Reverso da medalha comemorativa do Congresso

e de homenagem a Ibn 'Abdân de Évora

(escultura de Louis Philisteen)
This report aims to present two chronicles in Portuguese (allegedly translated from Spanish), concerning Cairo in 1735. The sequence of events describes a violent struggle for power in that year, leading to large-scale rioting. A prominent feature of these events is an armed attack on the Jewish Quarter in Cairo and the annihilation of the Jews. The importance of these chronicles could be in that they provide an interpretation for the hitherto unexplained rapid decline of the Jewish community in Cairo — wealthy and powerful up to the earlier part of the eighteenth century, but insignificantly small and poor at the end of that same century.

A serious difficulty in unreservedly accepting such an interpretation lies in that the facts referred to find no corroboration in other sources, perhaps because these (Arabic, Turkish and Hebrew) are unusually brief and unrewarding for the year 1735. Indeed, one might even suggest that the chronicles are nothing but a feuillet volant of the time. However, local color is so persuasively natural that one ought to delve deeper into these chronicles. A minute examination of internal evidence attempts to check details, under the following division: events, general information, geographical data, names of persons, technical terms, references to money, and statistics. While eighteenth-century chronicles can hardly be expected to relay precise information on every detail, the above analysis suggests that there may well be a certain historical substratum to the Iberian chronicles discussed above. Even if embellished and exaggerated, the data which they present appear to offer an explanation to the sharp decline of the Jewish community in eighteenth-century Cairo.