Introduction

Delivering a sermon at Padua in the early fifteenth century, charismatic preacher Bernardino da Siena exploded, "Oh! Is there any Jew here? I do not know since I do not recognize them; if they had an O [shaped badge] on their chest, I would recognize them."[1] For Bernardino, who believed Jews were the cause of all evils, "unmarked Jews" evoked a danger that was ever present but hidden from view.[2] He was not alone. From the pointed hat and colored badges of the Middle Ages to the yellow star of the Holocaust, many European secular or religious authorities resorted to visual markers to remedy the Jews' "unrecognizability" and bring their Jewishness into plain view. Of course, periods during which Jews were forced to wear a sign alternated with times during which they were not, and the claim that Jews were undistinguishable from the rest of the population meant something different in the twentieth century than it did in the fifteenth century. Still, the effort to mark the Jews using visual signs is a phenomenon with remarkable longevity.

The history of the Jewish badge in Europe began in 1215 at the Fourth Lateran Council. At that time, Pope Innocent III, citing the possibility of sexual intercourse between Jews and Christians, ordered that Jews be distinguished from Christians by the "nature of their

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[1] Nirit Ben-Aryeh Debby, "Jews and Judaism in the Rhetoric of Popular Preachers: The Florentine Sermons of Giovanni Dominici (1356–1419) and Bernardino da Siena (1380–1444)," *Jewish History* 14 (2000): 185.

[2] Ibid., 186; for more on the friar's anti-Jewish rhetoric, see also Robert Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 23–29; Diane Owen Hughes, "Distinguishing Signs: Ear-Rings, Jews and Franciscan Rhetoric in the Italian Renaissance City," *Past and Present* 112 (1986): 3–59; Franco Mormando, *The Preacher's Demons: Bernardino of Siena and the Social Underworld of Early Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 165–218.

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clothes."[3] Yet, despite the papacy's great power at the time, the imple-
mentation of its directives required active cooperation from local
authorities. Such collaboration did not always occur immediately or
easily, but over time, the Jewish badge became a common feature of
medieval and early modern Jewish life. From Iberia and England in the
West to Budapest in the East, and from the thirteenth to the eighteenth
century, authorities issued decrees that attempted to regulate the Jews'
appearance through distinctive marks: blue stripes in Sicily, a red cape
in Rome, the Tablets of the Law in England, a yellow wheel in France, a
pointed hat in Germany, a red badge in Hungary.[4] Scholars have
traditionally referred to these as "the Jewish badge," because it often
was a brightly colored badge, though as the above list indicates it could
also be a hat, a veil, or a cloak. In the Italian archival documents that I
will discuss in this book, the badge was usually called the *segno*, the
(Jewish) sign, a term indicating its functions as a visible mark and
signifier of Jewishness.[5]

   My book is a study of efforts to visually label the Jews and the
consequences of such efforts in Italy during the fifteenth and sixteenth
centuries. Focused on three major Renaissance Italian states – the
Duchy of Milan, the Republic of Genoa, and the Duchy of Piedmont-
Savoy – I examine what the Jews' distinctive signs meant in a variety of
contexts, how they molded Jews' and Christians' interactions with each
other, and what their study tells us about relations between different
groups in society. Although such regional focus may seem narrow
compared to the scope of the problem laid out above, the history of
the Jewish badge in these three areas offers a unique prism to examine

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[3] Solomon Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the XIIIth Century: 1198–1254*,
    2nd ed. (New York: Hermon Press, 1966), 308–9. For the full text of the Canon
    in Latin with English translation, see Norman P. Tanner, *Decrees of the
    Ecumenical Councils* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990), 266.
[4] Guido Kisch, "The Yellow Badge in History," *Historia Judaica* 4, no. 2 (1942):
    105–9.
[5] The word *segno* (or its equivalent *signum* in Latin) was in widespread usage on
    the Italian peninsula. See, for example, Stefanie B. Siegmund, *The Medici State
    and the Ghetto of Florence* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 68–
    69. Siegmund points out that the "badge was not only to signify the Jews'
    Jewishness, but also their *falsity*." Such was the case in Rome, too; see Barbara
    Wisch "Vested Interest: Redressing Jews on Michelangelo's Sistine Ceiling,"
    Artibus et Historiae 48 (2003): 143. As we will see, both identification and
    denigration emerged as characteristic of the Jewish badge in Genoa, Milan, and
    Piedmont as well.

the dialectic of inclusion and exclusion of Jews from Italian society. By comparing the situation in three distinct but neighboring regions, my book explores the powerful influence of general and persistent anti-Jewish ideas on Christian society and on Jewish lives, while also highlighting how specific political and cultural conditions could strengthen, subvert, or modify seemingly fixed laws and practices for labeling Jews in society. How traditional anti-Jewish ideas, the stereotyping force of sartorial markers, the decisions of religious and political powers, and Jewish reactions to the aforementioned led or did not lead to anti-Jewish discrimination forms the narrative of this book.

The Jewish Badge: Legal and Historical Contexts

Although Milan, Genoa, and Piedmont were neighboring states, they lend themselves well to a comparative analysis because of their different political and social structures: Milan was a large inland duchy, Genoa a maritime republic, and Piedmont a mountainous region between Italy and France. Each region also found itself under the influence of, or in alliance with, a foreign power: Spain for Milan and Genoa, France for Piedmont. As for the Jews, they were a fairly new presence in northern Italy, having emigrated from southern Italy and Rome, as well as from France and Germany during the fourteenth century. Among the important urban centers, Rome, Venice, and Florence had larger, more established Jewries that were often ghettoized in the course of the sixteenth century.[6] By contrast, the Duchy of Milan, the Republic of Genoa, and the Duchy of Piedmont-Savoy were areas with small Jewish settlements (of sometimes just a family or

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[6] Roberto Bonfil provides a list of towns and the dates at which a ghetto was established: "Venice 1516; Rome 1555; Florence 1571; Siena 1571; Mirandola 1602; Verona 1602; Padua 1603; Mantua 1612; Rovigo, 1613; Ferrara 1624; Modena 1638; Urbino, Pesaro, Senigallia 1634; Este 1666; Regio Emilia 1670" and so on until "the eve of the French Revolution!"; Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy*, 71–72. For more on the larger ghettos established in Venice, Rome, and Florence during the sixteenth century, thus concurrently to the period covered in this book, see Benjamin Ravid, *Studies on the Jews of Venice, 1392–1797* (Ashgate Publishing, 2003); Kenneth R. Stow, *Theater of Acculturation: The Roman Ghetto in the Sixteenth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 67–98; and Stefanie Siegmund, *The Medici State and the Ghetto of Florence*.

two) dispersed over wide geographies and where the development and conditions of Jewish life are less well known.[7]

The rules that imposed Jewish badges, hats, and other signs were reimposed on a regular basis. Scholars speculate that when legislation needs to be reissued, it is an indication that it was not or could not be effectively applied.[8] However, the stories in this book will show that laws can have a significant impact even when they are not implemented.[9] Information on such impact is found not in the initial Jewish badge laws but in a variety of other sources such as lists of fines, police reports, witness statements, trial proceedings, personal and official letters and memoranda, as well as the Hebrew chronicle *Emek ha-Bakha* by Joseph ha-Cohen. These records reveal that the distinctive sign laws set in motion a whole series of actions by individuals on both the issuing and receiving ends of those laws. Therefore, this book does not focus merely

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[7] Small and scattered Jewish settlements were not uncommon in medieval and early modern Italy; see Ariel Toaff, *Love, Work, and Death: Jewish Life in Medieval Umbria* (Littman Library of Jewish Civilization), 5: "The Jewish presence in Italy in the late Middle Ages was distinguished by the breadth of its dispersal; settlements, often limited to single families, were spread over a considerable number of city-states, walled towns, and villages, linked by poor or inconvenient communications." Stefanie Siegmund further suggests that, given this dispersal, the term "community" may not accurately reflect the situation of Jewish settlements in Tuscany, in *The Medici State and the Ghetto of Florence*, 168: "Rather than referring to the Jews of pre-ghetto Florence, or of Tuscany as a whole, as a community, then, we might call them a constellation, another, perhaps, more descriptive metaphor."

[8] Thus, the argument goes, the Jewish badge was a legal event that lacked tangible repercussions in everyday life, and this makes it less important as a subject of study in itself. See, for example, Ariel Toaff, "Jewish Badge in Italy during the 15th Century," in *Die Juden in Ihrer mittelalterlichen Umwelt*, ed. Alfred Ebenhauer and Helmut Zatloukai (Vienna: Böhlau, 1991), 174; Irven Resnick, *Marks of Distinction: Christian Perceptions of Jews in the High Middle Ages* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 80–89.

[9] This was frequently the case with sumptuary laws whose purpose was to regulate people's dress. See Diane Owen Hughes, "Sumptuary Law and Social Relations in Renaissance Italy," in *Disputes and Settlements: Law and Human Relations in the West*, ed. John Bossy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 69–99; Ronald E. Rainey, "Sumptuary Legislation in Renaissance Florence" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1985); and Alan Hunt, *Governance of the Consuming Passions: A History of Sumptuary Law* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 356. Hunt argues that what mattered was not the effectiveness of the law but its existence, for the law's symbolic presence "expressed elements of an ideological agenda and generated a sense that something was being done about the persistent anxieties and tensions concerning class and gender relations which fueled the sumptuary impulse."

on whether and when the Jews wore a badge or hat; rather, it examines the totality of actions and reactions (individual or collective, by Jews, Christians, or both) as well as social, religious, and political events that arose when the subject of the Jews' sartorial distinction was raised. Such an examination shows that "the badge" was not a single event with a single meaning but a process – one inextricable from the larger story of Jewish-Christian relations and from the larger process by which the Jews contested, negotiated, made strategic use of, and at least partially avoided being "marked" as a separate people within Italian societies.

Often, Jewish badge decrees were issued in combination with other limitations on Jewish life, such as restrictions on interest rates or other professional or social activities, but only the *segno* threatened the Jews' physical image, their ability to control their appearance and fashion their selves vis-à-vis the rest of society. As a measure of physical segregation, the badge is, perhaps, most related to the ghetto – "a compulsory segregated Jewish quarter in which all Jews were required to live and in which no Christians were allowed to live."[10] In the case of Florence, Stefanie Siegmund points out that Jewish-badge legislation immediately preceded the Jews' ghettoization and that both were "tools that might remove this confusion [created by the presence of Jews in Tuscany] by 'locating' the Jews in a Christian social order."[11] Still the ghetto, as many scholars have understood, had an ambivalent character: while it was meant to be humiliating and pressure the Jews to convert, it also provided the Jews with a physical space in the city, which they were able to make their own.[12] By contrast, the Jewish badge was seen by both Christians and

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[10] As defined by Benjamin Ravid in, "From Geographical Realia to Historiographical Symbol: The Odyssey of the Word Ghetto," in *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. David Ruderman (New York: NYU Press, 1992), 373.

[11] Stefanie Siegmund, *The Medici State and the Ghetto of Florence*, 128–29.

[12] On the ghetto's ambivalent character, see David Ruderman, "Introduction," *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. David Ruderman (New York: NYU Press, 1992), 24–27; on the Papacy's hope that the ghetto of Rome would spur the Jews' conversion, see Kenneth Stow, "The Papacy and the Jews: Catholic Reformation and Beyond," *The Frank Talmage Memorial Volume* (Haifa: Haifa University Press, 1992), 257–75; but Siegmund argues that conversion may not have been the Medici's main goal when establishing the ghetto in Florence, see Stefanie Siegmund, *The Medici State and the Ghetto of Florence*, 221. Despite difficult living conditions, the Jews grew attached to the ghetto over time, as the evolution of the meaning of the word "ghetto" reveals: Ravid, "From Geographical Realia to Historiographical Symbol," 373–85; and also Kenneth Stow, "The Consciousness of Closure:

Jews as shameful and its discriminatory effects bore on the Jews as individuals (rather than as a group). This, as we will see, damaged intercommunal and intracommunal links between different Jewish groups, compounding the Jews' vulnerability.

Historiographical Approach

At the same time that this book investigates the social history of the Jews in early modern Italy through the prism of the Jewish badge, it also acknowledges that the Jewish badge has a long history of its own. In medieval Christian art, Jews were commonly identified by a pointed hat, even though such conic hats were not always pejorative symbols – by contrast, badges appeared less frequently in art but more often carried negative meaning.[13] In the twentieth century, the image of Jews wearing a yellow star has become one of the most iconic images of the

Roman Jewry and Its Ghet," in *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. David Ruderman (New York: NYU Press, 1992), 386–99; Roni Weinstein, " 'Segregatos Non Autem Eiectos' (Segregated yet Not Ejected): Jews and Christians in Italian Cities during the Catholic Reformation," in *Being Different: Minorities, Aliens and Outsiders in History*, ed. Shulamit Volkov (Jerusalem, 2000), 93–132.

[13] The incredibly complex evolutions in the meaning of the figure of the Jew in Christian art are laid out in Sara Lipton's recent book, *Dark Mirror*. She shows that early on, Christian artists depicted Jews with respect and veneration as ancient biblical figures, even though they often donned a pointed hat. But by the end of the Middle Ages, for reasons having more to do with debates and insecurities internal to Christianity, "the Jew had become one of the most powerful and poisonous symbols in all of Christian art." Nonetheless, she argues that despite this seemingly linear progression toward more explicitly anti-Jewish imagery, there was nothing automatic or inevitable in this process. Indeed, she writes that "at almost no point … did medieval Christian clerics or artists consciously set out to create an anti-Jewish visual repertoire, much less to inspire anti-Jewish violence or retribution … But the meaning and power of images does not end with its original inspiration … they were viewed, internalized, reimagined, and reused by a dynamic public." For the quotes, see Sara Lipton, *Dark Mirror: The Medieval Origins of Anti-Jewish Iconography* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2014), 1, 279–80. For more on the derogatory connotations of the "rouelle," name given to the round badge of the Jews in France, see Danièle Sansy, "Signe distinctif et Judéité dans l'image," *Micrologus* 15 (2007): 87–105. For more analysis and comparison of the symbolic significance of the badge and hat in northern Italy, see Chapter 1, 34–49 and also Flora Cassen, "From Iconic O to Yellow Hat: The Shifting Symbolic Meaning of Jewish Distinctive Signs in Renaissance Italy," *Fashioning the Jews: Clothing, Culture, and Commerce* (Purdue University Press: Studies in Jewish Civilization Series, vol. 24, 2013), 29–48.

Holocaust. Guido Kisch, a German Jewish historian who fled Nazi Germany and wrote an article on the topic of the Jewish badge in 1942, drew a direct link between the Middle Ages and the Nazi era: "All the means of castigation and ways of oppression used by the Nazis in their powerful attempt to annihilate Jewry and Judaism … lack originality … [The] yellow David star, as a badge of infamy, represents an exemplary instance for comparing genuine and modern medievalism."[14] Having been himself marked and excluded from society, Kisch used this article not only to present the history of the Jewish badge in Europe but also to relate, in personal terms, to what the badge may have meant to past Jews. Finally in the summer of 2016, press reports uncovered that "alt-right groups" are using a symbol called the "twitter (((echo)))" to identify and label Jews in the online world of the Internet.[15] Such visual identifier is necessary, an online commentator, echoing Bernardino da Siena, explained, "because one of the greatest

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[14] Kisch, "Yellow Badge in History," 95–96. Only two monographs have been written on the subject of anti-Jewish distinctive signs, but both appeared in the late nineteenth century: Ulysse Robert, *Les signes d'infâmie au moyen âge: Juifs, Sarrasins, hérétiques, lépreux, Cagots et filles publiques* (Paris: H. Champion, 1891); Giulio Rezasco, *Segno degli ebrei* (Genoa: Tipografia del R. istituto sordo-muti, 1889). Since then the Jewish badge has not been the object of a book-length study, though recent articles and book sections have explored various aspects of its history across Europe, the Middle East, and the United States. See Hughes, "Distinguishing Signs," 3–59; Benjamin Ravid, "From Yellow to Red: On the Distinguishing Head-Covering of the Jews of Venice," *Jewish History* 6, no. 1–2 (1992): 179–210; Ariel Toaff, "The Jewish Badge in Italy during the 15th Century," in *Die Juden in Ihrer mittelalterlichen Umwelt*, ed. Alfred Ebenhauer and Helmut Zatloukai (Vienna: Böhlau, 1991), 275–81; Ruth Mellinkoff, *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the High Middle Ages*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 43–47; Sara Lipton, *Images of Intolerance: The Representation of Jews and Judaism in the Bible Moralisée* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 2–6, 12–13; Danièle Sansy, "Marquer La Différence: L'imposition de la rouelle aux XIIIe et XIVe siècles," in "La rouelle et la croix. Destins des Juifs d'Occident," édition spéciale, *Médiévales* 41 (2001): 15–36; Sansy, "Signe distinctif et Judéité dans l'image"; Irven Resnick, *Marks of Distinction: Christian Perception of Jews in the High Middle Ages* (Washington, DC: 2012), 69–76; Beth Berkowitz, *Defining Jewish Difference: from Antiquity to the Present* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 159–235; Eric Silverman, *A Cultural History of Jewish Dress* (London, New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 47–67; Flora Cassen, "From Iconic O to Yellow Hat", 29–48; Lipton, *Dark Mirror*, 150–53, 182, 221, 239–78.

[15] The twitter echo was first observed by Jonathan Weisman from the *New York Times* on May 26, 2016: "The first tweet arrived as cryptic code, a signal to the army of the 'alt-right' that I barely knew existed: 'Hello ((Weisman))'."

tricks of the Jew has been its ability to blend into a host nation without being detected and/or suspected."[16]

While the preceding remarks may appear to situate this study of the Jewish badge within a *longue durée* history of antisemitism, the framework of this book is broader and more complicated.[17] My study is anchored in the history of early modern Italy and looks to contemporary local political and religious circumstances to explain the situation of the Jews. At the same time, I suggest that to fully grasp the impact of the Jewish badge on perceptions of Jews by Christians and on the lives of Jews, one also needs to recognize that the Jewish badge had a

      Soon after, numerous news outlets explained it; see, for example, in *Mic*, "Echoes Exposed, the Secret Symbol Neo-Nazis Use to Target Jews Online," https://mic.com/articles/144228/echoes-exposed-the-secret-symbol-neo-nazis-use-to-target-jews-online; or in *Vox*, "The Echo Explained," www.vox.com/2016/6/6/11860796/echo-explained-parentheses-twitter. On June 6, 2016, the Anti Defamation League added the ((((echo))) to its list of hate symbols, www.adl.org/press-center/press-releases/anti-semitism-usa/adl-to-add-echo-symbol-used-by-anti-semites-on-twitter-to-online-hate-symbol-database.html.

[16] Quoted from Marcus Cicero, a writer on infostormer.com, a white supremacist news site: "One of the greatest tricks of the Jew has been its ability to blend into a host nation without being detected and/or suspected, with further modifications centering around their ability to trick whole populations, as in Southern and Middle America, into believing that they are in reality 'White people following a different religion'." Published on June 4, 2016: www.infostormer.com/lol-dem oralized-jews-now-outing-themselves-in-effort-to-defeat-nazi-trolls/.

[17] The term "anti-Judaism" more accurately denotes premodern expressions of anti-Jewish feelings. I used the term "antisemitism" here in reference to the titles of the following books, which are examples of such *longue durée* histories: Jules Isaac, *The Teaching of Contempt: Christian Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964); Léon Poliakov, *The History of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1965); and more recently, Robert Solomon Wistrich, *Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred* (New York: Schocken, 1994); Anthony Julius, *Trials of the Diaspora: A History of Anti-Semitism in England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). The "lachrymose view of Jewish history" is another term sometimes used to refer to the presentation of European Jewish history as a tale of increasing persecution that started with the Crusades and culminated at Auschwitz. But, in reality, the phrase was originally coined by Salo Baron precisely to criticize overly dark conceptions of premodern Jewish experience and argue that premodern Jewish life was more stable and safe than in modern times. Salo W. Baron, "Ghetto and Emancipation," *The Menorah Treasury: Harvest of Half a Century*, ed. Leo Schware (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1964), 50–63. For a thorough, recent analysis of Baron's ideas on Jewish history, see the articles by Elisheva Carlebach, David Sorkin, Adam Teller, and David Engel written for a special issue of the Association for Jewish Studies Review, "Rethinking Salo Baron in the Twenty-First Century," *AJS Review* 38, no. 2 (November 2014): 417–45.

symbolic meaning that, in some ways, transcended its local geographi-
cal and temporal dimensions.[18] Gershom Scholem wrote that "any-
thing in the world can become a symbol; it need only have something of
the spiritual 'charge', of the intuitive heritage which lends the world
meaning, gives it character, and reveals its mystery."[19] The Jewish
badge was no different; to Bernardino and Renaissance men and
women who worried about Jews whom they could not see, it identified
the Jews and crystallized in one sign who they were and what their
place in society ought to be. Thus, combining a local sociohistorical
analysis with a symbolic approach, the book shows that the anti-Jewish
sartorial regulations that were put in place in northern Italy in the
fifteenth and sixteenth centuries represented a complex amalgamation
of anti-Jewish arguments that were already centuries old, local and
contemporary concerns about Jews and their place in society, political
struggles between the centers and the peripheries of Italian states, and
changing relations between Church and State.

The Jewish Badge as a Tool of Power

When I first delved into Italian archival material on the Jewish badge,
I was struck by two apparently contradictory observations: first autho-
rities claimed that Jews could not be recognized without an identifying
sign; second, however, both in and outside of their hometowns,
Jews were usually known to be Jewish. In the sixteenth century, those
most frequently arrested for not wearing a yellow badge or hat were
Jewish travelers – indicating that whether at home or away, and on the
road, Jews were somehow identifiable as such.[20] This raises the ques-
tions of whether there were "unrecognizable" Jews in Renaissance

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[18]   The notion that anti-Jewish symbols can have a history of their own has been
       discussed by David Nirenberg in his recent book, *Anti-Judaism: The Western
       Tradition* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014). He argues that as an
       intellectual movement, anti-Judaism has been a recurring theme of Western
       thought. For him, anti-Judaism had a history of its own that sometimes inter-
       sected with the actual history of the Jews, but that more fundamentally con-
       structed a figure of thought with which Western thinkers defined themselves and
       others.

[19]   Gershom Scholem, "The Star of David: History of a Symbol," *The Messianic
       Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (New York: Schocken
       Books, 1971), 257.

[20]   I discuss how Jews were recognized in Chapter 3, 99–102.

Italy (as authorities asserted when they imposed the badge) and what the badge was for, if not for recognition. As it turns out – and as a variety of case studies, drawn from a wide corpus of primary source materials, will demonstrate throughout this book – the Jewish badge was not only a mark of identity but also a remarkably complicated and flexible device of power and control, which often served to intimidate the Jews and extort payments from them. Officials at all levels participated in this process of intimidation, but during the fifteenth century, Italian princes often sought, and often were able, to protect the Jews. Such protective action was also a means to assert their authority over lower levels of administration, a game in which the Jews fell victim to or occasionally benefited from power struggles unrelated to them. In the sixteenth century, under the combined pressures of the Catholic Reformation and the Spanish empire, the Jews lost their traditional princely protectors and their political situation, now subject to faraway monarchs, changed in sweeping ways.

Measuring the effectiveness of a law by the totality of its outcomes, rather than narrowly according to the fulfillment of its stated purpose, reveals that forcibly identifying the Jews served explicit and implicit functions. On the surface, it allowed authorities to seem to themselves and others to protect the purity, morality, and safety of Christian society by establishing visible boundaries between Jews and Christians. Absent such boundaries, Jews (allegedly) could "infiltrate Christian cities," "engage in sexual intercourse with Christians," and "commit innumerable ills under the cover of anonymity."[21] Yet, beneath these religiously driven considerations, there were also economic and political motives for issuing Jewish-badge laws – such as intimidating the Jews, increasing their tax burden, or using control of the Jews as a pretext to encroach on local governments. In understanding Jewish distinctive signs as complex devices with a multiplicity of usages and as a political tool in the hands of Christian authorities, this book reexamines the widely accepted assumption that "the Jewish badge" was simply one more example of a growing hatred of the Jews in Europe.[22] We will see that despite the loss of security and stability that resulted from laws attempting to control how they looked

[21] Ravid, "From Yellow to Red," 179–210.
[22] This observation draws on Stefanie Siegmund's argument that the Medici State of Florence, too, used the ghetto as a "tool of power" to advance not one, but multiple and diverse policy goals related not only to the Jews but also to