

Having a Native American Protestant mother and (as far as he knew) a Catholic father, Gershom had no right to join most congregations of observant Jews without embarking on a full Jewish education aimed at conversion.[37] He undertook serious study of Judaism and convinced his wife to join him in living a Conservative Jewish life, engaging in a formal conversion process to join a Conservative Jewish congregation.[38] (His wife did not need to "convert," since her mother was Jewish, if non-practicing.) After Gershom converted, he and his wife were re-married in a Conservative Jewish wedding ceremony. Later, Gershom took his studies of Judaism much deeper, culminating in a formal conversion to the much more demanding lifestyle required by Orthodox Judaism. Again, he and his wife were re-married, this time in an Orthodox Jewish wedding ceremony (see Figure 2).

Only after Gershom completed these conversions did he discover that he actually had Jewish ancestry from both his paternal grandparents. Gershom told me that if he had wanted to simply "become Jewish" and had known about his Jewish ancestors in his father's line, he would have been able to join a Reform Jewish congregation in the U.S. without having to go through a formal "conversion" process (see Note 38). But he initially decided to become actively observant by joining a "Conservative" congregation, requiring a formal conversion.

Gershom is now an active leader in the Orthodox Jewish community of Rhode Island. For some years, he served as head of the volunteer *Chevra Kadisha* society that makes funeral arrangements. When any Orthodox Jew

[37]Traditional Jewish law recognizes membership in Jewish communities when traceable through the mother's line. In the contemporary U.S., "Reform" Jews recognize Jewish descent traced through the father's line.

[38]For a summary of Jewish denominations in the US, see My Jewish Learning, "The Jewish Denominations: A Quick Look at Reform, Conservative, Orthodox and Reconstructionist Judaism—and at Other Jewish Streams," https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-jewish-denominations/ (accessed February 25, 2019).

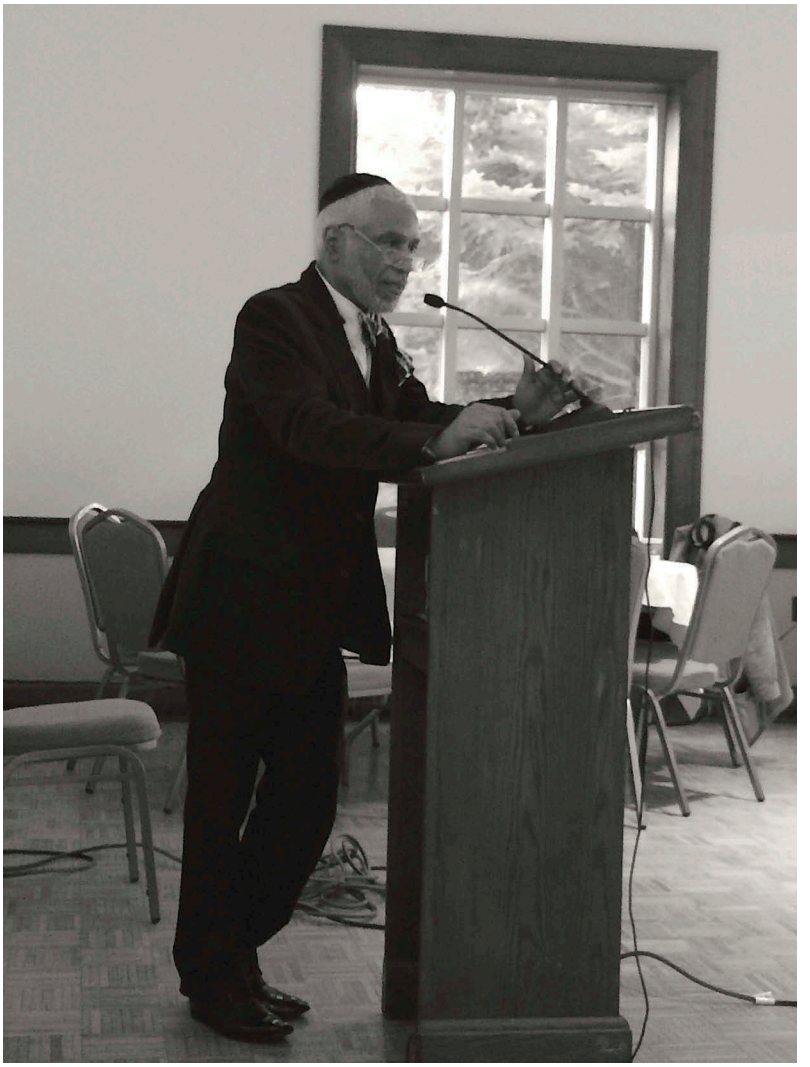

Figure 2. Gershom Barros speaking to the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Boston (2018). Photo: Alma Gottlieb.

in the state died, relatives called Gershom to identify someone to guard the corpse until the burial.[39] Gershom also oversaw aspects of the spiritual welfare of any Jewish prisoners in the state, including ensuring that they received Kosher food for all meals and arranging for them to receive a Seder plate every Passover.

For all of his active engagement with Jewish tradition, Gershom keeps these commitments somewhat private; "in public," he does not wear a skullcap (*kippah*/*yahrmulke*) or any other easily identified religious marker to avoid being identified

[39]For a description of this religious obligation for observant Jews (*shemira*, Heb.), see Gamliel Institute, Jewish Funeral Practices Committee of Greater Washington, "Kavod v'Nichum: Jewish Funerals, Burial, and Mourning," n.d., http://jewish-funerals.org/shemira (accessed February 25, 2019).

as a Jew. His rationale: if he ever "does something stupid," he would want to avoid playing into anti-Semitic stereotypes held by people who might be inclined to criticize his action because he is a Jew, not because he "did something stupid."[40]

In reflecting on his nonlinear life journey, Gershom marveled that he came to Judaism without conscious knowledge of his heritage. Yet both he and his wife suggested to me that, at some unconscious/mystical level, Gershom must have known of this ancestry. In recent years, Gershom traveled to Cabo Verde, where he was amazed to see abundant signs of Jewish practice in the lives of Cabo Verdeans who did not recognize them; he identified practices ranging from airport protocol to funeral customs.

Gershom's story is extreme, therefore illustrative of one end of the spectrum of religious devotion among Cabo Verdeans rediscovering their Jewish ancestry. Next, I profile someone who occupies a different section of the "*C*" circle of the Venn model.

A Conservative Jewish convert

Carlos was born and raised on the Cabo Verdean island of Brava, but now lives in Rhode Island. At age 52, Carlos completed his formal conversion to conservative Judaism. The long path that led to that life-changing ceremony was complicated. Most simply, we might date it back three years, when Carlos (along with eight others) enrolled in a weekly course for potential converts to Judaism at a Conservative temple in Rhode Island.

But the seed of that tree was planted much earlier. Carlos emigrated to the U.S. in 1994. Soon, he encountered Jews—he thought, for the first time. Taking a college course that covered the Jewish history of Portugal, Carlos found his interest in Judaism piqued. From a deep ethical commitment to helping others in need—Hebrew-speaking Jews might evoke *tikkun olam*, the impulse to "heal/repair the world"[41]—Carlos began volunteering with elderly Jews at senior citizens' homes and centers around Rhode Island. As that proved tremendously fulfilling, Carlos delved more deeply into Judaism. The spiritual leader of a nearby congregation took Carlos under his wing. In 2014, Carlos began formal training in Judaism to undergo formal conversion. His "liminal" period encompassed the next two years, when he considered himself no longer Catholic (his former religion) nor formally Jewish yet.[42] In 2016, Carlos experienced the third and final component to his life-cycle ritual: the

[40]Conversation, Providence, RI, September 28–29, 2011.

[41]The popular Jewish magazine *Tikkun* takes as its motto: "To heal, repair, and transform the world," https://www.tikkun.org/nextgen/ (accessed February 25, 2019).

[42]On the three basic components of all life-cycle rituals—separation, liminality, and reintegration—cf. Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1960 [1909]).

Figure 3. Carlos Spinola wearing traditional Jewish prayer shawl (*tallis*) at a temple in Providence, Rhode Island (2015). Photo: Alma Gottlieb.

formal conversion to Conservative Judaism. In his case, that included a surgical circumcision, a ritual immersion in the *mikveh* [an indoor pool for achieving ritual purity] bath at his synagogue, a temple service in honor of his new identity, and the signing of documents attesting to all the above (see Figure 3).

But even that twenty-two-year journey pales by comparison with the long arc of history that surely underlay the curiosity and attraction that Carlos felt in first meeting American Jews. During his self-education, Carlos discovered that his last name, "Spinola," is an orthographic variant of "Spinoza"—as in Baruch Spinoza, one of the most important European philosophers of the

Figure 4. At a recent Cabo Verde DNA conference held in Boston, Anna Lima (left), the conference's organizer, presented a genetic testing kit to Carlos Wahnon Veiga (right), the current Cabo Verdean ambassador to the U.S. (and a former prime minister of Cabo Verde), who has Moroccan Jewish ancestry. Photo: Alma Gottlieb.

early modern period.[43] Part of a Jewish family that escaped the anti-Semitism ravaging Iberia from the late fifteenth century, Spinoza's ancestors fled the peninsula, with Baruch Spinoza born and raised in Amsterdam. Carlos Spinola assumes he has roots in some branch of this distinguished family.

Carlos' life journey back to his family's Jewish identity has by no means stopped with his conversion. He attends Jewish services every Saturday morning and has recruited a few friends and relatives to join him. He is an active member of his Conservative temple's Social Justice Committee. He tries to observe the Jewish dietary laws, and the requirements for "keeping the Sabbath," as much as is feasible while remaining an active member of his largely Catholic family and ethnic community. His next planned step is more momentous: He is preparing to "make *aliyah*," aiming to gain formal status as a legal citizen of Israel, which he now considers the birthplace of his Jewish ancestors.

If Gershom and Carlos represent somewhat unusual (though not singular) stories in the extent to which they take their commitment to their newly discovered Jewish ancestry, many others are exploring their own ways of reclaiming their Jewish ancestry, while declining to take the highly

[43]For biographies, see Steven Nadler, *Spinoza: A Life*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2018 [1999]); Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics: The Marrano of Reason* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989); on early Jewish Amsterdam, see Miriam Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999).

demanding requirements of formal conversion. In the following, I profile one woman whose life experiences place her on the boundary between circles "*A*" and "*B*" in my Venn diagram (see Figure 4).

A curious "Cashew"

As Cabo Verdeans reassess what they thought they knew of their identity, they sometimes find themselves hard-pressed to categorize their religious orientation using accepted conventional labels. Some seek new labels that acknowledge a hybrid religion, to include both the Catholic and Jewish components of their religious heritage, calling themselves either "Catholic Jews" or "Jewish Catholics." Even more intriguingly, one Cabo Verdean has coined the term "Ca-Ju/Cashew" as a neologism uniquely suited to expressing her mixed religious heritage. "*Ca-ju*" is not only an abbreviation of the hybrid term, "Catholic-Jew," it is also (*sans* hyphen) the Portuguese word for "cashew," making the term a doubly clever bilingual pun. Anna Lima has written a blog post to introduce the term to the online Cabo Verdean community:

> On my first trip to Cape Verde, I discovered the cashew fruit. I had always known the cashew, which is pronounced "Caju" in Portuguese, to be a nut. But it's actually a fruit AND a nut. All these years, I believed the cashew was only a nut—Who knew?!?!? It was during this same trip that I first realized my own Jewish ancestry—Who knew?!?!? All this time I believed my family was Catholic but, as I learned more of my ancestry, I realized that many of our traditions were, in fact, based in the Jewish faith.
>
> So, if you're born and raised in the Catholic Church but practiced Jewish traditions, are you Catholic or Jewish? This is a questions [sic] that many Cape Verdeans may begin asking themselves as we begin to seriously consider the impact of Jewish ancestry in Cape Verde. I jokingly referred to being a "CaJu" with a friend of mine, who also recently found out about his Jewish roots. Is it possible to be Catholic AND Jewish—basically, a "Ca-Ju"?
>
> …I am a descendant of two groups of very strong people who survived a history of indescribable horrors for merely being who they were…. Because of our ancestors, we all have the freedom to be and to live how we'd like to. We are free to worship how we'd like. And I am free to be a Catholic or a Jew and even a "CaJu" if I please.[44]

Anna instructed her children to write in "Cashew" under "Other" when asked to identify their religion on bureaucratic forms. Her son expressed interest in having a *bar mitzvah* to initiate him into the Jewish ritual stage of manhood[45] (although, for a variety of reasons, Anna did not comply), and her daughter is considering taking a Birthright Israel trip.[46] Anna has created a nonprofit

[44]Anna Lima, "Catholic, Jewish or 'CaJu?'," The Creola Genealogist [blog], March 27, 2013, https://thecreolagenealogist.com/?s=cashew&submit=Search (accessed February 25, 2019).

[45]Conversation, Providence, RI, April 19, 2014.

[46]The Birthright Israel Foundation sponsors trips to Israel for young Jewish adults around the world, aged 18 to 32, https://www.birthrightisrael.com (accessed February 25, 2019).

foundation, Cape Verde DNA, Inc., dedicated to encouraging Cape Verdeans to explore their genetic origins and "find DNA relatives"; the surprising discovery of Jewish ancestors is a frequent component of many of these Cabo Verdeans' DNA reports and ensuing conversations.[47]

Anna's journey of discovery and re-definition places her somewhere between the "*A*" and "*B*" circles in my Venn diagram. Anna has gone out of her way to discover, and acknowledge, her Jewish ancestry and the Jewish origins of many intimate family practices with which she was raised, and she encourages other Cabo Verdeans to do the same. However, she has not incorporated Jewish ritual practices into her life, nor has she joined a synagogue or begun a "conversion" process.

At the same time, her creative neologism of "Ca-Ju/Cashew" raises theoretical insights. For example, it suggests that "border theory" has relevance not just to geopolitical borders, but to religious borders as well.[48] Border theorists such as Gloria Anzaldúa, Daphne Berdahl, Shahram Khosravi, Alejandro Lugo, Renato Rosaldo, Gilberto Rosas, and others have provocatively pointed to the complicated, rich, and vexed space that national borders occupy. The so-called "migrant crisis" across both the U.S. and the E.U. reminds us of the contemporary urgency of rethinking borders as spaces of both danger and opportunity. But, as migrants cross geopolitical borders, they may also cross spiritual borders. And, as border theorists tell us, crossing borders does not necessarily mean abandoning what remains on the far side of the frontier. The Cabo Verdean case instructs us that different levels of engagement with Judaism mean that we need nuanced frameworks beyond an "all-or-nothing" model—for the suitcases packed by migrants may contain more *invisible* baggage than the clothes weighed on Customs scales.[49] Anthropologists are trained to discover and examine such "invisible baggage."

I have suggested that many Cabo Verdeans with Jewish ancestry are now slowly, tentatively making their way to acknowledging, and sometimes embracing their Jewish ancestry; for some, that means adopting Jewish religious practices. For Cabo Verdeans in New England, this awareness may start from hearing about, or attending, an annual Seder held in Boston for the past fourteen years. At this Seder, which attracts about 100 Cape Verdeans and 100 American Jews every year, many Cabo Verdeans encounter Jewish ritual—and, in some cases, American Jews—for the first time. The seating plan intentionally joins members of both groups at each table, promoting conversations that often produce curiosity about possible

[47] As of this writing, the Facebook-based group has 5,536 members, https://www.facebook.com/groups/438321819686279/ (accessed February 25, 2019).

[48] Alma Gottlieb, "Crossing Religious Borders: Jews and Cabo Verdeans," *Mande Studies* 16, no. 17 (2015/16): 31–68.

[49] Alma Gottlieb, "Packing a Cultural Suitcase: Anthropological Perspectives on the New African Migration to Europe and the U.S." (talk presented at the conference on "New Contexts of Migration: When the Origin Transforms the Destination," Instituto Superior de Ciências do Trabalho e das Empresas, Lisbon, October 9, 2006).

Jewish ancestry on the part of the Cabo Verdeans. On leaving, some feel inspired to pursue this curiosity, which may take them in multiple directions.

Another influential event was a ritual rededication of a Jewish cemetery held in Praia (Cabo Verde's capital) in June 2013. The event attracted a small but passionate number of Cabo Verdeans from on and off the islands.[50] International publicity spread news of the event much further. Out of the ritual came a local NGO formed by Cape Verdeans eager to further preserve and publicize Jewish heritage (and promote Jewish-cultural tourism) on the islands.[51]

A second rededication ritual recently occurred for two cemeteries of Moroccan Jewish families on another Cabo Verdean island (Santa Antão). With such public activities increasing both on and off the islands, the spread of knowledge about the nation's Jewish history is inevitable. How individual Cabo Verdeans will acknowledge and react to this knowledge remains to be documented.

Concluding thoughts

As Cabo Verdeans reassess the frequently overlooked Jewish underside to their family histories and their national identity, this source of religious diversity in the Cabo Verdean community is emerging as a strength in which increasing members of this island nation are finding new paths to knowledge and pride. In this process of re-evaluating history, perhaps Cabo Verdeans enact what writer Philip Graham identifies as the shadow of memory:

> [M]ost of the stories of our lives cast shadows. Some shadows are obvious, while others wait for us to notice them. Either way, a shadow is what gives a memory, whether of a person, place, or event, its true life, just as chiaroscuro, the traditional artist's technique of blending light and dark, gives depth to a two-dimensional surface….
>
> [S]hadows can call to each other…. Memory—imperfect, fluid, sometimes hazy—waits for us to return and re-return, to examine and re-examine what at first we cannot see… we are collectors not of memories so much as those memories' shadows, so that we might recover, through their nurturing darkness, the hidden meaning of our lives.[52]

Today, many Cabo Verdeans are undertaking restorative work to recuperate the Jewish (and other) components of their frequently secretive history.

[50]The project was the brainchild of Carol Castiel, who founded a non-profit organization, Cape Verde Jewish Heritage Project, to restore degraded Jewish graves in Cabo Verde; the organization now embraces broader goals concerning revaluing the nation's Jewish legacy; cf. https://www.facebook.com/CVJHP/; https://capeverdejewishheritage.org (accessed February 25, 2019).

[51]The Associação Cabo-verdiana para a Preservação da Herança Patrimonial Judaica [Cabo Verdean Association for the Preservation of Jewish Patrimonial Heritage] was founded in 2014 by Salamith Spencer.

[52]Philip Graham, "The 'So What' Factor: What the Shadow Knows," in *Assay: A Journal of Nonfiction Studies* ["Spotlight" Section] 5, no. 1 (Fall 2018), https://www.assayjournal.com/philip-graham-the-shadow-knows-51.html (accessed February 25, 2019).

The borders of a deeply troubled history now invite new spiritual border (re) crossings. Keeping in mind these shadows of history now emerging from darkness into daylight, it is appropriate to leave the last word to Anna Lima, who concludes a video she has recently produced about her quest to discover her family's history (Jewish and otherwise) with this simple statement: "Their stories are my stories."[53]

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[53]Anna Lima, "Come with Me on a Journey as I Connect with My Roots," video, The Creola Genealogist (blog), May 29, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K21j2_gOsgQ (accessed February 25, 2019).

Graham. I remain humbled by the generous ways that so many Cabo Verdeans, both on and off the islands, along with some American Jews involved in Cabo Verdean communities, have shared their perspectives, beliefs, and life stories with me. A full list would occupy more space than this journal could accommodate.

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