

ARCHIVE IS FAMILY, FAMILY ARCHIVE:
DESCRIBING THE *REGGIO – MICHELSTAEDTER* FONDS AT THE CDEC, MILANO

Introduction

The present paper reports on the development of a project envisaging new arrangement and description of the *I.S. Reggio - C. Michelstaedter* family fonds kept in the Historical Archives of the Fondazione Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea (CDEC, Milan), with the aim to draw attention to the issues and promising research avenues arising from the study of the papers and documents¹ and to lay the groundwork for a systematic review of the private correspondence included therein.

The initiative stemmed from the writer's participation in the "Corso di Alta Formazione in Archivistica Contemporanea" at the Italian Central State Archives (Roma, December 2018 - June 2019) and from his first confrontation with archival practice at CDECHA since February 2019. Connecting Jewish studies, philology and Archivistics, the experience turned into a research opportunity whose first outcomes are presented in the following pages.

* Special abbreviations: ANAI = Associazione Nazionale Archivistica Italiana; *b.* = *Talmud Bavli*; *Ber.* = *Berakot*; CDECHA = CDEC Historical Archives; DBF = *Dizionario Biografico dei Friulani* (<http://www.dizionariobiograficodeifriulani.it/>, last accessed 04/01/2020); DBI = *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (<http://www.treccani.it/biografico/>, last accessed 04/01/2020); F./FF. = file/files; f./ff. = folio/folios; Fds = fonds; IN° = item number; Init. = initialism; ITT = *InterPARES Trust Terminology* (<https://interparestrust.org/terminology>, last accessed 04/01/2020); *m.* = *Mišnah*; MAT = *Multilingual Archival Terminology* (<http://www.ciscra.org/mat/mat>, last accessed 04/01/2020); p = physical (prefixed); sF./sFF. = sub-file/sub-files; S./SS. = series; sS./sSS. = sub-series; v = virtual (prefixed).

¹ Strictly personal or family documents ('papers') are distinguished from other archival items ('documents'). The term 'record' is restricted to the

The project has a dual nature, archival and philological. On the one hand, the purpose is to carry out complete filing, rearrangement, inventory and description of the fonds.² On the other hand, the letters in Aramaic and Hebrew demand advanced linguistic skills and can further build upon the research on Isacco Samuele Reggio, a leading figure of the Italian Jewish Enlightenment.

In three parts, this contribution will outline the history, extent and management issues of the fonds (§§1-2) and offer an overview of its earliest nucleus, the correspondence (§3). Since this last has never undergone thorough investigation, a preliminary study on a Hebrew letter is also included.

1. *History and conservation*

As a family archive, the *I.S. Reggio - C. Michelstaedter* fonds³ results from the sedimentation of the documentation created and

institutional and administrative use: see ITT and MAT *s.v.* For general reference 'items' and 'units' are used.

² Extensive digitization and preparation of subsidiary finding aids (e.g. indexes) are also foreseen. Archival processing and digital description on the *xDams* platform comply with the guidelines and standards released by (inter)national organizations: see COMMISSIONE NAZIONALE BIBLIOTECHE SPECIALI, ARCHIVI E BIBLIOTECHE D'AUTORE (cur.), *Linee guida sul trattamento dei fondi personali (versione 15.1 - 31 marzo 2019)* (<https://www.aib.it/struttura/commissioni-e-gruppi/gbaut/strumenti-di-lavoro/linee-guida-sul-trattamento-dei-fondi-personali/>, last accessed 20/12/2019) and the dedicated ANAI webpage: http://www.anai.org/anai-cms/cms.view?munu_str=0_2_6&numDoc=111.

³ Also known as *Gandus - Reggio* fonds (*R-M*).

collected over generations by kin individuals in four main nuclei:⁴

1. the ‘Reggio papers’: correspondence and writings of Abramo Vita Reggio⁵ and his son Isacco Samuele⁶ integrated with later study materials;
2. the ‘1922 tree’: a manuscript copy of the Reggio family tree made by Silvio Michelstaedter in 1922, to which later documents and study materials on the history of the Reggio and Michelstaedter families were added;
3. the ‘Michelstaedter papers’: personal papers and writings of Silvio Michelstaedter;⁷
4. publications and newspaper articles on Carlo Michelstaedter⁸ and his father Alberto.

⁴ The earliest documents are letters both received and sent by Abramo Vita and Isacco Samuele Reggio. This last was the great-grandfather of Carlo Michelstaedter and his cousin Silvio Michelstaedter, who inherited the family papers. The last heiress and owner, Anny Michelstaedter (1914-2007), was Silvio’s niece and the wife of the donator, Aldo Gandus.

⁵ Avraham Ḥay Reggio (AḤaR, 1755-1841) taught at the rabbinical school of Gorizia, whose Jewish community he also led. An authority in Jewish law, he had a keen interest in coeval lay culture and scientific thought – as his dense correspondence shows – and was influenced by the Jewish interpretation of the Enlightenment theories spreading from Vienna. See G. TAMANI, *s.v.*, in DBF.

⁶ Yiṣḥaq Šemu’el Reggio (YaŠaR, 1784-1855). Born to AḤaR and Malchina Morpurgo, he was educated at the catholic schools of Gorizia and attended the rabbinical school in Trieste. His philosophical and exegetical works are marked by a rationalist belief in the importance of modernizing and emancipating Jewish culture by integrating lay and religious education. To this end, he also urged the need for renovated approaches and institutions for the training of Italian rabbis, which eventuated in the foundation of the Collegio Rabbinico in Padua (1829). Preliminary information can be found in: M. GRUSOVIN, *s.v.*, in DBI and RBF. See also G. TAMANI, *I.S. Reggio e l’Illuminismo ebraico*, in P.C. IOLY ZORATTINI (cur.), *Gli Ebrei a Gorizia e a Trieste tra “ancien régime” ed emancipazione. Atti del Convegno. Gorizia, 13 giugno 1983*, pp. 29-40. Additional information – also on other personalities, e.g. AḤaR and Yoseph Colombo – is accessible on the *Rabbini*

The fonds was donated in 1990 to the CDEC, the current holding institution.⁹ Items are dated between 05 May 1779 and October 1983¹⁰ and diverse: autograph letters¹¹ and writings; cuttings from periodicals and newspapers;¹² transcripts of letters and other original writings;¹³ typewritten drafts with marginal annotations; handwritten notes, drafts and working copies; rough copies of letters; photocopies; post receipts; digital scans.

1.1 Formation and acquisition

The main stages of the fonds development can be outlined as follows (see also Table 1):

- 1770s-1912. Creation, sedimentation and conservation of documents and papers,

italiani web site (www.rabbini.it, last accessed in November 2019).

⁷ Elia Silvio di Giuseppe Michelstaedter (S.M.).

⁸ Carlo Raimondo Michelstaedter (C.M., 1887-1910): see A. ARBO, *s.v.*, in DBI; M. GRUSOVIN, *s.v.*, in DBF, and the bio-bibliographical pages on the website of the Biblioteca Statale Isontina (<http://www.michelstaedter.beniculturali.it/index.php?it/1/home>, last accessed 19/12/2019).

⁹ The CDECHA originated in 1955 with the acquisition of the first documents and progressively grew through further accessions, with the primary aim to preserve all the documentation concerning the history, life and destruction of the Italian Jewish communities under the Fascist regime and the German occupation. The archival holdings amount to about 180 linear meters including testimonies, private papers (notary deeds, family trees, correspondence and memoranda), photographs, audio recordings, videos and private fonds of persons, families, corporate bodies and institutions covering the history of the Italian Jews from the late eighteenth century to the present day. The *R-M* fonds is the earliest one. See the CDEC official web page: <http://www.cdec.it/home2.asp?idtesto1=584&idtesto=944&son=1&level=2> (last accessed 19/12/2019).

¹⁰ Dates of the earliest letter of the correspondence and latest newspaper cutting respectively.

¹¹ Dated from 1779 to 1868.

¹² Dated from 1958 to 1983.

¹³ Probably by the hand of S.M. These are of the greatest interest since the originals are not included in the fonds.

mostly letters and personal writings of AḤaR, YaŠaR and their relatives dating from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth centuries (pFF. 1 and 4, see §2.1);

- *1912-1970s*. In 1912 S.M. inherits the Reggio papers:¹⁴ frequent annotations on sleeves and sheets prove his keen interest thereupon. The 1922 tree (pF. 3) and his personal papers (pF. 6) are included in the fonds;
- *1970s-1990*. The fonds is transmitted to Anny Michelstaedter¹⁵ after her uncle's death in the early 1970s;¹⁶ in the same period Yoseph Colombo¹⁷ reviews the Reggio papers

extensively and adds new documents. In the course of the 1980s Silvio Cusin's¹⁸ study materials on the Reggio and Michelstaedter families (pF. 5) and the documentation on C.M. gathered by S.M., A.M. and Aldo Gandus¹⁹ (pF. 6) are annexed to the fonds;

- *05/12/1990*. A.G. donates the fonds to the CDEC: the acquisition records filled by Michele Sarfatti are included;²⁰
- *March 1994*. Maddalena Del Bianco Cotrozzi²¹ examines the fonds and her report is included;²²
- *1994-2008*. New documentation is added by the CDEC curators.²³

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Creator / collector</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Current placement</i>
1770s-1912	Reggio family and correspondents	letters, writings	pFF. 1, 4
1912-1970s	S. Michelstaedter	notes, writings, papers, documents	pFF. 1, 4, 3, 6, 7
1970s-1990	A. Michelstaedter / A. Gandus	drafts, letters, cuttings	pFF. 5, 6
	Colombo	notes, study materials, documents	pFF. 1, 4
	Cusin	study materials, documents	pF. 5
05/12/1990	Sarfatti	acquisition records	pF. 0
March 1994	Del Bianco	inventory list	pF. 0
1994-2008	Sarfatti	photocopies of letters	pF. 8
	Brazzo	1922 tree digital version	pF. 2

Table. 1 – *R-M* fonds formation.

¹⁴ The papers were kept and bequeathed within the family: a note by S.M. on the original sleeve containing part of the correspondence (pF.1, IN° 6) states that he received them from his granduncle Lelio Reggio on 10/01/1912. Other letters (or maybe the same?) came from his uncle, Alberto Michelstaedter, as the title of pF. 4 shows (see §2.1).

¹⁵ A.M. henceforward.

¹⁶ S.M. had settled since the 1930s in London, where he died with no children. See L. GANDUS - N. GANDUS, *Un "pacco prezioso" di carte*, in A. CAVAGLION - A. MICHELIS (eds.), *Marcel Proust, Carlo Michelstaedter. Lessico familiare: un questionario*, Nino Aragno editore, Torino 2014, pp. 27-33.

¹⁷ Y. Colombo (Y.C., 1897-1975) was a teacher and University Professor in Humanities, among of the founders of the Jewish School of Milan and director of «La Rassegna Mensile di Israel». See A.M. PIATTELLI, *s.v.*, in ID., *Repertorio Biografico dei Rabbini Italiani*, Gerusalemme 2017, p. 19. He most likely deciphered the chronograms and noted the equivalent Jewish years on the Hebrew and Aramaic letters.

¹⁸ Silvio Graziadio Cusin (S.C., 1922-2013) joined the profession of psychoanalyst to scholarly research into Jewish culture and history. The results of his genealogical investigation into the Reggio family were published in S. CUSIN, *Filiazione patri-lineare e matrilineare, legami di sangue, alleanze e affinità tra Illuminismo e tradizione nell'inedito* Ilan ha-Jachash di Isacco Samuele Reggio, in P.C. IOLY ZORATTINI (cur.), *Gli Ebrei a Gorizia e a Trieste*, cit., pp. 71-89.

¹⁹ A.G. henceforward.

²⁰ These documents feature the first description of the fonds extent (see §§1.2, 2 and 2.2).

²¹ Full Professor of History of Religions at the University of Udine (Del Bianco).

²² See §§1.2, 2 and 2.2.

²³ M. Sarfatti (M.S., Director of the CDEC until 2016) gathered the photocopies of some early letters (pF. 8) and had the fonds examined by Del Bianco. In 2008 the current curator of CDECCHA, Laura Brazzo (L.B.), carried out new conditioning and arrangement (pFF. 5 and 8) and added the digital version of the 1922 tree (pF. 2).

1.2 Accessibility and finding aids

The fonds is accessible by appointment after authorization of the chief curator of the CDECHA, according to the Institute policies and the national legislation in force.

Essential information is provided by the access aids prepared and included in the fonds after the donation:

- ‘acquisition records’: two typewritten forms (*Foglio notizie* and the attached receipt, both filled in by M.S.) registering the acquisition of the fonds by the CDEC upon donation of A.G. (dated 05/12/1990);
- the ‘Del Bianco list’ of the items included in the fonds (*Elenco provvisorio*, two typewritten ff. dated 16/03/1994).²⁴

1.3 Conditioning and condition

The present conditioning derives from past conservation and arrangements. The eight

files of the fonds are conserved in a modern cardboard box with cotton laces; each file is covered in a sleeve in conservation paper with title. Sub-files have been created by means of sleeves in white paper.

The letters included in the Reggio papers are written on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century white, yellow or blue paper with watermarks. Some of them still preserve the senders’ seals in red and black wax. Other supports include modern paper, copy paper, stationery paper, newspaper cuttings and CD-ROMs. Overall condition is good, except for some letters that need urgent conservation measures.²⁵

2. Extent and (re)arrangements

The fonds has repeatedly undergone processing, and the annotations and study materials that progressively became part of the documentation testify to a constant examination over time. Past arrangements can be phased as shown in the following charts (Tables 2 and 3):

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Owner / curator / operator</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>Total FF.</i>
<i>1770s-1990</i>	Reggio family	---	?
	S. Michelstaedter (1912)	notes	
	A. Michelstaedter / A. Gandus (1970s-1990)	---	
	Colombo (1970s)	file titles	
<i>05/12/1990</i>	Sarfatti	acquisition records	5
<i>19/03/1994</i>	Sarfatti	Del Bianco list	6
<i>2008</i>	Brazzo	file and sub-file titles	7+1
<i>2019</i>	Pratelli	file and item numbers	8

Table 2 – R-M fonds processing over time.

- *1770s-1990*. This stage can only be reconstructed from scant evidence. The papers inherited by S.M. in 1912 had certainly been arranged or grouped somehow,

for his notes mention a «parcel» and at least two «envelopes» containing the Reggio papers.²⁶ Later on, Y.C. examined the Reggio papers and probably set the struc-

²⁴ An accompanying letter to M.S. dated 19/03/1994 (one typewritten f.) reports further observations and preliminary comments.

²⁵ Most frequent damages are breaks and splits

of sheet folds, tears at the margins, medium perforation and ink detachment due to oxidation.

²⁶ In Italian *pacco* (see n. 16 above) and *pieghi* respectively.

ture of the present arrangement, since three files still bear the original titles he gave (pFF. 1, 6 and 7, see §2.1).²⁷

- 05/12/1990. The acquisition records list five files including: genealogical materials on the Reggio and Michelstaedter families (A); the Reggio papers (B-C); documentation on C.M. (D); S.M. papers (E).²⁸
- 16/03/1994. Six files figure in the Del Bianco list including: the 1922 tree with other documents (I.); other genealogical materials (2.);²⁹ the Reggio papers (3.-4.); S.M. papers (5.); documentation on C.M. (6.).

- 2008. New arrangement and conditioning. Files increase in number from six to seven: the 1922 tree (III) is separated from S.C. study materials on the Reggio and Michelstaedter families (V),³⁰ and the photocopies of a few letters gathered by S.M. are added (VIII). Also, the digital version of the 1922 tree is included in a separate envelope (II*);³¹
- 2019. Sequential numbering of files (1-8), sleeves and items by S.I.M. Pratelli under the supervision of the CDECCHA curator.³²

Year	Files							
1990	B		A	C	A	E	D	
1994	4.		I.	3.	2.	6.	5.	
2008	I	II*	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
2019	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

Table 3 – Synopsis of arrangements.

2.1 Current physical arrangement

The eight physical files of the fonds are entitled and composed as follows:³³

- (pF.) 1: “Carteggio dei rabbini Abramo Vita Reggio - Isacco Samuele Reggio. Consegnatomi dal dr. Gandus e a lui restituito il 6/XII/1971. Y. Colombo”
98 items. Study materials on the Reggio papers collected or prepared by Y.C.; original letters in Italian and German, mostly sent to

AḤaR and YašaR; AḤaR and YašaR auto-graphs (drafts and letters).

- (pF.) 2: *Albero genealogico I.S. Reggio (copie digitali)*
2 items. Two CD-ROMs containing the digital version of the 1922 tree (cf. pF. 3).
- (pF.) 3: *Albero genealogico Isacco Samuele Reggio (in ebraico, 1922)*
8 items. A copy of the Reggio family tree in 8 manuscript sheets in Hebrew and Latin script made from the original by S.M. in 1922.³⁴

²⁷ It is not clear whether the genealogical documents were included in any of these files or rather gathered in separate untitled sleeves.

²⁸ When Y.C. examined the fonds the Reggio papers were maybe gathered in only one file which was later disassembled in two before the donation (B-C): this would explain why only one of the two current files including the Reggio papers has an original title by Y.C. (pF. 1 but not 4). The very same file might have also included the 1922 tree, which was later extracted and added to the other genealogical documentation in A.

²⁹ FF. 1. and 2. might therefore derive from the disassembling of A.

³⁰ In the corresponding Del Bianco FF. the Reggio and Michelstaedter family trees (I.) were separated from the other genealogical documentation (2.).

³¹ The files were not given a number in 2008: Roman numerals are just used for the sake of effectiveness. Also, the content of current pFF. I/1 and IV/4 does not match exactly that of Del Bianco 3. and 4.: some items should have been moved before 2008.

³² Envelope II* became pF. 2.

³³ The titles of pFF. 1, 6 and 7 are the original ones by Y.C.; pFF. 3, 4, 5 and 8 were named in 2008, pF. 2 in 2019.

³⁴ As stated by S.M. in an annotation on the first folio.

- (pF.) 4: *Testi in ebraico dei rabbini Isacco Samuele Reggio e Abramo Vita Reggio (?) (provenienti da Alberto Michaelstadter)* 124 items. Letters in rabbinical Hebrew and Aramaic, mostly written by M.S. Ghironi to AḤaR and YaŠaR.
- (pF.) 5: *Albero genealogico di I. S. Reggio. Studio di Silvio Cusin (1978-1983)* 7 items. Materials concerning the history and genealogy of the Reggio and Michelstaedter families; Michelstaedter family tree;³⁵ correspondence between S.C., A.M. and A.G.
- (pF.) 6: “Scritti di Silvio Michelstaedter (1914-1947)” 10 items. Anastatic copies of ‘proustian questionnaires’ filled in Italian and Hebrew and frequently signed;³⁶ hand- and typewritten drafts by S.M.
- (pF.) 7: “La stampa su Carlo Michelstaedter (1906-1983)” 20 items. Typewritten drafts of the introduction to an exhibition on C.M. held in Milan in 1983; newspaper cuttings on C.M. and the Jewish community of Gorizia collected by the Ganduses.
- (pF.) 8: *Carteggio Abram Vita Reggio (1783-1784)* 8 items: photocopies of some eighteenth-century letters from pF. 1 made by M.S.

2.2 Processing

The fonds has been thoroughly reviewed since February 2019 with the aim to understand its development, to interpret its structure and to point out the historical and logical bonds between the items.

Firstly, the eight files were assigned numbers (pFF. 1-8) respecting their sequence in the

conservation box. Successively, each item was univocally identified through a progressive number (IN°) with the aim to ensure repositioning in case of accidental move³⁷ and to assess the fonds extent and the content of each file. The total extent indicatively amounts to 277 units.³⁸

Secondly, existing secondary archival units (i.e. sub-files and sub-sleeves) were univocally identified through number within the file specifying date of creation, title, short content description and IN°s of included items.³⁹

Thirdly, a file named “Corredo e accesso” was created.⁴⁰ This gathers the four fundamental records aiding the reconstruction of the fonds history and extent, namely the Del Bianco list and letter and the acquisition records (see §1.2 above).

Finally, languages, addressees/senders and chronological extremes of the Reggio correspondence (pFF. 1 and 4) were identified.⁴¹

2.3 Virtual re-arrangements

Filing the fonds resulted in the outlining of two different rearrangement proposals complying with as distinct parameters and purposes.⁴²

The first model (*Proposal 1*) keeps to the current organization and better meets conservation requirements – especially the duty to preserve the fonds structure as the result of progressive documental settling in time – by just rearranging the existing physical files, whereas the second (*Proposal 2*) drives interpretation further and envisages moving items into newly created files (see Table 4). These models are by the way just virtual, for no interventions have been carried out on the fonds structure,⁴³ neither has any unit been moved.⁴⁴

³⁵ Pointing out the branch of A.M.

³⁶ Published in A. CAVAGLION - A. MICHELIS (eds.), *Marcel Proust, Carlo Michelstaedter*, cit., pp. 35-132.

³⁷ As well as to recognize lacunae.

³⁸ Counting includes both archival (i.e. sub-sleeves) and documentary (i.e. single items) units and needs reassessment.

³⁹ This is the case of pF. 1, in which records were already gathered in seven sub-files.

⁴⁰ That is, pF. 0 (see Table 1).

⁴¹ See §3.

⁴² Complying with archival rules and praxis and proceeding through hierarchical levels (indicated through square brackets), the description is currently being uploaded on the *xDams* online platform and will stop at the sub-file level as the minimal archival unit.

⁴³ See §2.1.

⁴⁴ With the aim to ensure unfettered interpretation and avoid flattening the historical depth reflected in current arrangement.

*Proposal 1*⁴⁵

- [Fds] *Reggio - Michelstaedter*⁴⁷
- [S.] I. *Reggio. Scritti e carteggio*⁴⁸
- [vF.] A. *Spoglio Colombo*⁴⁹
- [sF.] A.1
- [sF.] A.2
- [sF.] A.3
- [sF.] A.4
- [sF.] A.5
- [sF.] A.6
- [sF.] A.7
- [vF.] B. *Copie Sarfatti*⁵⁰
- [vF.] C. *Carteggio ebraico*⁵¹
- [S.] II. *Michelstaedter. Materiali e scritti*⁵²
- [vF.] D. *Carlo Michelstaedter*⁵³
- [vF.] E. *Silvio Michelstaedter*⁵⁴
- [S.] III. *Albero genealogico Reggio*⁵⁵
- [vF.] F. *Copia 1922*⁵⁶
- [vF.] G. *Digitalizzazione*⁵⁷
- [vF.] H. *Studio Cusin*⁵⁸

*Proposal 2*⁴⁶

- [Fds] *Reggio - Michelstaedter*
- [S.] I. *Reggio*
- [sS.] I.1 *Scritti*
- [vF.] I.1.a *Scritti A.V. Reggio*
- [vF.] I.1.b *Scritti I.S. Reggio*
- [sS.] I.2 *Carteggio*
- [vF.] I.2.a *Carteggio. Corredo*
- [vF.] I.2.b *Carteggio A.V. Reggio*
- [vF.] I.2.c *Carteggio M. Morpurgo*
- [vF.] I.2.d *Carteggio I.S. Reggio*
- [vF.] I.2.e *Carteggio A. Michelstaedter*
- [vF.] I.2.f *Carteggio E. Michelstaedter*
- [vF.] I.2.g *Carteggio. Studio Y. Colombo*
- [vF.] I.2.h *Carteggio. Copie M. Sarfatti*
- [S.] II. *Michelstaedter*
- [vF.] II.a *Carlo Michelstaedter*
- [vF.] II.b *Silvio Michelstaedter*
- [S.] III. *Albero genealogico*
- [vF.] III.a *Albero genealogico 1922*
- [sF.] III.a.1 *Manoscritto*
- [sF.] III.a.2 *Digitalizzazioni*
- [vF.] III.b *Albero genealogico. Studio S. Cusin*

Proposal 1

Level Fonds. Since the genealogical documents regard both the Reggio and Michelstaedter families and the papers concern the Reggio Rabbis and S. or C. Michelstaedter as well as their relatives and friends, the name of the fonds is changed into *Reggio - Michelstaedter*.

Level Series. Three series are identified considering both logical interconnections and content: the first (I) includes documents and papers regarding the Reggio family; the second (II) gathers the Michelstaedter papers; the third (III) is centred on the 1922 tree and the related

study materials (including the digital version of the tree itself).⁵⁹ This series seems to have developed independently. Similarly, no direct link occurs with series II.

Levels File and Sub-file. Complying with the principle of provenance and preserving both the progressive stratification of documents and the logical and thematic connections between archival units, the proposed virtual arrangement through eight virtual files (vFF. A-H) and the current physical one perfectly match. Series I includes the Reggio papers (A = pF. 1 including sFF. A.1-7), M.S. photocopies (B = pF. 8) and the Hebrew and Aramaic letters (C = pF. 4). Se-

⁴⁵ Roman numerals (I, II, III), capital letters (A-H) and progressive numbers within files (A.1-A.7) identify series, files and sub-files respectively. Titles (in italics) have been assigned to series and files, whereas sub-files carry no title at the moment due to the too heterogeneous content.

⁴⁶ Such a radical rearrangement could be possible only after complete digitization of the fonds. Each level and archival unit is assigned an alpha-numerical code describing hierarchical position (e.g. I.1.a) and a title (in italics).

⁴⁷ 05 May 1779-October 1983.

⁴⁸ 05 May 1779-1994.

⁴⁹ 05 May 1779-06 December 1971.

⁵⁰ 1990-1994.

⁵¹ 1809-1868.

⁵² 1906-1983.

⁵³ 1906-1983.

⁵⁴ 1914-1947.

⁵⁵ 1922-2007.

⁵⁶ 1922.

⁵⁷ 1990-2007.

⁵⁸ 16 May 1978-26 May 1983.

⁵⁹ Preserved also on the CDECCHA remote server.

ries II consists of two vFF. named after object (D = pF. 7) or creator (E = pF 6). Series III comprises three vFF. corresponding to as many document typologies related to the Reggio family: the 1922 tree (F = pF. 3), its digital version (G = pF. 2) and the study materials on the Reggio and Michelstaedter families (H = pF. 5).

Proposal 2

Level Series. Same considerations as above.

Level Sub-series and Files. Sub-series are outlined with the aim to clarify the dynamics of formation. Sub-series I.1 would virtually

include the Reggio writings, either autographs or copies (= pF. 1). The correspondence is included in sub-series I.2 (= pFF. 1 and 4) and is organized through vFF. named after addressees (I.2.b-f).⁶⁰ Separate vFF. include the partial lists of letters by S.M. (pF. 1 and 4), lists, digest notes and study materials prepared by Y.C. (I.2.g = pF. 1) and M.S. photocopies (I.2.h = pF. 8). Series II features the same structure as in *Proposal 1*. Series III consists of two vFF. including: the 1922 tree accompanied by its digital version (III.a: sFF. III.a.1 and III.a.2 = pFF. 3 and 2); genealogical study materials on the Reggio and Michelstaedter families and related correspondence (III.b = pF. 5).

<i>Proposal 1</i> (vFF.)	A	G	F	C	H	E	D	B
<i>Current</i> (pFF.) (IN°)	1 (1-98)	2 (99-100)	3 (101-108)	4 (109-232)	5 (233-239)	6 (240-249)	7 (250-269)	8 (270-277)
<i>Proposal 2</i> (vFF.)	I.1.a I.1.b I.2.a-g	III.a		I.1.a I.1.b I.2.a-f	III.b	II.b	II.a	I.2.h

Table 4 – Synopsis of the new arrangement proposals.

3. The Reggio letters

The extensive filing and inventorying of the *R-M* fonds require archivists to consider the massive number of letters⁶¹ and their critical value for the study of the private and intellectual lives of AḤaR and YaŠaR.

Besides drafts and rough copies of writings in Hebrew and Italian whose content still deser-

ves proper investigation, the correspondence includes around 184 letters⁶² – a small number of which were presumably transcribed from the originals by S.M. – in five languages. In most cases, the addressees are AḤaR and YaŠaR, while among the senders Mordecai Ghironi blatantly stands out.⁶³ The results of the examination are illustrated in the following table:

⁶⁰ The letters should be further arranged per sender and date within each file.

⁶¹ This is the earliest and largest nucleus of the fonds (ca 66% of total items).

⁶² It is unclear whether some of the Hebrew papers are letter drafts or writings, and total number is currently not definitive.

⁶³ Mordekay Šemu’el Ghironi (1799-1852), chief rabbi and teacher of theology at the Collegio Rabbिनico of Padua. Other addressees occur:

F. Dörfles, A. Michelstaedter, E. Michelstaedter, L. Stella. Precious letters to Malchina Morpurgo from her husband are included. Senders are: J.A Blumenfisch, M. Bolaffi, D. Bolaffio, R. Coen, S.V. Dalla Volta, L. Della Torre, I. Dusch, M.Ehrenreich, G.S. and A. Galligo, D.L.E. Igel, H. Liebermann, S.D. Luzzatto, I.S. Minerbi, Malchina and Marco Morpurgo, M. Perlmann, S.G. Pesaro, B. Reggio, C. Rovighi, O.H. Schor, L. Stella, S.G. Treves.

<i>Language</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Time span</i>	<i>% of total letters</i>	<i>Collocation</i>
Hebrew and/or Aramaic	122 ⁶⁴	1809-1868	66%	pF. 4
Italian	42	1779-1863	23%	pF. 1
German and/or Yiddish	20 ⁶⁵	1783-1855	11%	pF. 1

Table 5 – Distribution of the letters by language.

The study of the correspondence is still at an early stage. The letters written in Italian will be examined first, followed by those in German and Yiddish.⁶⁶ The study of the Hebrew and Aramaic letters has recently begun: a transcription of the oldest one (dated 1809) with translation and preliminary notes is presented at the end of this paper.

Conclusions

The papers and documents of the *Reggio - Michelstaedter* fonds kept in the Historical Archive of the Fondazione Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea in Milan are of the greatest importance for the understanding of the life and thought of Abramo Vita and Isacco Samuele Reggio and equally precious for the study of the reception of the works of Carlo Michelstaedter and the intellectual activity of his cousin Silvio Michelstaedter.

The complex structure of the fonds has been examined with the aim of carrying out a new archival processing, preparing an inventory and completing a digital description. After nearly a year of work it is possible to propose two different models of virtual rearrangement that stress the progressive sedimentation of documents over time while pointing out the promising research possibilities they offer.

This is the very case of the correspondence: the letters in German and Yiddish can be read

only by experts in *Kurrentschrift*, while those in Hebrew and Aramaic require not only advanced linguistic skills, but also proficient competence in rabbinical prose and style (e.g. formulas and intertextual references) and extensive knowledge of the historical and cultural context in which the correspondents lived, as the attached preliminary study of the earliest Hebrew letter clearly shows.

IN° 125 (1809)⁶⁷

Digest: M. Ghironi congratulates A.V. Reggio for his son's achievements and sends him his wishes for Pesach. *Writing materials:* white watermarked paper,⁶⁸ 255×180 mm. *Justification and layout:* 225×170 mm, 28 ll., narrow margins, black ink. *Script:* personal handwriting. Semi-cursive rabbinical (or *Rashi*) script featuring angular aspect, uniform pattern and middle-sized scale. Paragraph initials, either letters or words, and place names have sensibly larger dimensions. Letter shape, proportions and ductus are regular: *nun / kaf* and *het / taw* can be mistaken sometimes. There are no ligatures. The space between letters and words is generally stable: some narrowing occurs at the end of a few lines. *Punctuation and pointing:* poor and sparse. The end of paragraphs is generally marked with colon, closing of sentences with full stop. There is no vocalisation: /o, u/ vowels are sometimes indicated by superposed

⁶⁴ Four of which written both in Hebrew and Aramaic and one only (IN° 127) in Aramaic.

⁶⁵ At present only IN° 39 has been ascertained to be in Yiddish.

⁶⁶ These are all written in *Kurrentschrift* and therefore extremely hard to read and interpret.

⁶⁷ Address and further information are written on the *verso*, although reading is difficult: «All'Ornat.mo Sig. Isach Reggio | Con Preg.mo amico | che D. R. (?) אטן און (?)S.R.M.».

⁶⁸ The watermark features the initials *VCF*.

double horizontal dots. *Abbreviations*: frequent, mainly rabbinical initialisms.⁶⁹ *Style and language*: the style is artificial, dense with biblical,

talmudic and rabbinical quotations,⁷⁰ and the tone is made high and formal thanks to the rather abstract language.

- 1 ב"ה
- 2 לכבוד הרב הכולל מלא חכמה ודעת ויראת ה' הנאסר ונקשר בעבותות האהבה
- 3 לכל הקרב הקרב אל משכן שלו לשתות בצמא את דבריו נודע בשערים שמו הטוב
- 4 כמו ה"ר אברהם ריגיו נר"ו אב"ד ומ"ץ בק"ק גוריציאה יע"א.
- 5 מה נמלצו אמרי יושר דברי פי חכם הכתובים באגרתו המסולאה לה יקרא חפצי
- 6 בה על הכתב המכתב והלשון הזהב וההדרת ולי מה יקרו תירוציו על שאלותי
- 7 עליו. אמרו חכמים זקני תורה כל זמן שמזקינין דעתם מתיישבת וחכמתם
- 8 מתגברת שנאמר בישישים חכמה וארך ימים תבונה:
- 9 קוצר הזמן וטרדות העסקים בימים האלה מונעים הטוב ממני להתמה הנעם
- 10 מנתור בעניינים תורניים כאשר עם לבבי אמנם בע"ה אחרי עבור החג אחזור
- 11 לה שתעשע במכתב קולמוס הלב לשאת ולתת עמו לטעום צוף אמרי נועם
- 12 דבריו מתוקים מדבש ונופת צופים:
- 13 אבשרהו כי הרב נכדו נר"ו עשה פרי בלימודיו וראה סימן יפה בתלמידיו ונהנתי
- 14 לשמוע מפרנסי ת"ת (ביום החקירה) שהצליח באומנותו ללמד דעת את התלמידים
- 15 ומובטחני שכה יעשה רכה יוסיף למצוא חן ושכל טוב בעיני אדם ואדם:
- 16 ועתה אכפול לו שלומותי בשם אהובתי רעייתי מב"ת המשתחוה לברכתו.
- 17 בצפייתנו נצפה לבשורותיו הטובות עם חבילי מצותיו היקרות:
- 18 יהיו נא דברי אלה קרובים אל ה' יעמידהו בריא אולם יחדש כנשר נעוריו
- 19 שנים רבות יחייהו ויעלהו על במותי ההצלחות וישביעהו שובע שמחות
- 20 בחג המצות הבע"ל עם כל בני ביתו יחד כולם ישמחו יעלצו בשמחה
- 21 רוחנית וששון ועלצון ישיגו עם כל חותמי ברכות שבמקדש אכ"ר
- 22 אחלה פניו שיזכיר לטובה בתפלותיו את אפרים רפאל בני שיחזירוהו ה' לבריאותו
- 23 ולאתננו הראשון כי ידעתי את אשר יברך יבורך וברכתו על חיקו
- 24 תשוב להוסיף אומץ בעוז והעצמות ויתענג על רוב שלום

⁶⁹ The periphrasis *ha-Šem* is suspended as usual.

⁷⁰ See M. PELLI, *On the Role of Melitzah in the Literature of the Hebrew Enlightenment*, in L.

GLINERT (ed.), *Hebrew in Ashkenaz*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1993, pp. 99-110.

אמור יאמר העבד אהבתי את אדוני אברהם 25

והוא הצעיר מרדכי שמואל גירונדי 26

פאדובה באג"ד לנשיאים שנת 27

יפאר ענזים בישועה 28

1 With the help of God.⁷¹

2 To His Excellency the Chief Rabbi full of wisdom, knowledge and fear of God, tightly gripped in the bonds of love 3 to anyone who approaches his tabernacle⁷² to drink his words with thirst, known at the gates of His good name⁷³ 4 as the great Rabbi⁷⁴ Avraham Reggio, supremely magnanimous,⁷⁵ chief of the rabbinical court⁷⁶ and master of justice⁷⁷ in the holy community⁷⁸ of Gorizia⁷⁹ – may God preserve her, *amen!*⁸⁰

5 How pleasant are the right pronouncements, the words of true wisdom⁸¹ written in your⁸² most welcome letter:⁸³ *it will be called "My delight 6 is in her"*⁸⁴ for the handwriting (?),⁸⁵ the letter itself, the precious language⁸⁶ and the splendid style,⁸⁷ and how nice are your replies to my questions 7 about you. The wise learned of the Torah said: «The more they age, the more their knowledge stabilizes and their wisdom 8 is strengthened»,⁸⁸ as it is said: «in the elderly is wisdom, and in longevity reason». ⁸⁹

9 Lack of time and work-related worries deprive me in these days of the serenity to fully enjoy⁹⁰ 10 the debate⁹¹ on Torah issues *as it is*

*my wish.*⁹² However, with the help of God and his salvation,⁹³ at the end of the Feast I shall go through it again,⁹⁴ 11 to cheer up the calamus of the heart through it,⁹⁵ to exchange opinions⁹⁶ with you, to taste the nectar of the balmy pronouncements 12 and your words sweeter than ambrosia and honeycomb.

13 I announce to you that your offspring, the supremely magnanimous Rabbi,⁹⁷ has been successful in his studies⁹⁸ and has been so lucky to have good pupils,⁹⁹ and I was pleased 14 to hear from the directors of the *Talmud Torah* (on the day of the examination) that he succeeded in his job of inculcating wisdom in pupils, 15 and I am sure that at this rate he will continue to improve and find grace and intelligence in the eyes of God¹⁰⁰ and men.¹⁰¹

16 And now I renew my thanks in the name of my beloved wife *from the women of a blessing tent*¹⁰² that prostrates to your blessing. 17 With great hope we await¹⁰³ for good news of you with some packages of your precious *mašot*.

18 May these words of mine reach the Lord, that He may restore you to health and al-

⁷¹ Init. *be-‘ezrat ha-Šem* (or *baruk ha-Šem* “blessed be God”).

⁷² See Num 17:28.

⁷³ See Prov 31:23.

⁷⁴ Init. *ha-rav Rabbi*.

⁷⁵ Init. *nafaḥruaḥ we-nešamah*.

⁷⁶ Init. *‘av bet-din*.

⁷⁷ Init. *u-moreh šedeq*.

⁷⁸ Init. *be-qehillahqedošah*.

⁷⁹ *Gorišiah*, in larger scale.

⁸⁰ Init. *yagen ‘aleha ‘Elohim*.

⁸¹ Lit. “the words of the mouth of a wise man”.

⁸² Actually, it is always “his.../him”, agreeing with כבודו “his excellency” (1. 2).

⁸³ Lit. “pleasing in itself”.

⁸⁴ Cfr. Isa 64,2.

⁸⁵ This word (*ha-ktav*) is crowned by three points in triangle that might indicate deletion.

⁸⁶ Lit. “the golden language”.

⁸⁷ Lett. “the splendor” (*ha-hadrut*).

⁸⁸ Maybe an echo of *m.Qinnim* 3:6.

⁸⁹ See Job 12,12.

⁹⁰ Lit. “to relish enjoying”.

⁹¹ Lit. “from leaping” (*mi-netor*).

⁹² See Josh 14:7.

⁹³ Init. *be-‘ezrat ha-‘El we-yešū‘ato*.

⁹⁴ Lit. “I shall return to it”.

⁹⁵ Lit. “the letter”.

⁹⁶ Lit. “receive and give”.

⁹⁷ See l. 4.

⁹⁸ Lit. “has borne fruit in his studies”.

⁹⁹ Lit. “and saw good fortune in his students”.

¹⁰⁰ Reverential spelling *‘Elodim* with *‘alef-la-med* nexus.

¹⁰¹ Lit. “and of man”.

¹⁰² See Judg 5,24.

¹⁰³ Lit. “in our hope we hope”.

so *renew your youth like an eagle*;¹⁰⁴ **19** may He make you live many years and raise you to the heights of success, and may you be filled with joys without number **20** on the Feast of the *mašot* which will come upon us with favour¹⁰⁵ with all the children of your house together: may they all rejoice and jubilate with joy **21** in spirit, and may happiness and joy be obtained with *all the conclusions of the blessings in the Sanctuary*,¹⁰⁶ may it be!¹⁰⁷

22 I beseech you to remember with benevolence in your prayers Ephraim Rafael my son - may God restore him to health **23** and strength,¹⁰⁸ for I know that *he who blesses will be*

blessed,¹⁰⁹ and his blessing on his action **24** will be repaid,¹¹⁰ increasing courage with strength and tenacity, and he will revel in great peace.

25 *The servant will say: "I have loved my lord"*¹¹¹ Avraham, **26** and that is the young Mordekay Šemu'el Ghironi.

27 Padua,¹¹² among the people of the grievous exile¹¹³ for the chiefs of the community, in the year **28** «He will adorn the poor with salvation».¹¹⁴

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SUMMARY

The present paper illustrates the research issues and first results of a recent project aiming at the archival rearrangement and description of the *I.S. Reggio – C. Michelstaedter* family fonds preserved at the Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea (Milan). The project features a dual nature, between archival science and philology. On the one hand, thorough records inventory, rearrangement, description and digitalization are planned; on the other hand, filing and study of the ca. 120 Hebrew and Aramaic letters included in the epistolary demand strong language skills and in-depth knowledge of the historical and cultural context. A transcription and translation of the most ancient Hebrew letter with preliminary notes is included.

KEYWORDS: Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea; Mordecai Ghironi; Abramo Vita Reggio; Isacco Samuele Reggio; Reggio-Michelstaedter archive.

¹⁰⁴ See Ps 103,5.

¹⁰⁵ Init. *ha-ba' 'alenu le-ṭovah*.

¹⁰⁶ See *b. Ber. 63a* (quoting *m. Ber. 9,5*).

¹⁰⁷ Init. *'amen ken yehirašon*.

¹⁰⁸ Lit. "strengthen him in his health and to his original strength".

¹⁰⁹ See *Toledot Yišḥaq* on Num 22,2.

¹¹⁰ Lit. "return".

¹¹¹ See Exod 21,5.

¹¹² *Padovah*, in larger scale.

¹¹³ Init. *be-'anšey ha-golah ha-dewuyyah*.

¹¹⁴ A chronogram quoting Ps 150:4. Double dots are placed above the words expressing the year (in larger scale): (70+50+6+10+40) + (2+10+300+6+70+5) = [5]569 (1809).