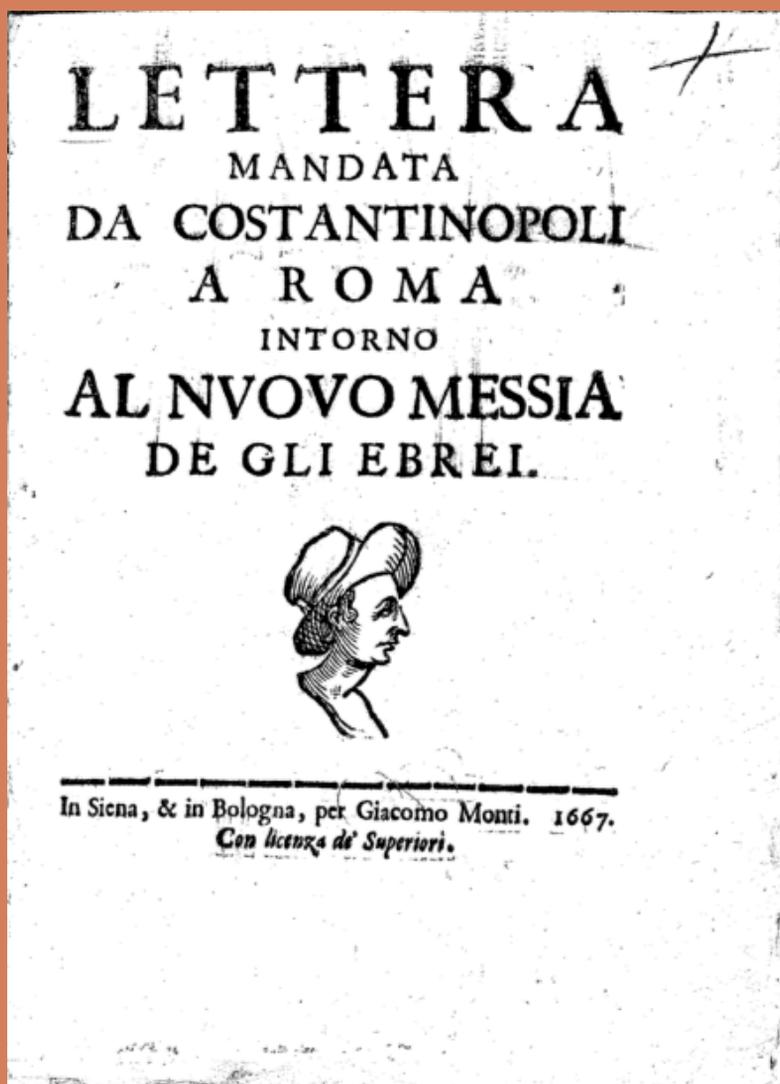


# SABBATEANISM IN ITALY AND ITS MEDITERRANEAN CONTEXT

## A Call for Papers

International Conference, Rome, January 20-22, 2019



Paper proposals of no more than 300 words accompanied by a brief cv should be submitted to Stefano Villani [villani@umd.edu](mailto:villani@umd.edu) by April 1, 2018

## Sabbateanism in Italy and its Mediterranean Context A Call for Papers

Sabbateanism has recently been the subject of renewed interest among social and religious historians. Attention has been focused on the vicissitudes of Sabbatai Zevi himself as well as on the movement that gathered around him in 1665 and 1666, and that would continue to express itself through activist missionizing and subterranean conventicles in the decades and even centuries that followed. Both proponents and opponents of the movement have offered historians opportunities to investigate the social, religious, and cultural dynamics of the period. And of course, the general trends of apocalyptic and millenarianism as well as of conservatism and repression outside the Jewish community also have much to teach us about the contributing factors, the fate, and the long-term implications of this powerful messianic movement.

Our workshop will seek to investigate the context and particular impact of Sabbateanism in Italy. Several Italian cities were important centers of this messianic movement, among them Livorno, Mantua, Modena, Padua, Ancona, and Venice. Existing treatments have stressed that Italian cities served the movement both as spiritual centers and as nodes in Mediterranean networks of communication. Accordingly we will focus on Sabbateanism on the Peninsula itself, trying to explore its broader contexts among both Jews and non-Jews. We are eager to trace earlier examples of apocalyptic, millenarian, and messianic speculation, then offer case studies of the presence of specifically Sabbatean nuclei, and follow up by looking at pietists and activists in the 18th-century who continued Sabbatean themes. Throughout, we are searching for possible theoretical relationships between a variety of early modern millenarian and messianic enthusiasms, seeking thus to situate this Jewish cultural explosion in its broader context. We hope to take advantage of the treasury of resources and scholarship on early modern Italian religious thought and practice—stretching from Renaissance hermeticism through sometimes heretical utopianism, Quietism, popular beliefs in omens, prophecies and the importance of astrology and magical practice—in order to trace the movement's entanglements with charismatic religious expressions, both Christian and Islamic, in contemporary Europe and the Middle East. Finally, we seek connections between the Jewish opponents of Sabbateanism and the parallel oppositions to apocalyptic and millenarian enthusiasts expressed by both secular and religious disciplinarians of the Catholic Reformation era. Can we discover parallels among these phenomena? Does the recent scholarly turn to “entangled history” help us in this direction?

The Sabbatean movement was also a major “media event” in the Mediterranean context, as both Jews and non-Jews used print and non-printed mechanisms to spread the news and interpret it from their own points of view. This was part of an ever-shifting narrative that sought to make sense of monumental political shifts, demographic sea-changes, religious revolutions, and economic transformations, all in terms of traditional conceptions of divine purpose. In this context, reports from Jesuits, both Catholic and Protestant diplomats, merchants, medical observers and Ottoman correspondents take their place alongside Jewish accounts to demonstrate not only how news traveled and was utilized in this era of facilitated communication but also how tales were shaped and transformed by their tellers.

The following list of suggested topics is meant to be suggestive rather than exclusive, and scholars are urged to propose papers related to their own specialties.

1. Social history of Sabbateanism in Italy; communal and rabbinic anti-Sabbatean decrees of excommunication
2. Literary expressions of both Sabbateanism and its opponents; Sabbatean printing in Italy (Nathan of Gaza's *Tikkunei Teshuvah*, *Eshel Avraham*, etc.)
3. The attitude of the papacy to Sabbateanism; the possibility of Christian influence

4. The activities and theology of both Isaac and Abraham Cardozo in Italy
5. The school surrounding Rabbi Avraham Rovigo and the writings of R. Mordechai Ashkenazi
6. Nehemia Hiyya Hayon's Italian imprints (*Raza di-Yihuda*), and the opposition to his teaching
7. Responses of Italian rabbis to the Emden-Eibeschutz controversy
8. Rabbi Moses Hayyim Luzzatto and his circle and the accusations of Sabbateanism
9. Italy's ties to Sabbateans in the Ottoman Empire, especially to the Dönme

We expect the conference to take place in Rome on January 20-22, 2019. For best consideration, paper proposals of no more than 300 words accompanied by a brief cv should be submitted to Stefano Villani [villani@umd.edu](mailto:villani@umd.edu) by April 1, 2018. The organizers expect to respond by May 15, 2018.

This conference is intended as the first meeting of a research project on Jews in Italy during the long Renaissance. The project is promoted by the University of Maryland in College Park, Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Bar-Ilan University in Ramat Gan, the Italian Research Program of National Interest-PRIN 2015 *The Long History of Anti-Semitism* (University of Milan 'La Statale', University of Pisa, University of Genova, University of Rome, 'La Sapienza'), BA in Jewish Studies of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities (Unione delle comunità ebraiche italiane), the Jewish Community of Rome, and the International Research Group in Early Modern Religious Dissents & Radicalism EMOdIR.

Scientific committee: Bernard Cooperman, Serena di Nepi, Pawel Maciejko, Germano Maifreda, Yaakov Mascetti, Stefano Villani