



# **The Morpurgos,**

**the descendants of the Maribor Jews**

**Marjetka Bedrač and Andrea Morpurgo**





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## Introduction

When Zlata Vokač Medic published her historical fiction novel *Marpurgi* in 1985, it brought to life the memory of the once successful Jewish community, especially within the local environment – a community which significantly characterized medieval Maribor with its life and work. However, the memory of the Jews and their quarter had never been totally erased from the fabric of the city, since it was preserved both in the name of a street, i.e. ‘Židovska ulica’ (Jewish Street), and in the inscription ‘Mariborska sinagoga’ (Maribor Synagogue), placed on the frontage of the former Jewish pray house. Despite all this, it was rather concealed, forgotten and barely known.

Several decades passed before a thorough reconstruction of the former synagogue began – it should not be forgotten that the Maribor synagogue is the only preserved medieval synagogue in Slovenia and at the same time, one of the oldest of all preserved synagogues in Central Europe! At the same time, the professional public’s interest in the history of the Maribor Jewish community and the Jews in Slovenia in general started to rise. This very group with its research findings helped co-design the foundations for the revitalization of the Maribor synagogue as one of the most important remnants of Jewish heritage on Slovenian soil.

Nowadays, knowledge about the Jewish history of Maribor and Slovenia both among the professional and the general public is greater than it used to be several decades ago. After all, with its continuous work in the fields of collecting, documenting, researching and interpreting of Jewish cultural heritage, the Center of Jewish Cultural Heritage, seated at the former synagogue, most certainly contributed to that a lot. However, despite all the work done, some chapters of Jewish history in the wider area of the City Municipality of Maribor have not been definitively studied; thus a thorough picture neither of the life of the Jews in medieval Maribor nor of their life in places where they settled after they left Maribor has been created.

On the occasion of the 520th anniversary of the exile of Jews from Styria and thus from Maribor, which was commemorated in 2016 and 2017 with the project *Tracing the paths of Maribor Jews*, we wanted to on the one hand pay tribute to the memory of former Jewish citizens and invite their living descendants to (at least) symbolically return to the home city of their ancestors, and give a new impetus to our research work on the other. Initially, the project was designed as a two-year project and was based on three core programmes: presenting the exhibition *Vid Morpurgo and his lifetime* by the City Museum of Split, holding the international professional conference *Jews in Maribor and Styria in the Middle Ages* and creating our own travelling exhibition *The Morpurgos, the descendants of the Maribor Jews*. All three programmes were successfully carried out as planned. However, during the implementation of the project, it became clear that the relatively short time planned would not suffice to tell the whole story of the Maribor Jews. Luckily, we recognized this fact soon enough and during the implementation of the current programmes, started to put in place foundations for the future projects with the aim of gradually unveiling the cultural and historical heritage of the Jewish community in Maribor.

The present publication accompanies the travelling exhibition *The Morpurgos, the descendants of the Maribor Jews*. It provides a general insight into the history of the Jewish community in medieval Maribor and presents the departure of their members from the city at the end of the 15th century. At the same time, it tries to reconstruct the paths of those Maribor Jews and their descendants who later took up the family surnames of either Marpurg(er)/Marburg(er) or Morpurgo in the places where they settled down. The Morpurgo surname was by far most frequent among those surnames, therefore we devoted a special part of the exhibition to the presentation of individual members of the Morpurgo families (this gave the exhibition its title). Through thorough selection, we tried to indicate the wide range of economic, political, cultural and artistic activity and work with which the Morpurgos significantly contributed to the economic and cultural development of their environments.

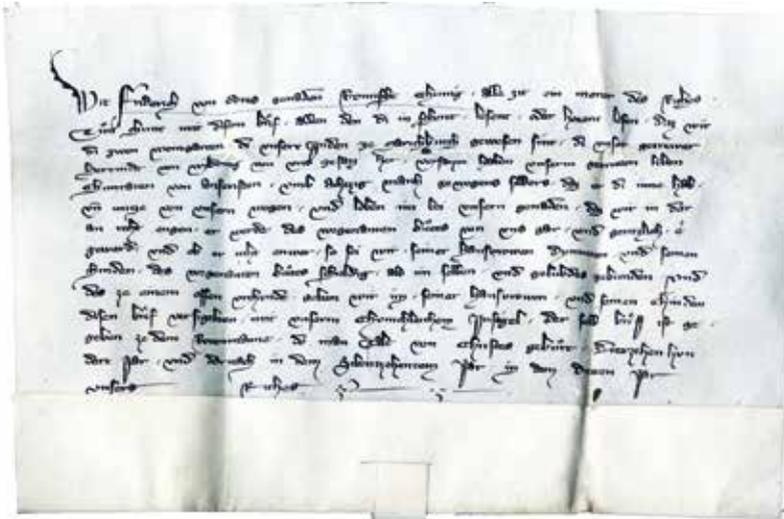
It is a special honour for me that during the preparation of the exhibition and the implementation of the project in general, we managed to connect with some of the above mentioned descendants of the Maribor Jews. At this point, I would particularly like to thank Andrea Morpurgo and Peter Morpurgo who shared some important and valuable information about their family tradition.

As I have already mentioned, the project *Tracing the paths of Maribor Jews* will be continued in the following years: we will carry out additional and more thorough research and present our findings to the public with new programmes and activities, including exhibitions which will focus especially on the presentations of individual branches of the Morpurgo and Marpurger families.

To conclude, I am going to let you in on a little secret that has revealed during the duration of the project: it appears that the descendants of the Morpurgos live in Maribor today.

Marjetka Bedrač,

Author of the project *Tracing the paths of Maribor Jews* and co-author of the exhibition *The Morpurgos, the descendants of the Maribor Jews*



1 The preserved charter is a solid proof of the presence of the Jews in Maribor. In the charter, King Frederick ‘the Fair’ pawned two vineyards, the property of his Maribor Jews – “vnserr Juden ze Marichburch”, to Konrad von Aufenstein. (Pawn charter, [22. 6. – 14. 7.] 1317, Rottenmann, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv: Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (HHStA), AT-OeStA/HHStA AUR 1317 [VI 22 – VII 14])

## Maribor and its Jews

Marjetka Bedrač

In Maribor, today Slovenia's second largest city, in the late Middle Ages there lived a relatively large and important Jewish community. Marpurch, Marpurg or Marburg, as the city used to be called, was part of the Styria duchy. Together with the duchies of Carinthia and Carniola and the Austrian Littoral, it belonged to the Inner Austrian provinces which were part of the Habsburg territory.

Individual Jews probably started to immigrate to Maribor as early as in the 13th century, however, a permanent Jewish settlement in the city can be traced back to 1317. The majority of the Maribor Jews settled in a special quarter in the south-eastern part of the city. The centre of the quarter was in today's Židovska ulica (as 'Juden gasse' it was first mentioned in 1493). On a small square there stood a synagogue (as 'Judenschul' it was first mentioned in 1354), while the ritual bath was underneath the synagogue. The Jewish cemetery, which is referred to in written sources for the first time in 1367 ('Juden freydhoff'), was located outside the city. Since 1358, the Jewish gate ('Judentor', 'Juden türll') have been documented in written sources.

Based on the preserved sources, a line of Maribor rabbis and Jewish masters can be traced. Among them, rabbi Israel/Isserlein bar Petachya (around 1390–1460) had a special position, and was present in Maribor in the second quarter of the 15th century. Due to his erudition and worldliness, he was greatly respected and one of the most important rabbi authorities of the 15th century in Austrian lands in general.

The main economic activity of the Maribor Jews was money-lending, however, they dealt also with trade, especially wine, which used to be both a profitable and important activity. In the 13th and especially 14th centuries, the Christians were not allowed to lend money with interest due to prohibition by the Church, therefore the main holders of the lending business in the 14th century were Jews. All social classes borrowed money from them, among their greatest debtors were aristocrats, the high clergy and rich monasteries.



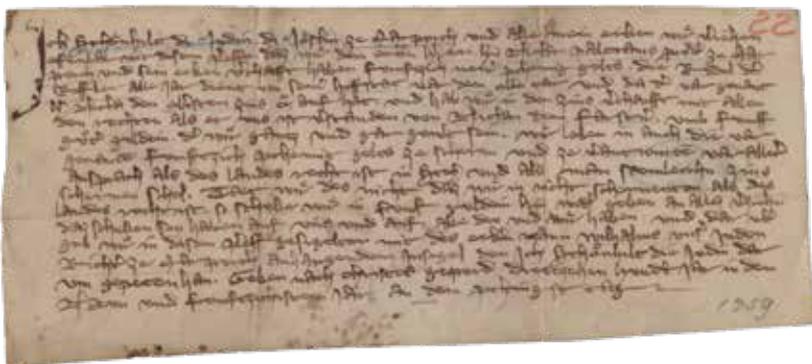
2 In Maribor, the majority of Jews lived in a clustered community in the south-eastern part of the city, in the Jewish quarter. Jews probably owned houses also in other city quarters, while some houses in the Jewish quarter were owned by Christians. In the veduta of Maribor from 1681, the framework extent of the former Jewish quarter is marked in colour. (Unknown painter, Votive painting with a view of Maribor, 1681, oil on canvas, detail, Pokrajinski muzej Maribor, inv. št. N. 65)



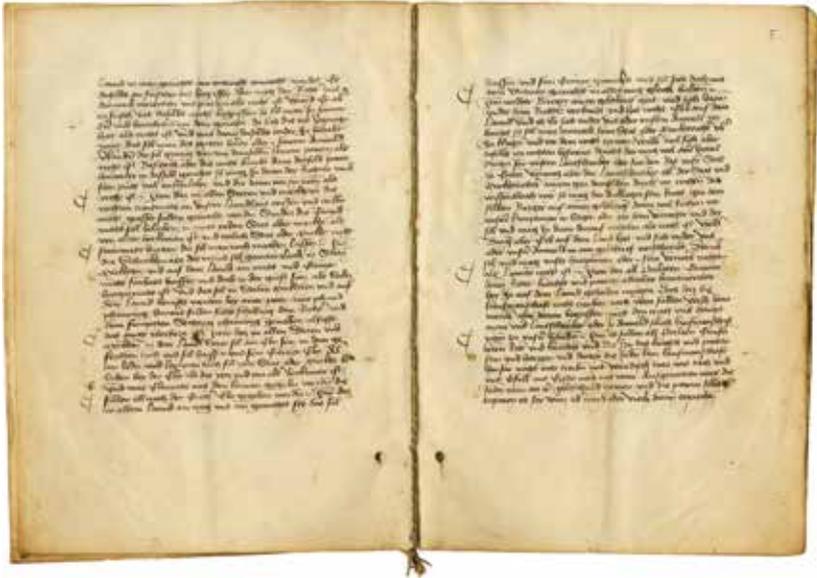
3 Beside the partly preserved Židovska ulica, which used to be the central street of the former Jewish quarter, the synagogue in Maribor has also been preserved. It was the religious, spiritual, and social centre of the Maribor Jews. In the second quarter of the 15th century it even served as the occasional seat of the high rabbinate for Styria, Carinthia and Carniola. Aerial photograph with the view of the preserved part of the former Jewish quarter in Maribor (Center judovske kulturne dediščine Sinagoga Maribor, photo by Branimir Ritonja, 2009).



4 A Jew called Mush (*Musch*), grandson of Isserlein (*Ysserlein*) from Maribor, confirmed that all the debt of the Counts of Cilli was settled. The charter is sealed by the Maribor Jewish judge Meinhard Praunsperger and the Maribor city judge Matthias König, however, a note in Hebrew is added. The charter is telling proof of the business connections between the Jews and rich aristocratic families. (Certificate of the settlement of debts, 15. 8. 1384, Arhiv Republike Slovenije (ARS), SI AS 1063, Zbirka listin, št. 4343)



5 Even Jewish women dealt with lending and selling real estate. A Jewish woman called Schönhilt, widow after Joshua (*Jöslin*) from Maribor, sold a house with some land in front of the Upper Gate to Nicholas (*Niclan*), brother of Paltram from Maribor and all his heirs, for five guildens. The charter is sealed by the Maribor Jewish judge Wilhalm. (Sale purchase agreement, 9. 6. 1359, Pokrajinski arhiv Maribor (PAM), Zbirka listin 1246–1869, št. 24)



6 Emperor Frederick III, father of the king and emperor Maximilian I, resisted exiling Jews. However, with adoption of numerous prohibitions, he greatly limited Jewish economic activities. For example, in 1445, he thus, as King Frederick IV, prohibited trade with Venetian goods, as well as with cloth, woven, iron and wine in Styria. (Certificate of privileges, 6. 11. 1445, Vienna, Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv (StLA), AUR 5993 V)

Towards the end of the 14th century, the role and position of Jews in the lending business gradually changed. More and more Christians started to deal with money lending; they became strong competitors also in trade activities. In the 15th century, only the less well-to-do borrowed money from Jews. The economic power of the Jews started to decline and thus the benevolence and protection of the emperors and land lords who no longer recognized Jews as financially or economically interesting.

Within the changed economic circumstances which were additionally aggravated by war conflicts and devastation by the “Black Death”, the divide between the Christians and “heretics” increased. The accusations of Jews as host desecrators, murderers of Christian children, poisoners of Christian wells, falsifiers of charters and seals, etc., were revived. The demands of the Inner Austrian States to exile Jews from these provinces

gradually increased. On 18 March 1496, King Maximilian I finally signed the decree on the exile of Jews from Styria, Wiener Neustadt and Neunkirchen. With the decree he defined that Jews from these provinces had to move away by 6 January 1497. They were allowed to exact payment from their debtors and sell their real estate. At the same time, Jews were exiled from Carinthia too.

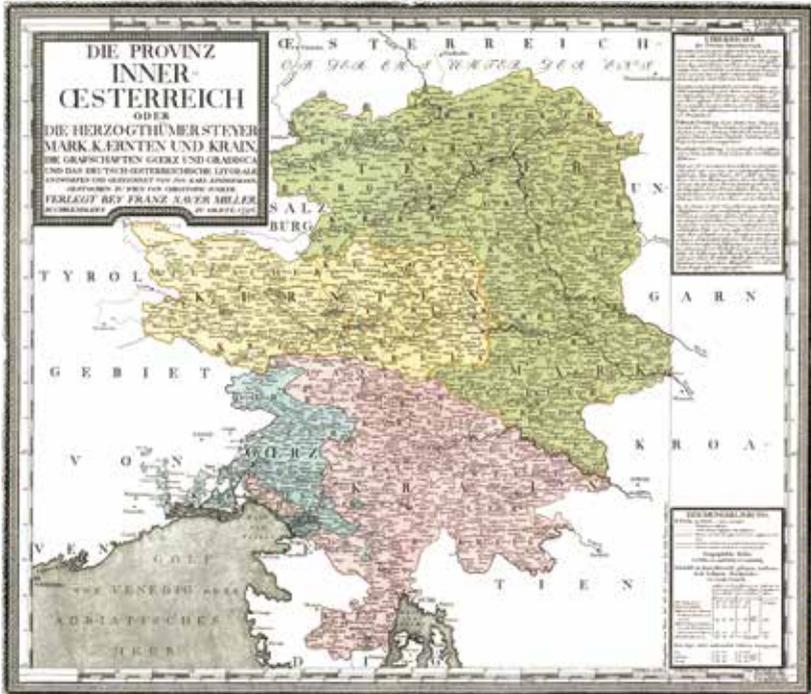


7 King Maximilian I signed the decree on the exile of Jews from Styria and Wiener Neustadt and Neunkirchen to exhortations of the Styrian States in exchange for 38 thousand guldens. In the decree, as the main reasons for the exile he stated the desecration of hosts, ritual murders of Christian children and forgeries of charters and seals. (Exile charter, 18. 3. 1496, Donauwörth, StLA, Laa. A., Urkunden, A-017 I)



8 Due to the short time given until their final departure, the Jews were not able to exact all the debts and had to undersell their real estate. Some Jews sold their real estate just before the due date, one of them being Chaym, son of Gärell from Maribor who together with his spouse Milkha, daughter of the deceased Maribor Jew Briba, sold his property in Židovska ulica to the Maribor citizen and city judge Bernhardin Druckher and his wife Barbara. (Sale purchase agreement, 1. 1. 1497, PAM, Zbirka listin 1246–1869, št. 239)

Jews have always been a rather mobile layer of the population and have often moved. The Maribor Jews, as well, moved several times from place to place in Styria or between places where they had some business or family connections. After the exile at the end of 15th century, a part of the Styrian Jews probably first took refuge in Carniola respectively Ljubljana (until 1515 when they were exiled from there as well), a part to the territory of the later counties of Gorizia and Gradisca, a part to Trieste and different northern Italian cities, a part to the Bohemia and Moravia region and from there to Poland, and a part to the region of the then Lower Austria and to cities in the border region between the Austrian and Hungarian provinces.



9 Map of Inner Austrian provinces – the duchies of Styria, Carinthia, Carniola, counties of Gorizia and Gradisca and the Austrian Littoral – at the end of the 18th century (freely accessible at: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AvI\\_Provinz\\_Inner%C3%B6sterreich.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AvI_Provinz_Inner%C3%B6sterreich.jpg))

The Maribor Jews were Ashkenazi Jews. In contrast to the Sephardi Jews, they mostly used Hebrew patronyms in their names as late as in the late Middle Ages. After the medieval expulsions, the Ashkenazi Jews also started to increasingly use surnames derived from either patronyms, typical professions or personal characteristics either topographical names.

After they left Maribor, some Maribor Jews in the new places took up the Marpurg(er)/Marburg(er) or Mörpurg surname. The Mörpurg surname is the Italian variant of the Marpurg surname. It is supposed to have developed from the Venetian name for Maribor ('Mörpurch'). Among all variants, including Marpurch, Mörpurch, Mörpurg, Mörpurg, de Mörpurg and Mörpurg de Nilma, Mörpurg itself is by far the most frequent surname of the descendants of the Maribor Jews.



10 The preserved medieval charters prove that the Maribor Jews, as a rule, also used patronyms in personal names. With this contract the Jew Aram, son of Ismail (*Ysmabel*) from Maribor, sold his house and manor in today's Slovenska ulica in Maribor to a Maribor citizen called Hanns Vinsterstern in 1459. (Sale purchase agreement, 30. 3. 1459, PAM, Zbirka listin 1246–1869, št. 143)

There are no preserved sources from the early 16th century, on the basis of which one could identify the places in which the Maribor Jews settled after the expulsion. However, it is possible to conclude that the majority settled down in the Gorizia region and in Trieste. Towards the end of the 16th and at the beginning of the 17th century, the majority of references of Jews with the Marpurger surname refer to individuals and families who at that time lived in Gorizia and Gradisca d'Isonzo. The members of the Morpurgo families were later also among most numerous representatives of their communities in both cities, and the Morpurgo surname became more and more common in Trieste as well.



11 Before 1480, Aron/Aram from Maribor, also known as ‘the rich Aram’, moved to Trieste. Aron was married to Viola and they had a son named Isacco. He was in the lending business and trade and died around 1480. After his death, Isacco carried on the family business and his descendants took over the Morpurgo surname in memory of their great-grandfather Aron in the middle of the 16th century. Partly, this family tradition relies on the family chronicle by Edgardo Morpurgo, as well as on the privilege, granted to Isacco from Trieste, the son of the deceased Aron from Maribor, by Emperor Maximilian I in 1509. The privilege has been referred to several times in the research literature. View of Trieste in 1885 (freely accessible at: [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:Triest\\_1885.jpg](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:Triest_1885.jpg)).

In the environments where they lived, many Morpurgos significantly contributed to the economic, as well as the social and cultural development. Often, they were among the most hard-working members of the local Jewish communities and exceptional humanitarian workers. The Second World War broke their creative enthusiasm, many of them lost their lives during the Holocaust, and some families became extinct for ever.

According to the data, collected by some family genealogists, the family tree has included more than 2,350 Morpurgo family members so far. Individual Morpurgo families are not always related, however, they share a common geographical origin of their ancestors and the surname with which they carried the name of the medieval Maribor abroad.

Today, the majority of Morpurgos still live in Italy, however, they also live in Austria, Croatia, France, Spain, Greece, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, the United States of America, Canada, Israel, Venezuela, Brazil, Surinam, etc.

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12 In 2016, the Morpurgos from all over the world gathered at the family reunion in Trieste. At the occasion, they also visited Maribor. In the Maribor synagogue, they viewed the special exhibition on Vid Morpurgo, one of the most eminent public figures in Split in the second half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, and listened to a lecture on his engagement in the development of the Ampelea company. (Private archive, photo by Mitja Sagaj, 2016)



13 Morpurgo family reunion, Trieste, 2016 (private archive of Peter Morpurgo, photo by Walter Zacchini, 2016)

# The long history of the Morpurgo family

Andrea Morpurgo

This is the story about a family which, just like a mighty century-old tree, branched out from Maribor across at least three continents. The protagonists of the story, the Morpurgos, carried the name that they got from the Slovenian city, into the world.

From Maribor, the city where, in the late Middle Ages, the Morpurgos dealt primarily with activities connected to money lending, and secondarily with trade, the family first moved to Vienna. They lived there until 1560 when they were expelled with a decree by Emperor Ferdinand I. They then split into three branches: the first one moved to Moravia, the second one to Krakow and Galicia and the third one to Gradisca d'Isonzo, from where, according to the data from the monograph *La famiglia Morpurgo di Gradisca sull'Isonzo, 1585–1885* by Edgardo Morpurgo, all the “Italian” families originate.

In 1624, Emperor Ferdinand II recognized “the services which Jewish bankers, ancestors of the Pincherle, Morpurgo and Parente families, offered to the former generations” and gave these families “his special mercy, kindness and patronage”. This represented waiting room for freedom which came in 1721 with the bull from Emperor Charles VI that granted the Morpurgos the privileged status of court Jews (“Hofjuden”). Some members of the family made the best of their position and left the ghetto in Gradisca d'Isonzo and took the path of economic and social success.

Some Morpurgos decided to stay in Gradisca d'Isonzo, for example rabbi Elia (1730–1801), who succeeded as the first silk manufacturer and merchant. He was also an insightful intellectual, maintaining continuous contact with Pietro Metastasio and rose among the greatest representatives of the Jewish Enlightenment. Others, for example Isacco Morpurgo (1764–1830), established the presence of the family in Trieste, which was declared a free port at that time, and developed a profitable





trade activity with which they soon made a large fortune. Together with Marco Parente, another Jewish merchant, Isacco founded the Morpurgo-Parente Bank, a credit institution and import/export firm connected to the Rothschild Bank in Vienna. He also invested in mines, industry and the insurance business. Isacco's sons, Elio (1805–1876) and Giuseppe (1816–1898), additionally increased the social and economic reputation of the family. With the Emperor's appointment, they became barons and were thus among the first Jews in the empire to be given this heritable noble title. They were present at the opening of the Suez Canal, Elio as the highest representative of the Austrian Lloyd and Giuseppe as the representative of the Trieste Trade Chamber.

The Morpurgos crucially contributed to the economic development of Trieste. For example, Giuseppe Lazzaro (1759–1835) was the first to start operating in the insurance business. He was born in Gorizia to a family of silk manufacturers. He spent his childhood and youth in Trieste and Verona. He was a poet, an important member of the Trieste Jewish



16 Certificate of the authenticity of the deed of partnership (Trieste, September 20, 1832) with printed version attached (Archivio Storico Assicurazioni Generali (A.S.A.G.), Presidenza e organi sociali, Atti istituzionali, Statuti, scheda 62394, photo by Duccio Zennaro)



17 At the cemetery of the Gorizia Jewish community in Rožna Dolina (It. Valdirose), 692 headstones were evidenced at the grave count in 1876. Most of them (139) belonged just to the Morpurgos. Their headstones are often ornamented with the motif of the prophet Jonah in the mouth of a big fish. (Private archive, photo by Aleš Topolinjak, 2017)



18 In Trieste, as well, the Morpurgos were among the more important and well-off families. Many of them are buried there at the Jewish cemetery. (Private archive, photo by Andrea Morpurgo, 2015)



19 Many Morpurgos are also buried at the Jewish cemetery in Gradisca d'Isonzo. (Private archive, photo by Aleš Topolinjak, 2017)

community and of different city institutions, but most of all, a genius founder of insurance companies: *Accomandita di Assicurazioni* (1814), *Azienda Assicuratrice* (1822) and *Ausilio Generale di Sicurezza* in 1831, on the bases of which the *Generali Insurance Company* was founded the same year.

Carlo Marco Morpurgo (1827–1899) from Gorizia also lived in Trieste. Together with his brother Giacomo (1836–1884), he created a successful and rich career on the Trieste-Egypt route. He started his entrepreneurial activities in Alexandria, Egypt, where he founded *Banca Mondolfo e Morpurgo* in 1854, *Banco Austro Orientale* and finally *Banca Triestina di Costruzioni* in 1871. In 1866, he received the title of ‘cavaliere’ (baron) for his charity work and added the ‘de Nilma’ attribute to his surname.



20 Carlo Marco and Giacomo Morpurgo de Nilma together with their spouses bought a building at the corner of today's *Via degli Imbriani 5* and *Via Mazzini 42* in Trieste with the corresponding land. They had the building demolished and set up a palace – today known as the *Palazzo Morpurgo* – in the neo-renaissance style in its place, designed by the architect *Giovanni Andrea Berlam*. Its last owner, *Mario Morpurgo de Nilma* (1867–1943), a well-known collector and traveller, donated this family house with all its assets, art collection, furniture and equipment to the Trieste municipality in his last will. Today the palace houses the *Morpurgo Museum*. (Civico Museo Morpurgo, source: <http://www.triestecultura.it/luoghi/index/id/36/>)

Other important branches stem from the Morpurgo family tree, the most well-known are those in Ancona, Salonica, Split, Amsterdam and Tunis.

The Ancona branch begins with the arrival of Sanson/Samson from Gradisca d'Isonzo (1681–1740). After studying medicine in Padua, he became a rabbi in Mantua and later moved to Ancona where he practised medicine and carried out the function of main rabbi. Samson was the author of an important collection of responsa, some of which were published by his son posthumously with the title *Shemesh Tzedakah*.

This branch was related to Davide's family. Around 1710, Davide (1682–1758) moved to Salonica and established the Davide Morpurgo e Co trade company which fostered trade links with most significant Italian companies, including Davide's cousins from Ancona Eredi Sanson Morpurgo.

The Morpurgos also established themselves as successful businessmen in Split. The forefather, David Vita (around 1710–1774) moved to the Dalmatian city from Salonica and founded a trade house, which sold manufactural goods both retail and wholesale. The family had a great influence on the economic and social life of the city, especially thanks to Vito/Vid Morpurgo (1838–1911) who owned a bookshop dating back to 1856, where the intellectuals of Split met. In 1868 he also established a very well-known Spirits Factory.



21 Morpurgo Bookshop on the National Square in Split city centre in 2013 (private archive, photo by Aleš Topolnjak)

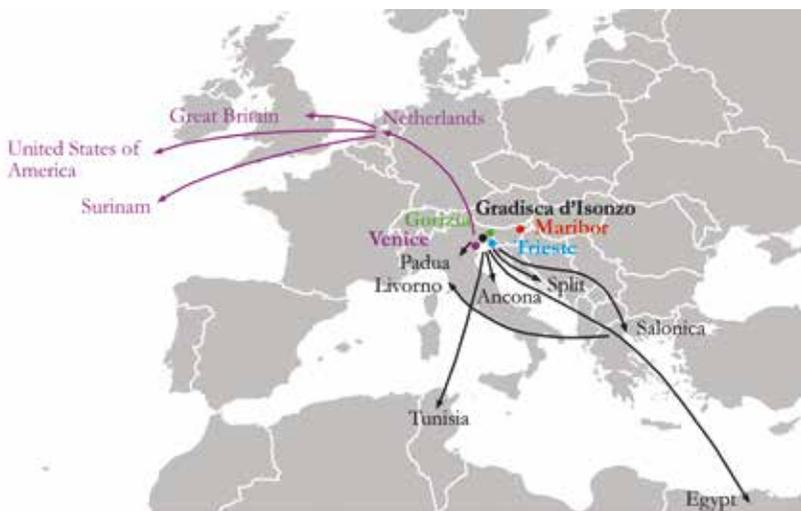
The Udine branch of the family dates back to the first half of the 19th century when a merchant, banker and currency exchange officer called Abramo (1815–1877) came to Gradisca d’Isonzo. In Udine, the Morpurgos also achieved success in the financial and industrial fields. Abramo was a skilful merchant and businessman. He became a member of the Trade Chamber and the management of the Monte di Pietà bank. Moreover, he was also appointed to the position of municipal councillor. Elio (1858–1944), Abramo’s son, chose a political path – in 1885 he joined the city council and was later elected as the first Jewish mayor



22 Palazzo Valvason Morpurgo in Udine was built in the 18th century. Complementary to its elegant appearance are the interior yard and garden with a loggia which was decorated by a cycle of frescoes by Giambattista Canal and Giuseppe Borsato at the beginning of the 19th century on the initiative of the then owners, the Valvason counts in the neo-classicist style. In 1871, the house was bought by Abramo Morpurgo and the palace thus passed to the Udine Morpurgo family. Its last owner Enrico Morpurgo (1891–1969), the son of Elio Morpurgo, donated it to the City of Udine, wishing that a museum could be arranged in it. Today it houses a gallery (Gallerie del Progetto) and the archives of architecture and design which keeps a collection of plans, models and photographic documentation of the Friulian architects of the 20th century. (Civici Musei di Udine, Fototeca)

in Italy. He was the mayor of Udine from 1889 to 1894, in the period of 1895–1919 he was a member of parliament and later, in 1920, was elected senator. In 1909 he was given the title of baron for his political merits.

The Morpurgos also settled in Padua. The forefather of this lineage was Marco Raffael (1761–1846). He was born in Ruda near Udine, then moved to Venice, where he went into banking, and later moved to Padua. Here his son Isacco Vita (1805–1896) was born. Isacco Vita became the representative of Jewish communities of the Lombardo-Veneto Kingdom. He was sent to Vienna to request Emperor Ferdinand abolish the restrictions which burdened Jews after the temporary freedom they enjoyed in Napoleonic times. Emilio (1836–1885), Isacco Vita's son, became a university teacher of statistics and the chancellor of the University of Padua. During 1873–1876 he was secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Trade and in the period of 1876–1880, he was member of parliament.



23 The map shows the migration paths of Morpurgo families. (Private archive, map by Anja Premk, 2017)

For quite some time the family played an important role in the Netherlands as well. The first one to move from Gradisca d'Isonzo to Venice and then to Amsterdam was Semaria Morpurgo (1756–1819) at the end of the 18th century. His first son, Moses Haim (1781–1838), headed to Surinam around 1830 and thus carried the family name to the other side of the ocean.

In North Africa, the family members settled down in Egypt, where some of them became rich, as well as in Tunisia. In 1846, lawyer and patriot, member of the Carbonari, Giuseppe Morpurgo (1820–1880), born in Livorno to his father Isacco (1782–after 1841) from Gradisca d'Isonzo, moved to Tunis where he founded the first Italian school, which remained open until 1863.

*The Morpurgos, the descendants of the Maribor Jews* exhibition clearly shows the extraordinary history of the family. In past centuries, its descendants left Maribor and headed on numerous paths where they left an important mark on the history of Judaism. Pieces of biographies of individuals who established themselves as important merchants, entrepreneurs, bankers, rabbis, physicians, politicians and artists, and descriptions of personal and family successes prove how strongly the Morpurgos influenced the economic, social and cultural development of the cities and countries in which they lived.

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## Biographies



**Sanson/Samson ben Joshua Moses Morpurgo** (1681, Gradisca d'Isonzo – 1740, Ancona) was a rabbi, halakhist and physician. He graduated from the University of Padua with a doctorate in philosophy and medicine, and also devoted himself to the study of Talmud and rabbi writings at the same time. He was awarded a degree as a rabbi in 1709 from the School of Leon Briel, the main rabbi in Mantua. Soon after, he left to Ancona. He worked there as a rabbi until his death.

24 Sanson ben Joshua Moses Morpurgo (*Dizionario biografico dei Friulani*, accessible at: <http://www.dizionariobiograficodeifriulani.it/morpurgo-sanson-shimshon/>, source: *Encyclopaedia judaica*, VII, col. 350, 1972)

Sanson was well-known for his meditations and opinions and was very reputable among his contemporaries. He published, for example, *Confutazioni alle Saette del Gionata del Benetelli*, *Ez ha-Da'at*, and a collection of responsa

*Shemesh Tzedakah*, which was published after his death. Last but not least, he proved himself also as a skilled physician: when in 1730 in Ancona, a pneumonia epidemic broke out, he treated all the sick citizens regardless of their religion and despite the prohibition by the Church, according to which Jews were not allowed to treat Christians. For his commitment during the epidemic, he was publically awarded by Cardinal Lambertini (later Pope Benedict XIV) in 1731.





26 Portrait of Giuseppe Lazzaro Morpurgo, attributed to Gino Parin, around 1930, oil on canvas (Generali Group Collection, photo by Massimo Goina)

**Giuseppe Lazzaro Morpurgo** (1759, Gorizia – 1835, Trieste) was a businessman who dealt in the trade and insurance business. He was also the president of the Jewish community in Trieste. As early as at the end of the 18th century, he was one of the first to introduce technical frameworks for fire and hail insurance. He also wrote a study on charity in which he outlined the framework for a special insurance fund. It was meant to be managed by an insurance company and investments were to be made by well-off sponsors who would thus provide income for the poor. In 1814, he founded his first insurance company *Accomandita di Assicurazioni* in Trieste. In 1822, he founded *Azienda Assicuratrice* and in 1831, he was the main initiator of the foundation of one of the largest and most widespread insurance companies – the *Generali* insurance company (*Assicurazioni Generali Austro-Italiche*).

**Abramo Vita Morpurgo** (1813, Gorizia – 1867, Trieste) was a publicist and translator. He was also the founder and the first director of *Corriere Israelitico* (1862), an Italian monthly magazine devoted to Jewish history and literature. Among others, he realized and published a collection of prayers in Italian for the Jewish community of Trieste (1855) and translated Haggadah into Italian.



27 *L'Haggadà illustrata*, 1864 (Comune di Trieste, Fototeca dei Civici Musei di Storia ed Arte)

The **Morpurgo Haggadah** (or Trieste Haggadah) is one of the most beautiful illustrated haggadot of the 19th century. It was published in 1864 in Trieste in two variants: in Hebrew and Hebrew-Italian. The Italian translation was done by Abramo Vita Morpurgo, and it is accompanied by 58 copper engravings by C. Kirchmayr.



28 Giuseppe de Morpurgo, 1888 (private archive, courtesy of Pier Luigi de Morpurgo)



29 Elio de Morpurgo was the president of the Lloyd Austriaco from 1840 until 1876. (Civico Museo del Mare, Trieste – Archivio dei Beni Storici ed Artistici del Lloyd Triestino, inv. ASLT 0003)

**Giuseppe de Morpurgo** (1816, Trieste – 1898, Trieste) was one of holders of the development of the Trieste economy of the second half of the 19th century. He was a banker, businessman, delegate and consul for Belgium. He was employed at Assicurazioni Generali Austro-Italiche, which meanwhile changed its name to Assicurazioni Generali. He was appointed director of the insurance company in 1850 and kept the position until his death. Together with his brother **Elio** (1805, Trieste – 1876, Divonne-les-Bains), who was then the president of the shipping company Lloyd Austriaco, he represented Trieste Trade Chamber at the inauguration of the Suez Canal in 1869. Giuseppe and Elio Morpurgo were both granted the title of baron.



30 Carlo Marco Morpurgo de Nilma, around 1864, photo by G. Rota & A. Kappler (Comune di Trieste, Fototeca dei Civici Musei di Storia ed Arte)



31 Giacomo Morpurgo de Nilma, around 1873, photo by Guglielmo Sebastianutti (Comune di Trieste, Fototeca dei Civici Musei di Storia ed Arte)

**Carlo Marco** (1827, Gorizia – 1899, Trieste) and **Giacomo Morpurgo de Nilma** (1836, Gorizia – 1884, Graz) were bankers, financiers and businessmen. They lived for a considerable time in Alexandria in Egypt. In 1854, Carlo Marco founded there the Mondolfo e Morpurgo bank. In the same year, he married Emma Mondolfo, while his brother Giacomo married her sister Francesca (Fanny) Mondolfo a few years later. Carlo Marco was the co-founder of Banca Austro Orientale which had its headquarters in Trieste and numerous branches in Egypt. In 1871, he then founded Banca Triestina di Costruzioni. For his charity work, he was granted the title of ‘cavaliere’ (baron) in 1866, and added the nickname Nilma to his surname. Carlo Marco and Emma had no children, while in the Giacomo and Fanny’s marriage three children were born – Mario, Matilde and Marco Antonio, who died as a child. Mario and Matilde also had no offspring and were thus the last representatives of this Morpurgo branch.

**Vid/Vito Morpurgo** (1838, Split – 1911, Split) originated from a reputable Jewish family from Split. He was a bookseller and publisher, the founder of the renowned Morpurgo Bookshop, a merchant, politician, industrialist, and entrepreneur who dealt with the production of liqueurs and wines and contributed to the development of the Split wine growing and wine trade. He was also the initiator of the first steam brickworks in Split, president of the Split Commerce and Trade Chamber, a member of the Dalmatian Parliament, the community chairman and the president of the First People's Bank of Dalmatia. In the time of the national revival in Dalmatia, he played an important role in the social and political life and development of the City of Split with his political and cultural operations.



32 Vid Morpurgo (Muzej grada Splita, Fond Vid Morpurgo, Arhivska zbirka, MGS VM - 13.d)



33 Elio Morpurgo (Civici Musei di Udine, Fototeca)

**Elio Morpurgo** (1858, Udine – 1944, ?) was an Italian politician. From 1889 to 1895, he was the mayor of Udine, then he became a member of the Chambers of Deputies (Camera dei deputati). In 1920, he was appointed senator with a permanent mandate. Besides, he was the president of two banks (Banca Cooperativa Udine, Banca del Friuli) founded by his father **Abramo Morpurgo** (1815, Gradisca d'Isonzo – 1877, Udine). He cooperated in numerous cultural projects and was very active as a charity worker. Even though he was a member of the National Fascist Party, he got discriminated against after the introduction of Italian racial legislation. On 26 March 1944, the Germans deported him, at that time being severely ill and blind, to Risiera di San Sabba, and from there to Auschwitz. He never got there, he most probably died or was killed during his transportation to the camp.



34 Salomone Morpurgo (*Storia della Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Firenze: Direttori della Biblioteca*, accessible at: <http://storia.bncf.firenze.sbn.it/direttori-della-biblioteca-nazionale-centrale-di-firenze-dal-1861-ad-oggi/>)

Salomone's granddaughter **Anna Morpurgo Davies** (1937, Milan – 2014, Oxford) was a comparative philology professor at the university of Oxford and one of the leading researchers of the Ancient Greece, especially the Mycenaean, and Ancient Anatolian languages.

35 Anna Morpurgo Davies (Sather Professor Portraits, accessible at: <http://www.classics.berkeley.edu/sather-professor-portraits>)



**Salomone Morpurgo** (1860, Trieste – 1942, Florence) was a philologist, editor and librarian. Yet as a student, he enthused about Italian irredentism and was the co-editor of the *Archivio storico per Trieste, l'Istria e il Trentino* and *Rivista critica della letteratura italiana* newspapers. He was a director of Biblioteca Riccardiana in Florence, Biblioteca Marciana in Venice and afterwards from 1905 to 1923 of the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale in Florence. At the University of Bologna, he lectured on Italian literature and was well-known for his research of the Italian variant of the medieval legend on a wandering Jew. He was also a pupil of the famous writer Giosuè Carducci, who was the first Italian who received the Nobel Prize for literature.



36 Benedetto Morpurgo (Clendening Library Portrait Collection, accessible at: <http://www.kumc.edu/dc/pc/morpurgo.jpg>)

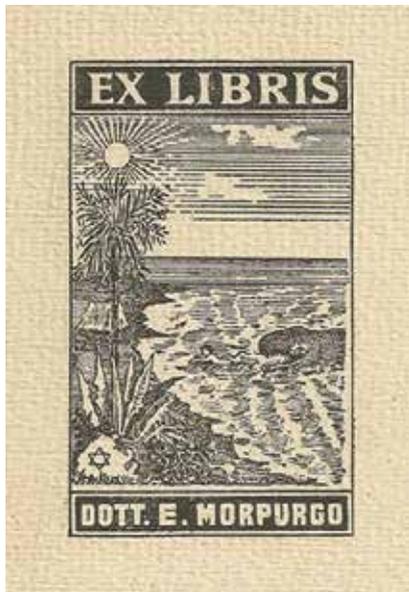
**Benedetto Morpurgo** (1861, Trieste – 1944, Buenos Aires) was one of the leading Italian pathologists. He studied in Rome and Vienna, completing his knowledge in pathological anatomy, physiological chemistry and clinical medicine in Strasbourg. He worked at several hospitals, medical institutes and the universities in Padua, Pavia, Collegno, Ferrara, Siena and Cagliari. From 1903 to 1935 he was chairman of the Department for Pathology at the University of Turin and, among other things, he ran the research institute for pathology at the University Centre for Research and Treatment of Tumours. He was a member of the Accademia dei Lincei in Rome and numerous other Italian and international institutions, as well as professional associations. After the introduction of Italian racist legislation, he retreated to Argentina and died there.



37 Edgardo Morpurgo, last two decades of the 19th century (A.S.A.G., Versamenti, scheda 28264)

**Edgardo Morpurgo** (1866, Trieste – 1948, Rome) was also one of most eminent representatives of the Assicurazioni Generali company. He was employed there at a young age of 17. In 1920, he was finally appointed president of the company. After the end of the First World War, the changed political circumstances dictated the reorganization of the company which Edgardo successfully carried out. At the same time, he succeeded in spreading its operation across Europe and the world, with the foundation of new branches. After the introduction of racial legislation in Italy, Edgardo was forced to resign as the president of the company and over the course of time, left all the positions which he had had. With his family, he retired from the maelstrom of war to Argentina and returned to Italy in 1947.

**Edgardo Morpurgo** (1872, Padua – 1942, Padua) was a physician, university teacher at the University of Padua, a bibliographer, a collector of Judaica and amateur historian. He authored works from the field of medicine, especially psychology and psychopathology, bibliographic works and historical works. He also authored a chronicle of his family titled *La Famiglia Morpurgo di Gradisca sull'Isonzo, 1585–1885* (1909). He donated an extensive collection of various Judaica ('Raccolta Morpurgo di letteratura e storia dei popoli semitici') comprising some 400 items to the University Library in Padua. Today it represents the majority of all Judaica the library owns.



38 Ex libris of Edgardo Morpurgo (private archive of Andrea Morpurgo)



**Fortunata Morpurgo Petronio** (1872, Trieste – 1956, Genoa) was a journalist working for female magazines such as *Caffaro* and *La Chiosa*, a magazine shut down in 1927 because it was considered dangerous by the fascists. She later became a famous writer of romance novels, writing under the pseudonym of Willy Dias. In her intense autobiography entitled *Viaggio nel tempo*, Dias retraces her regular meetings with Italo Svevo, James Joyce and Franz Kafka, her stays in Vienna, and Gorizia where she married, her life in short, over two wars: youthful irredentism that transformed in the course of her life into convinced antifascism and feminism.

39 Fortunata Morpurgo Petronio  
(source: Willy Dias, *Viaggio nel tempo*,  
Cappelli, Bologna 1958)



40 Portrait of Viktor Morpurgo by Ante Franičević (source: Duško Kečkemet, *Židovi u povijesti Splita*, Jevrejska općina, Split 1971)

**Viktor/Vittorio Morpurgo** (1875, Split – 1944, Banjica?), the nephew of a famous businessman and cultural worker Vid Morpurgo from Split, was the president of the Jewish community in Split up to the Second World War. He was also active as a humanitarian and cultural worker; he wrote poems, as well as the history of Jews in Split and a book about the life of one of the most significant representatives of the Jews from Split, Daniel Rodriguez. After the capitulation of Italy, he and his brother **Eugen** (1877, Split – 1943, ?) were captured by the Germans and deported to Banjica.



41 Umberto and Margherita Morpurgo, née Pacifici (1888–1935), pose near the lake in Genoa, around 1934. (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Liana Morpurgo Nizza)

**Umberto Morpurgo** (1877, Ancona – 1956, Ancona) was a bank manager, stock broker and the president of the Jewish community in Genoa. After the introduction of racial legislation, Umberto was no longer allowed to deal with stock exchange trading; however, he kept on giving advice to his clients in secret and thus maintained his family. Even after the beginning of the war, Umberto visited the seat of the community every day in order to see that everything was in order. After the invasion of the German forces into Northern Italy, one day on his way to the community headquarters, he met an acquaintance who warned him that he should hide immediately, since at the synagogue, Jews were being rounded up for deportation. Umberto Morpurgo's family started to hide by means of forged documents and thus survived the war.



42 Attilio and Maria Morpurgo, née Treves (1881–1961) (private archive of Andrea Morpurgo)

**Attilio Donato Moisè Morpurgo**

(1878, Gorizia – 1965, Trieste) originated from a Jewish family who traded with silk. In 1898, he was employed in the drug, colonial and grocery company owned by the senator and first Italian mayor of Gorizia Giorgio Bombig, and in the subsequent years became the owner of the company. Attilio was also an eager Italian irredentist. In 1919, he became director of the Gorizia synagogue and from 1932 to 1943, he was the president of the Gorizia Jewish community. Together with his wife

and youngest son Gaddo, he found shelter from the Nazi persecution in the vicinity of Ancona. **Gaddo Morpurgo** (1920, Gorizia – 1944, Forlì) did not survive the war, since the Nazis captured and shot him in 1944.



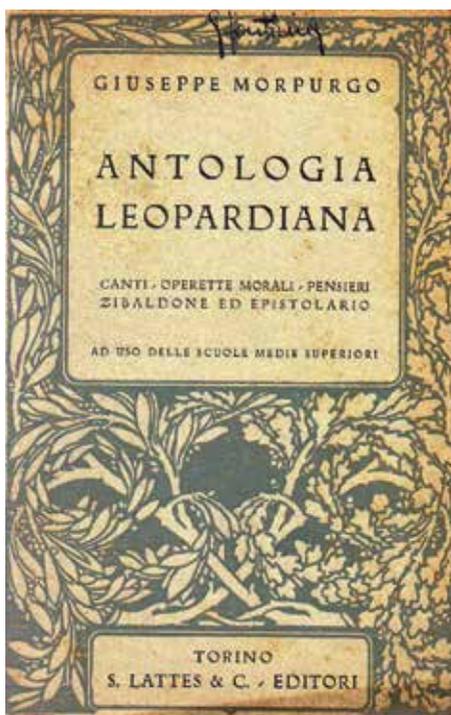
43 Gaddo Morpurgo (private archive of Andrea Morpurgo)

**Luciano Morpurgo** (1886, Split – 1971, Rome) was a publisher, writer and photographer. He spent his childhood with his uncle Vid Morpurgo and later wrote an autobiographical novel called *Quando ero fanciullo* (1938). In Rome, he owned the La Dalmazia publishing house and published numerous monographs about several Italian regions and places, collections of Italian folk songs, guides, travel diaries, postcards, and more. He was a recognised photographer and a co-author of the Italian encyclopaedia. He also authored *Caccia all'uomo* (1946), in which he wrote about the persecution of Jews during the war.



44 Luciano Morpurgo (freely accessible at: [https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Luciano\\_Morpurgo.jpg](https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Luciano_Morpurgo.jpg))

**Giuseppe Morpurgo** (1887, Ancona – 1967, Turin) was a teacher, writer and literary critic. He taught at a secondary school; however, after 1938 he was the headmaster of the Jewish School in Turin. He wrote works on school education, he also edited literary anthologies, including Vergil, Petrarca and Leopardi. He wrote two novels, *Yom ha-Kippurim* (1925) and *Beati Misericordes* (1930). His daughter **Lucia** (1920, Perugia – 2009, Turin) married the famous writer Primo Levi.



45 Giuseppe Morpurgo, *Antologia Leopardiana*, 1934 (source: <http://www.ebay.it/itm/X25-Antologia-Leopardiana-Giuseppe-Morpurgo-1934-ed-Lattes-/390953926765>)

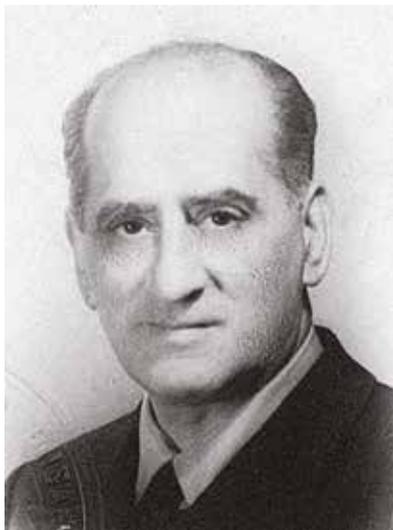
**Carlo Nathan Morpurgo** (1890, Trieste – 1944, Auschwitz) was the last secretary of the Trieste Jewish community up to the Second World War. With the beginning of the racist persecution of Jews, Trieste became one of the key points from where the Jewish refugees and emigrants left to go to Palestine. The Trieste Jewish community tried to provide them with any available assistance. After the Germans took over the control of Trieste in September 1943, Carlo did not want to leave the members of the Jewish community and kept on performing his function. In 1944, he was captured by the Germans and deported to Auschwitz.



46 Carlo Morpurgo, 1930 (source: <http://www.provincia.trieste.it/open-cms/open-cms/it/news/Fotogallery/Morpurgo/fotoalbumMorpurgo>)

47 In January 2018, a memorial to Carlo Morpurgo in the form of a paving stone, the so called 'Stolperstein', was set up in the immediate vicinity of the Trieste synagogue. (Private archive, photo by Annalisa Di Fant, 2018)

**Vittorio Ballio Morpurgo** (1890, Rome – 1966, Rome) was an architect and university professor. In the 1930's he became one of most prominent architects of the Fascist Party in power. Among the numerous orders with which he was entrusted, he contributed to the designing of the building of the seat of the National Fascist Party in Rome (1935), and he later got an order to work on the Piazza Augusto Imperatore (1937–1940) and within this project, also a special order to design the protective pavilion for one of the most precious monuments of the Augustan Age in Rome – the Ara Pacis (1938). Thanks to his connections to the leading representatives of Fascism, he was not a victim of direct persecution after the introduction of Italian racist legislation. After Second World War he mostly created abroad (Brazil, Haiti, Buenos Aires, La Valetta).



48 Vittorio Ballio Morpurgo, around 1946 (source: <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-95B3-SZL5>)

**Uberto Luigi de Morpurgo** (1896, Trieste – 1961, Geneva) was one of the best Italian tennis players. In the late 1920's he was ranked as one of the top ten tennis players in the world and the best tennis player in Italy. At the Olympic Games in 1924 in Paris, he won against the French favourite Jean Borotra, the Wimbledon winner at the time, thus winning him the bronze medal. Until today, he has remained the only Italian tennis player to have won a medal at the Olympic Games. He was also a member of the first Italian team which competed at the Davis Cup. In 1993, he was accepted into the International Jewish Sports Hall of Fame.



49 Uberto Luigi de Morpurgo, 1928 (*Tutti gli Sports*, Anno VI, No. 27, 1928, accessible at: <http://dlib.coninet.it/bo okreader.php?&f=3463&p=1&c=1#page/1/mode/2up>)



**Nelson Morpurgo** (1899, Cairo – 1978, Rimini) was a jurist and writer. In Cairo, he worked as a lawyer. After Second World War, he worked as a legal adviser to the Italian consulate and a counsel for the Italian Commerce Chamber, which he founded. In cultural and literary circles, he was well-known as a futuristic writer and a friend of Filippo Marinetti, the founder of the futuristic movement. Nelson authored, inter alia, *Morfina* (1921), *Il fuoco delle Piramidi* (1923) and *Per le mie donne* (1932).

50 Nelson Morpurgo, around 1930 (Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, Nelson Morpurgo collection, [ca. 1918–1940], Folder 21, GEN MSS 493, accessible at: <http://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3578383>)



51 Tina Morpurgo's Self-portrait, 1935 (source: Duško Kečkemet, *Židovi u povijesti Splita*, Jevrejska općina, Split 1971)

**Tina Morpurgo** (1907, Split – 1944, Banjica) was a painter. She had her first independent exhibition in 1931 and immediately received great acclaim from critics. She started attending a private school in Trieste and wanted to continue her art studies in Munich. Due to the ascent of Nazism and the economic crisis, she instead returned to Split and stopped creating due to despair. In 1943, she was transported to the Banjica concentration camp with her parents and never returned. The surviving members of the family and Tina's friends managed to save her works, and they were later put on display at posthumous exhibitions in Split (1974) and Belgrade (1975). Her opus is dominated by motifs of the views of Split outskirts and still life painted in a realistic style.

## Lucia Morpurgo Rodocanachi

(1910, Trieste – 1978, Arenzano) was a writer and translator, as well as a painter. She was married to the Greek painter Paolo Stamaty Rodocanachi. They lived in Arenzano (today a part of the Metropolitan City of Genoa) and their home – known as ‘casa rosa’ or ‘the pink house’ – soon became a meeting place of Italian intellectuals, artists and literary men, including Eugenio Montale, Camillo Sbarbaro, Elio Vittorini, Carlo Bo and Carlo Emilio Gadda. Lucia, passionate for foreign literature, wrote letters to many of them and thus created extensive correspondence. Upon the initiative of Eugenio Montale, she started to write and secretly translated for illustrious writer friends.



52 Lucia Morpurgo Rodocanachi  
(source: [http://www.oblique.it/manifesto\\_rodocanachi.html](http://www.oblique.it/manifesto_rodocanachi.html))

Among the more important poets and writers connected to the Morpurgos, there are Rachele Luzzatto Morpurgo, Michael Morpurgo and Primo Levi. **Rachele Luzzatto Morpurgo** (1790–1871) originated from the Luzzattos, a well-off Trieste Jewish family. She married **Giacomo Morpurgo** (1791, Gorizia – 1873, Trieste). She was the first modern Jewish woman poet who wrote poems in Hebrew and signed them with her real name. **Michael Morpurgo** (1943) is a famous British children’s and youth author and has received several prestigious awards. His stepfather was **Jack Morpurgo** (1918, London – 2000, London), a book editor, university professor and writer. **Primo Levi** (1919–1987), a chemist and famous writer, the author of *If This Is a Man*, in which he described the moving experience of a man who survived Auschwitz, was married to **Lucia Morpurgo**.

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# The Morpurgos, the descendants of the Maribor Jews

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### **Map of the migration paths**

Anja Premk (23)

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