

Ralf Arditti

Do I recognize a clear Sephardi heritage and what's the connection with the Arditti surname? Unfortunately, even in the Beit Hatfutsot Museum in Tel Aviv, the Diaspora Museum, there is not much information about Arditti because they combined the name Arditti with Arditus and all that. But probably we are coming from a region in Spain and, probably in 1492 when our ancestors were deported or chased from Spain, we moved over maybe to Italy, maybe directly to the Ottoman Empire because there are about 40, 50 Arditti families in Turkey and most of them do come from Izmir area, from the Aegean area, around this Aegean area. So, the connection of course with Arditti, with Spain and with Sephardi culture is very evident. What's interesting though is that 'arditi' also means 'arduous' in Italian, 'strong', 'arduous'. And it's interesting that the first adherents of Mussolini were the mountains' Ardittis which were the *gendarmarie*, the police in the mountains. That's not the same Arditti. In Italian 'arditi' with one 't' also means arduous. But I think our name, our surname of course, is not connected with that, the dealings of Mussolini, it's connected, of course, with Spain. Now, there are similar names like mine, for example, Roditi. Roditi is very clear, its Jews coming from Rhodes, Roditi, or Politi. Politi means Jews coming from the city, 'polis' in Greek. Now Arditti, what I've found, is that we are coming from a region in Spain somewhere and we've come over to the Ottoman Empire late 15th Century and we've been based in the Aegean Sea, in the Aegean region, for 400 years. My parents moved over to Istanbul in 1945, just before I was born. Before that they were in Izmir, and my father actually passed a considerable time during the war in Mersin, which is a southern Turkish city on the Mediterranean, closer to Israel than Izmir and all that.

Maisie Meyer

I'm of Baghdadi decent that means my forebearers came from Baghdad and also from my grandmother's side from Aleppo, they were Arabic-speaking Jews. And then they came to India. They were merchants and my grandfather set up business and trade. I think he also bought properties - import and export stuff. My dad took over the business in India, in Calcutta.

When did your family move from Baghdad?

I can't tell you those dates, I don't know them, I just know it was my grandmother and grandfather that came. I don't know the dates.

and before that your family had been in Baghdad for a long time?

Yeah, I've got very illustrious forebearers and one of them, Sadka Hussein, he was very well known in the community and he's written books and stuff, renowned really.

Alec Nacamuli

My father's family, originally the family came from Venice and then the family moved to Corfu. My great-grandfather moved from Corfu to Egypt, probably around 1860, and my grandfather was born in Cairo, where he spent all his life. He started his business; it was a paper import business which became the family business. He was also at one point President of the Cairo Jewish community.

My mother's family actually originally came from Aleppo in Syria, but then they moved to Manchester, like a lot of Jews from Aleppo moved to Manchester, you know, when Aleppo started to decline. So, my grandmother and my mother and her brothers and sisters were all born in Southend by Sea or Manchester, around that area. And then my mother's family moved to Egypt, probably at the end of the First World War and that's where my parents met and got married in 1939. But apparently my grandfather on my mother's side was from Egypt. He met my grandmother and wanted to marry her, but her father said, 'You are not taking my daughter to Egypt, you are staying here in Manchester.' And it actually, apparently, didn't work out so at the end they went to Egypt.

My father was George Nacamuli, born in 1908 and my mother was Marcelle nee Bigio, born in 1916 and they got married in 1939.

Nadia Arditti

Both of my parents were born in Crete, from an Italian community from Venice. My mother's name was Lydia Franco. Her mother's name was Victoria Sidi and my grandfather's name was Marco Franco, and my father's name was Isacco Cavaliero. He was also born in Crete.

The Cavaliero name means, in fact, in Hebrew there is a Hebrew family also, they call them Abir. The caballeros were the people who were riding on the horses in the time in Spain and they were collecting money, the taxes for the King of Spain so for the government. So, the

name comes from there. So, they went from Spain to Venice and then to Crete. There was a Venetian community in Crete. And my mother's family too. They came from Spain and they had an ancestor, called Isaac Ibn Sid who was an astronomer in the year 1250 in Toledo. He was making some research on the moon, and he drew a map of the stars. So, my cousin in Israel discovered that there was a watch that was given as a present at each Bar Mitzvah to the boys of the family and on the inside of the watch, there was a chart of the stars. So, they suppose that was the chart of the stars written by Isaac Ibn Sid.

David Tachauer

If we talk intellectually, it's difficult to make a differentiation between the Sephardi and the Ashkenazi. If on the other hand, we talk about, esoterically, we are 100 per cent Sephardi. My wife is Yemeni, which makes her Mizrahi Sephardi, and I speak Sephardic Hebrew. And my son Leon, who now resides in the New Jersey, is a prominent member of a Sephardi *minyán* in Englewick, New Jersey; his wife teaches at, and his children go to, a Sephardi Yeshiva school in Teaneck, New Jersey. You can't get much more Sephardi than that.

Haim Algranati

My name is Haim Algranati. My parents were born in Izmir, Turkey, and my grandparents were born in Turkey as well. They were direct descendants of the Jews that fled the Spanish Inquisition. I even traced my family to Granada, 1306...grandparents... My father was, his father was a widower, and his mother was a widower. She came from the French side. 'cos I have, one of my great grandfathers is French and he died in the trenches. The reason I know that is because they were receiving pension money from the French. My dad actually grew up speaking fluent French in Turkey, as well as Ladino, as well as Turkish, as well as other languages. He had, possibly, about eight languages on him. My father's side was a carpenter and he had a carpentry shop in Izmir, very well-off, but he had a boy that was a gigolo and burnt it all away.

My dad, at the age of about 24, was involved in getting Jews to Israel from Turkey. And the Turks didn't like it and he had to flee with the last group that he took. And he came to Israel with the group that my mum was at 1947 and went to kibbutz Maale Hachamisha outside of Jerusalem and that's where he kind of proposed to my mum. My mum was 17. And that's how

it all started. I mean, the only one little story I'm going to tell you is that my wife kept niggling me to go to Spain. I had a very, very, vivid almost lucid dream where I'm in Granada. And in Granada, I'm in a place which has a yard, and inside the yard there's like a big stone, which was on its side and plants and everything and I said, 'Okay you know what, let's go to Granada and find the place.' So, we took a weekend in Granada, and we looked and we didn't find it and, as we were walking, I saw a sign, 'The Jewish Museum'. So, we couldn't find it and then an elderly couple said: 'Here you go, go this alley and it's all happening in Albaicin right beneath Alhambra which is all ancient.' So, we go to this house and that was the Jewish Museum. I knocked at the door and this Rabbi opened the door, and I spoke to him in Ladino and his eyes just like went yip, and he says, 'You need to be one part of the exhibition.' And we got chatting and eventually I asked him, 'Do you by any chance have a book of families in Granada from old days?' And he said yep, and off we went and look, look, look, look, and found it, pulled it out and we started looking and okay, there was our family name from 1306. There's a whole Algranati family tree, that is going on from America, but there was a whole branch of the Algranatis that, basically, nobody knew where they were, and my daughter found out. Unfortunately, she found them in Auschwitz, more than 50 of them...