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Sephardi Jews in The Ottoman Empire

Aspects of Material Culture

Edited by Esther Juhasz

The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

The Israel Museum
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Greetings

I congratulate the Israel Museum on the occasion of its exhibition "Sephardi Jews in the Ottoman Empire," a major project of the Julia and Leo Forchheimer Department of Jewish Ethnography. Significantly, this exhibition has opened shortly before the 500th anniversary of the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain, which will be marked in 1992. The Jews expelled from the Iberian Peninsula and many of their Marrano descendants dispersed along the shores of the Mediterranean, in northern Europe and in the countries of the new world. But the Ottoman Empire in particular welcomed the exiles and their descendants, and Sephardi Jewish communities were established in the main cities of the Empire – Istanbul, Izmir and Salonika, in the Balkans and in Erez Israel, in Jerusalem and Safed. The Sephardi Jews, bringing with them their own language, literature and poetry, preserved their heritage through the centuries. This timely presentation of the material culture of the Jews of Turkey and the Balkans will hopefully not only serve as a memorial for the Balkan communities destroyed in the Holocaust, but will also help to bring the rich culture of the Ottoman Sephardi Jews closer to the hearts of all of Israel.

Yitzhak Navon
Minister of Education and Culture

Morit, Foundation for a Cultural Center of Turkish Judaism, congratulates the Israel Museum upon the opening of the exhibition and the publication of the book on the Sephardi Jews of the Ottoman Empire. We wish to convey our appreciation for the important research undertaken by the museum, and we hope that the exhibition and book will help in promoting and preserving the subject among the Turkish and Sephardi communities in Israel and among all of Israel.

Dr. Gad Nasi
Chairman, Morit

Acknowledgements

This book and the exhibition which it accompanies are the fruit of many years of research conducted by the staff of the Julia and Leo Forchheimer Department of Jewish Ethnography at the Israel Museum. The many years of work in Israel and abroad could not have been successfully completed without the blessing, support and encouragement of various individuals and institutions.

The contribution of Mr. Yitzhak Navon, Minister of Education and Culture and of Mr. Avner Shalev, Head of the Culture Authority in the Ministry of Education and Culture has been of particular importance. The ministry's Center for Integration of the Oriental Jewish Heritage, and Mr. Nissim Yosha at its head, and its Department of Museums, and Ms. Yehudit Inbar at its head – have supported the research from its inception and through all its various stages.

We received important donations for the research project from: The Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, New York, the late Mr. Jacques Levy, Barcelona, Dr. Davide S. and Irene Sala, London, Ms. R. Gomel, Montreal, and Ms. Marlyne Taub, New Jersey. Other, anonymous contributions were also made.

Members of the Sephardi communities in Israel and abroad were our main source of both information and exhibition items. Without their active support and unstinting enthusiasm throughout we could not have assembled a significant collection of objects or held an exhibition. Many of them opened their homes to us, devoting innumerable hours to giving us invaluable information. Many also donated or lent us objects for the exhibition. Space is too limited to mention them all by name, but we would like especially to note the help of Ms. Eda Amon, Haifa, Mr. Izi Baruch, Tel Aviv, Ms. Nina Beraha, Athens, Ms. R. Gomel, Montreal, Mr. Bill Gross, Tel Aviv, Mr. Gérard Lévy, Paris, Ms. Mathilda Serano-Cohen, Jerusalem, the late Ms. Sarah Soriano, Ashdod, Mr. David Recanati, Tel Aviv, and Mr. Moshe Shaul, Jerusalem.

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We are greatly indebted to the following people for reading and commenting on the articles: Dr. Olga Goldberg, Ms. Yael Hoz, Prof. Yedida Kalfon-Stillman, Dr. Hananel Mack, Dr. Leah Makovetsky, Dr. Rachel Milstein, Dr. Pnina Morag-Talmon, Prof. Bezalel Narkiss, Dr. Elhanan Reiner, Prof. Myriam Rosen-Ayalon, and Dr. Shalom Sabar. Ms. Vivianne Barsky, of the Israel Museum Publications Department, offered valuable editorial advice.

Many scholars and experts helped us in the research and the writing, including Dr. Tamar Alexander, Ms. Leticia Arbeteta, Dr. Patricia Baker, Dr. Jacob Barnai, Prof. Meir Benayahu, Prof. Esther Benbassa, Prof. Benjamin Braude, Dr. David Bunis, Mr. Rafi Grafman, Prof. Joseph Hacker, Prof. Jacob M. Landau, Dr. Avner Levi, Ms. Batia Ma'oz, Dr. Nancy Micklewright, Dr. Aron Rodrigue, Ms. Zohar Wilbush, and Dr. Zvi Zohar.

Various institutions in this country and abroad cooperated with us at different stages of the work and some lent us objects for the exhibition. Among these institutions are the National and University Library, department of manuscripts, archives and rare books, the Gershom Scholem Library and their staffs; the Ben-Zvi Institute and its staff and especially Mr. Avraham Hatal who gave of his time and knowledge; the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem, and especially Mr. Shlomo Avayu and Dr. Avner Levi; the Schocken Institute; the L. A. Mayer Memorial Institute for Islamic Art and its staff; the Center for Jewish Art at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem; the Eretz Israel Museum, Ethnography and Folklore Pavilion, Tel Aviv; Beth Hatefutsoth, the Nahum Goldman Museum of the Jewish Diaspora, Tel Aviv; the Salonika Jewry Research Center, Tel Aviv; Morit, Foundation for a Cultural Center of Turkish Judaism and Dr. Gad Nasi; Bar Ilan University, the Responsa Project; the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; the Jewish Museum, London; the Jewish Museum, New York and the curator Dr. Vivian B. Mann; the Jewish Theological Seminary and Dr. Menahem Schmelzer and Ms. Evelyn Cohen; Yeshiva University Museum and the curator Ms. Sylvia Herskowitz; Skirball Museum of the Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles and Ms. Grace Grossman; the Smithsonian Institution and the Museum of Natural History, Washington, D.C. and Dr. Gus W. Van Beek; the Jewish Museum of Greece in Athens and its director Mr. Nikos Stavroulakis; the Jewish Museum of Belgrade; the Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul; the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, Istanbul; and the Sadberk Museum, Istanbul.

Finally, this undertaking could not have been realized without the dedication of the Israel Museum staff. Esther Juhasz began the research in 1976 within the framework of the Survey of Material Culture of the Jewish Communities, a project instigated by Ms. Aviva Müller-Lancet, then curator of the Department of Jewish Ethnography. Miriam Russo-Katz joined in 1980, and the project was brought to its successful completion under the guidance of Dr. Rivka Gonen, the present curator of the department. The restoration laboratories, under the direction of Lea Ofer and Kochavit Shiryon, devoted several years to the preparation of the objects for display. The entire staff of the Department of Jewish Ethnography joined forces in the final stages of the work, to assist in the accomplishement of this complex endeavor. We thank Alia Ben-Ami, who set up the display, Orpa Brafman-Slapak, Batia Nathan and Tchya Sapir, Ora Schwartz Be'eri and Corinne Weil, and Ester Muchawsky. Other colleagues extended their valuable assistance: Carmela Teichman, Talia Aruch-Siton and Chaya Benjamin. To all these, and many others who have not been mentioned, I am profoundly grateful.

Dr. Martin Weyl
Director, the Israel Museum

Introduction

In this book the reader will find articles on topics that, considered peripheral to the broad field of Jewish history, have not frequently been studied before. Subjects such as costume and jewelry, and objects related to wedding ceremonies and to customs surrounding birth are not directly treated by historians, sociologists or folklorists. These subjects are within the realm of ethnography, a field that focusses specifically on material culture. Through the study of objects, both in their practical usage and in their symbolic meaning, the ethnographer attempts to decipher personal as well as cultural codes, and thus reconstruct the way of life and attitudes of individuals and of whole societies past and present.

The fact that the study of material culture is among the least developed aspects of history and sociology is perhaps due to an insufficient comprehension of the scope it offers. Objects are an inseparable part of human life in all places and at all times. Indeed, one of the best definitions of the human race, as opposed to the animal kingdom, is its being homo faber – man as creator, and indeed, since earliest times man has been shaping his environment through the creation of an ever-widening range of objects, both ceremonial and domestic.

Every object, even the simplest and most unassuming, can convey a broad array of personal and cultural meanings. On the personal level objects help us express our wishes and aspirations; embedded in them are many of our memories and experiences.

But objects are not only symbols. Being inanimate, they are the most objective testimonies of their time and place, a means for reconstructing technological and economic situations and processes relating to the individual and society. The messages contained in an object have many levels. Some are clear and obvious, others are hidden, often unconscious, transmitted in a non-verbal manner. The task of the student of material culture is to decipher the meaning of objects, and through them deepen our understanding of the society that made them and used them.

Let us illustrate the above observations with an example. A garment is first and foremost a practical object, designed to protect its user from the elements. But the use of a specific garment in a certain time and place can shed light on many and varied aspects of life.

One important avenue of study is the raw materials from which the garment is made. Locally found raw materials reflect the immediate geographic and climatic conditions, and point to the main economic activity of the local population. Linen and wool, for example, indicate the existence of herds and field, and may even hint at whether the society was sedentary or nomadic. On the other hand, imported raw materials indicate trade, including its intensity and direction. Once the existence of trade has been ascertained, a set of related questions arises, such as what were the agricultural or industrial surpluses created as a means of exchange.

The way in which the garment was produced – at home and by hand or in a factory by machines – reflects the technological level of the society. The cut and decoration of the garment, the colors most often used, indicate the prevailing style and the aesthetic needs of the people. Both the level of technology and the style reflect the degree of traditionalism in a society: to what extent it adhered to traditional techniques and forms, created and invented new methods and styles, or absorbed influences from the outside.

The study of garments is thus a key to the study of environmental, social and technolgical features. But that is not all. A comparative analysis of different types of garments and their changes over a period of time brings to the fore the role of clothing as a symbol of cultural values. Costume is a means of distinguishing between rich and poor, men and women, religious and ethnic groups. They are status symbols for the privileged and objects of imitation for others. All these aspects are part of the array of symbols that is the culture itself.

The study of objects can sometimes point at hidden processes, often unidentifiable otherwise. In our book the reader will find an interesting illustration of this point. While studying the Sephardi communities in Turkey, it became apparent that many of the synagogue textiles – Torah Ark curtains, Torah mantles and binders – were originally used in the homes where they served as dresses, blankets, pillow-cases and the like. These items were donated to the synagogue and re-sewn to fit their new role. The transfer of objects from home to synagogue, quite common already in the nineteenth century, was accelerated in the twentieth. How are we to understand such a process? Does it reflect the distancing of the community from the traditional values of everyday life, while at the same time holding on to the synagogue as a bulwark of traditionalism, a store house not only of the spiritual but also of the material heritage? Does the process rather indicate the loosening of attachment to the synagogue, or perhaps the opposite – the strengthening of the ties between the community and its place of worship? Does it reflect the dwindling of the community as a result of immigration? These are problems which would never have surfaced were it not for the ethnographic study of this particular class of objects.

We hope that this book will deepen our knowledge of the life of the Sephardi communities in the Ottoman Empire, and also open up new avenues for the study of their history and heritage.

Dr. Rivka Gonen
Curator
Department of Jewish Ethnography

Institutions and collectors who lent photographs for this book

Beth Hatefutsoth, the Nahum Goldman Museum of the Jewish Diaspora, Tel Aviv, and Morit, Foundation for a Cultural Center of Turkish Judaism
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The Jewish and National University Library Jerusalem, department of manuscripts and archives
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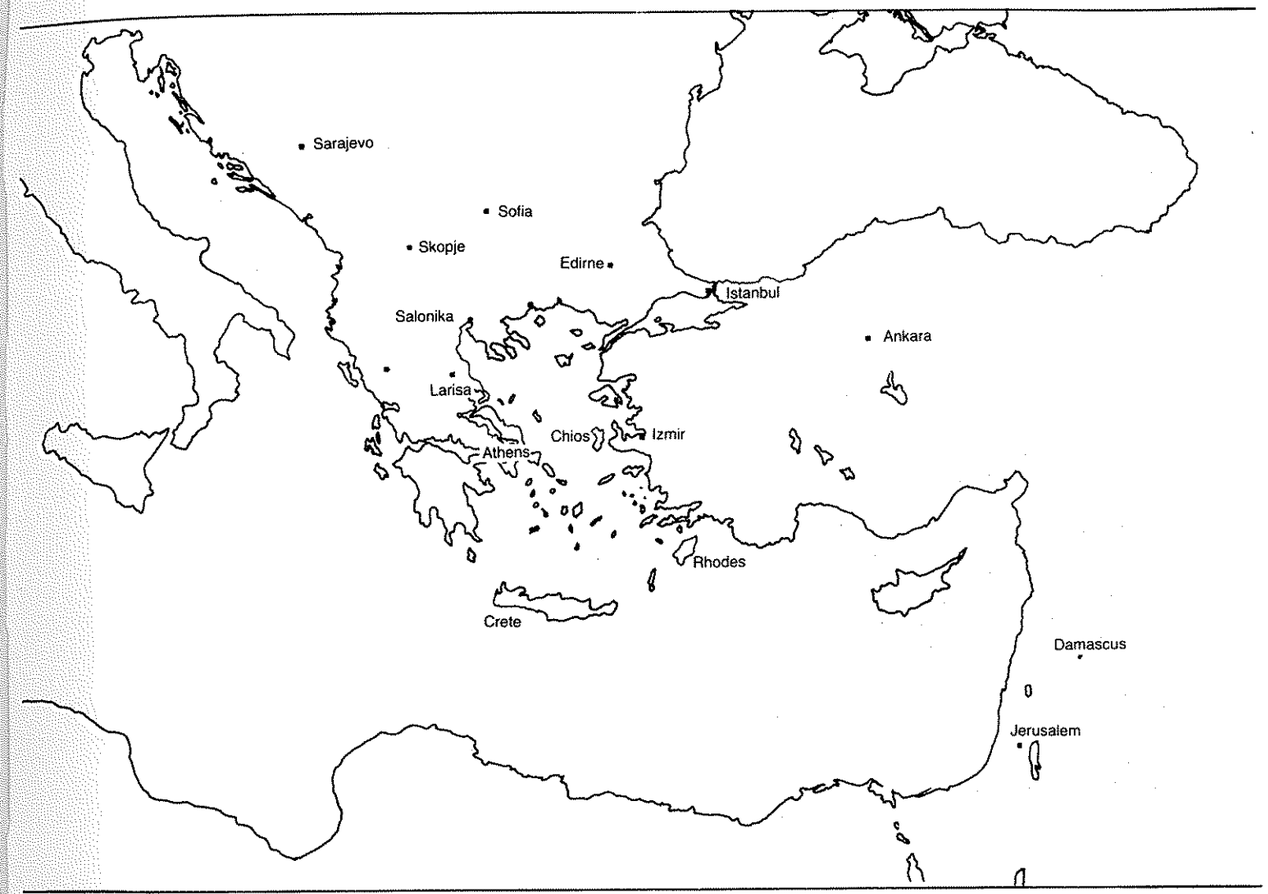
David Recanati, Tel Aviv
Ivan G. Schick, New York
Gérard Sylvain Collection, Paris
Nathan Shorr, Tel Aviv
The Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
The Textile Museum, Washington, D.C.
Victor Tary, New York
Warsaw University

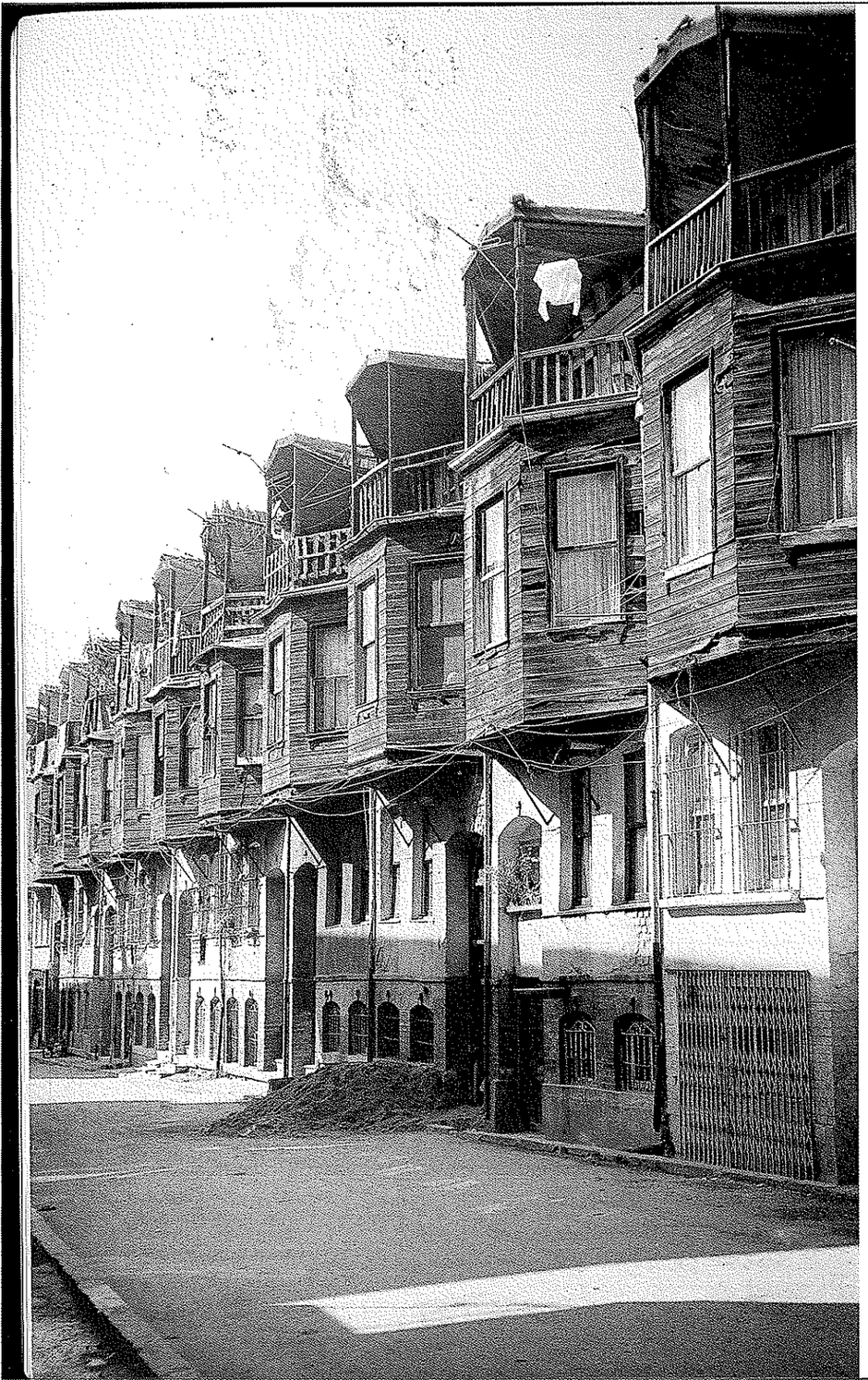
Many more members of Sephardi communities gave photographs to the Archives of the Department of Jewish Ethnography. Their names are given beside the photographs.

Abbreviations:
Photo. Arch. – Photo Archives of the Department of Jewish Ethnography, The Israel Museum
Slide Arch. – Slide Archives of the Department of Jewish Ethnography, The Israel Museum

L = length
W = width
H = height
D = diameter
All measurements are in centimeters

Black and white photographs are numbered separately in each article. Color plates are numbered throughout the catalogue.





1. "The Eighteen"
Row of 18 houses built by a Jew
and rented out to Jews
Ortaköy, Istanbul
Photo: 1983, Photo. Arch. 5949

Preface

Esther Juhasz

The Jews expelled from Spain and Portugal in the fifteenth century (called Sephardim) scattered and settled in many lands around the Mediterranean and in Europe. Despite their geographical dispersion, however, they continued to adhere to certain aspects of their original culture, such as language, and these common elements identify them to this day as a cultural unit. Tradition notwithstanding, the Sephardi communities underwent a natural process of assimilation in their host cultures, so that in time subgroups were formed within the larger unit, each with its characteristics and peculiarities, influenced both by the surrounding culture and by its internal historical developments.

This book is concerned with one of the most important of these groups, the Spanish Jews who settled in the Ottoman Empire. The articles deal with various aspects of their material culture, from the end of the nineteenth to the early twentieth century. In its wider definition, this cultural unit extended from Rumania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Greece, to Turkey and Erez Israel – all areas which were under Ottoman rule and influenced by Ottoman culture. However, despite certain common denominators, the group is necessarily heterogeneous, and it has thus been impossible to survey the different communities in their entirety. We have chosen instead to focus on those which developed around the center of the Empire: Istanbul, Salonika and Izmir, as well as Edirne, Bursa and Rhodes. The communities within the wider periphery, such as Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Erez Israel, although belonging to the same cultural framework, are mentioned only for purposes of comparison. In some instances, such as metal thread embroidery, identical objects were used in the same context throughout the Sephardi Ottoman communities. In other areas, such as the decoration of *ketubbot* (marriage contracts), local variation developed.

The objects which constitute the point of departure for our study were documented and photographed during a fieldwork survey of Turkish and Greek Sephardi Jews in Israel and their native countries, conducted between 1976 and 1987 by Miriam Russo Katz and Esther Juhasz from the Julia and Leo Forchheimer Department of Jewish Ethnography at the Israel Museum. The survey, which covered private homes and synagogues, brought to light objects dating chiefly from the last decade of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth century. Anything earlier is extremely rare, not only in private hands but also in synagogues and museum collections.

In each of the topics under discussion we have focussed primarily on the community which yielded the most material. From Salonika, for example, several complete women's outfits were preserved, while from Istanbul we were not able to find a single one. On the other hand, Istanbul was a source of a large variety of *ketubbot*. While the reasons why certain objects survived in one or another community are not clear, in some instances it was obviously the direct result of historical circumstances, such as the destruction of the Jewish community of Salonika during the Second World War.

A study of the material culture of the Sephardi communities of the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reveals three principal components: the Spanish heritage, Ottoman culture and modern European culture. The Spanish heritage, which serves as a unifying element among the communities, is more conspicuous in those areas which are not studied here, such as language and popular poetry, while in the material culture it is barely discernible. Nevertheless, in the minds of the members of the various communities it not only exists but is of importance. There was a tendency in interviews, for example, to attribute a Spanish origin or influence to objects simply on the basis of a Spanish name. Other links to Spain may be drawn through a comparison of stylistic motifs, such as the horseshoe arch in *ketubbot*.

The Ottoman component was absorbed into the Sephardi Jewish culture gradually. The adaptation to the mores and customs of the host culture, evident in the material culture such as costume and furnishings, tools and household implements, went hand-in-hand with isolationist tendencies. The tension which resulted from this conflict was evident already in the first generation of Spanish Jews in Istanbul. Elders of the local community, headed by Rabbi Moshe Capsali (1420-1496/7), issued a proclamation prohibiting Sephardi Jews from wearing their native Sabbath headgear which was not worn in Turkey. The Sephardim, as recent arrivals, it was said, should adopt local customs. But it seems that the latter ignored the injunction and, as in time they became more influential, continued to wear their special

headgear.[1] The complex process by which these two opposing tendencies within the Jewish community were reconciled has not yet been investigated. Only additional research, perhaps in affiliation with sociological and historical studies on the assimilation trends of Spanish Jews, will complete the picture.

Intracommunal pressures notwithstanding, by the end of the nineteenth century the Sephardi Jews were already well-rooted in contemporary Ottoman culture, and their lifestyle reflected the prevalent one in the Empire.

Situated between East and West, Ottoman Empire culture, especially Ottoman art, was exposed both to eastern, such as Chinese and Persian, influences, and to the infiltration of European styles and trends. Internally, Ottoman society comprised various ethnic groups and cultures. At the same time, the indigenous culture can be characterized by two main trends: the first originated in the sultan and his court and was widely imitated by the urban population, while the second developed among nomad or semi-nomad tribes and formed the basis of rural culture. Sephardi Jews usually constituted part of the urban population and thus the objects found during the survey generally reflect the contemporaneous urban culture. Many of these objects served the Jews in the same manner and for the same purposes as they served the non-Jewish population, and even uniquely Jewish artefacts, such as ceremonial objects, were made in the style of local art.

The effects of modernization and European influences on Turkey in the nineteenth century, accelerated by the Tanzimat Reforms did not bypass the Jewish community. The Alliance Israélite Universelle, which founded a network of institutions, especially schools, in many communities of the empire, was one of the main proponents of modernization. The exposure of Jewish society to modern European, and especially French culture was reflected in dress, household textiles and implements. The change did not necessarily follow the same pace in all the communities. In Istanbul, the capital, which was closer to the centers of fashion and innovation, it was naturally more rapid than in the isolated and remote communities.

The increasing modernization is reflected in the material culture in different ways: in some cases, a custom disappeared together with the object connected with it; in others the custom prevailed while the object changed. For example, the custom of displaying a bride's trousseau for the evaluation of the items before the wedding did not cease, but the contents of the trousseau changed with the new fashions in clothes and linen. Conversely, some objects continued to exist but changed their function as the custom changed. The *rozéta*, the hatpin, which at one time indicated a woman's status as married or widowed, continued to be worn on the breast as a brooch, an accessory to European clothing, long after the traditional hats were no longer worn.

In the early stages of our survey only the later, modern layer of Sephardi culture came to light, such as European-style embroideries, which were part of a bride's trousseau in the early decades of this century. Information received orally also indicated that the modern culture, which was eagerly embraced by wide circles within the communities, had completely obliterated the earlier. However, later in the work, especially when interviewing religious families where tradition had a stronger hold in all spheres of life, certain customs and objects that were not part of European culture emerged. It was here that we learned of customs and objects borrowed from Greek neighbors, such as the custom of offering guests *dúlse* (sweets) in a special set of dishes.[2] In other instances customs were similar to those of the Muslims, for example the use of an embroidered set of towels with which to wrap the bride as she emerged from the *hammam* waters in preparation for her wedding.

In the 1970s and 1980s, very few remnants of Ottoman culture were to be found in private houses. The surviving objects, mainly embroideries and jewelry, were concentrated in families of means where they were kept for their monetary and sentimental value. Everyday objects, such as clothing and tools, had almost completely disappeared. Synagogues, more than any other place, proved the repository of early traditional objects, serving as a kind of storehouse especially for textiles and embroideries, which were transformed from home to ceremonial objects.

While it is true that in recent years there has been a revival in the Sephardi communities of traditional customs, and the kind of item which had previously been sold is now sought after, modernity in all its ramifications has been instrumental in the final disappearance of a wealth of objects and customs.

Our focus has been, on the one hand, to reconstruct as far as possible customs and objects from the period before modernization and on the other, to point to the processes of change as they are reflected in clothes and jewels, in the bride's trousseau and in *ketubbah* ornamentation.

This study constitutes a kind of preliminary summary of the finds of the survey among the Sephardi communities of the Empire. The paucity of the preserved material on certain subjects, such as the home, did not allow for the systematic investigation of those topics. Conversely, in areas in which there is a wealth of material, such as synagogues, the research is far from complete. The inclusion of additional communities from the Sephardi dispersion and a comparative study of Sephardi and non-Sephardi communities, especially Romaniote Jews, in the same region, would be crucial for the attainment of a comprehensive picture.

Translated by Judith Levy

Notes

1. For the complete controversy, see Joseph R. Hacker, "The Jewish Community of Salonica from the Fifteenth to the Sixteenth century," (Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University, Jerusalem 1978, in Hebrew), Appendix 4.

2. See Esther Juhasz, "The Custom of Serving Sweets among the Jews of Izmir," *The Israel Museum News 15* (1979), pp. 72-79.

2. House in the Galata quarter
Istanbul
Photo: 1977, Photo. Arch. 3035

On the History of the Jews in the Ottoman Empire

Jacob Barnai

Fifteenth to eighteenth centuries

The history of the Ottomans, a tribe originating in Anatolia (Turkey), began in the early fourteenth century. Within some two hundred years, the Ottomans had conquered vast territories in Europe, primarily in the Balkans and Slavic regions, as well as parts of Asia and Africa, and had established a huge empire that would only come to an end in our own century. The Ottomans built most of their Empire on the ruins of two kingdoms they conquered: the Christian Byzantine Empire in Turkey and the Balkans, and the Muslim Mamluk kingdom in the Arab lands and Erez Israel. The majority of the new Empire's inhabitants were Muslims, but it also included a large number of Christians, as well as a Jewish presence. The population was extremely varied, comprising dozens of ethnic, religious, and national groups. Jews who were long time inhabitants of the formerly Byzantine territories were called Romaniotes (from Rome, as in the official name of the Byzantine Empire: the Eastern Roman Empire). The longest residing Jews in the Mamluk kingdom were known as Must'arabs (in other words integrated and behaving like the Arab population).

The capture of Constantinople (Istanbul)

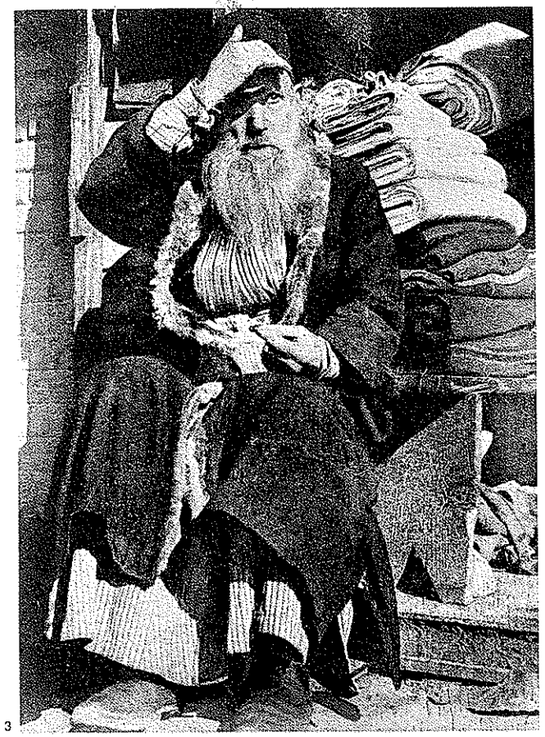
During the wave of Ottoman conquests, many cities were destroyed and others established in their stead. In the course of their military campaigns, the Ottomans augmented their ranks with young Christians they had converted to Islam. This is how the elite unit of the Janissaries (the Turkish army) was established. When they captured the Byzantine capital, Constantinople, in 1453, the Ottomans decided to rebuild it as their own capital city, Istanbul,and to that end they imported thousands of the Empire's inhabitants from throughout Turkey and the Balkans, including many Romaniote Jews. These deportees were called *sürgün* in Turkish. As a result of this transfer, the Jewish population of Istanbul grew considerably in the second half of the fifteenth century, but dozens of Turkish and Balkan Jewish communities were destroyed. For example, no Romaniote Jews were left in Salonika (Greece) after the deportation to Istanbul. Nevertheless, some age-old Romaniote communities in Greece and the Greek isles remained and preserved their traditional way of life under Ottoman rule.

The expulsion from Spain

With the expulsion from Spain (1492) and Portugal (1497), a new chapter in the history of Ottoman Jews began. Many thousands of the expelled Jews settled all across the Empire after the Sultan, Bayezid II (1481-1512), welcomed Jewish immigration and invited the refugees to settle in his realm. His reasons for doing so were probably pragmatic: the Sephardi Jews constituted a positive element, economically and technologically, and were likely to prove loyal subjects – unlike the large Christian minority, who were backed by Christian Europe.

R. Eliyahu Capsali, the sixteenth-century Jewish historian, describes the arrival of the Spanish refugees in this way:
"So the Sultan Bayezid, king of Turkey [i.e., the Ottoman Empire], heard of all the evil that the Spanish king had brought upon the Jews and heard that they were seeking a refuge and resting place. He took pity on them, and wrote letters and sent emissaries to proclaim throughout his kingdom that none of his city rulers may be wicked enough to refuse entry to the Jews or expel them. Instead, they were to be given a gracious welcome. Anyone who did not behave in this way would be put to death.... Thousands and tens of thousands of the expelled Jews came to Turkey and filled the land. Then they built innumerable righteous communities in Turkey and gave generously to redeem captives, and thus the children returned to their own country [as in the prophet Jeremiah, 'and your children shall come back to their own country']."[1]

In some cities, the Iberian refugees found the basis of existing Jewish communities. In Istanbul, for example, they encountered a sizeable, strong Romaniote congregation with a powerful leadership. Salonika, as we have seen, lost its Romaniote population to Istanbul, and the Sephardi newcomers found only a small Ashkenazi community established in the late medieval period. Similarly, other settlements con-



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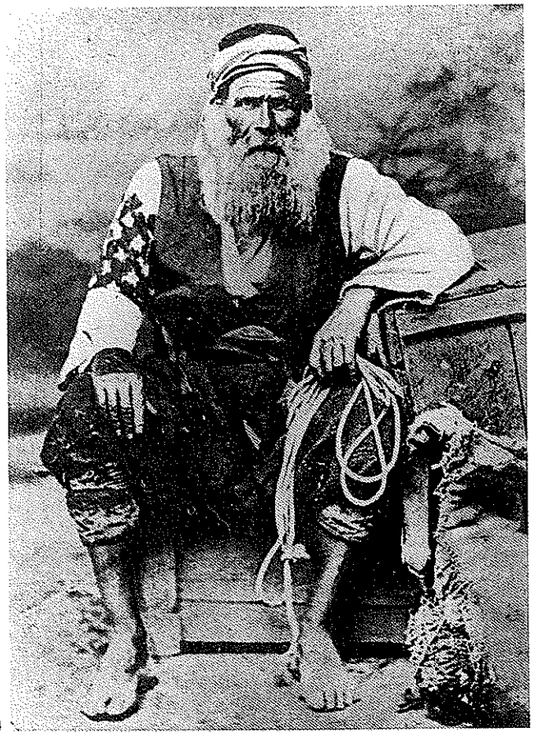

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tained only the remnants of the former Romaniote inhabitants. This state of affairs must be borne in mind if we are to understand the social development of Turkish and Balkan Jewish communities from the sixteenth century on.

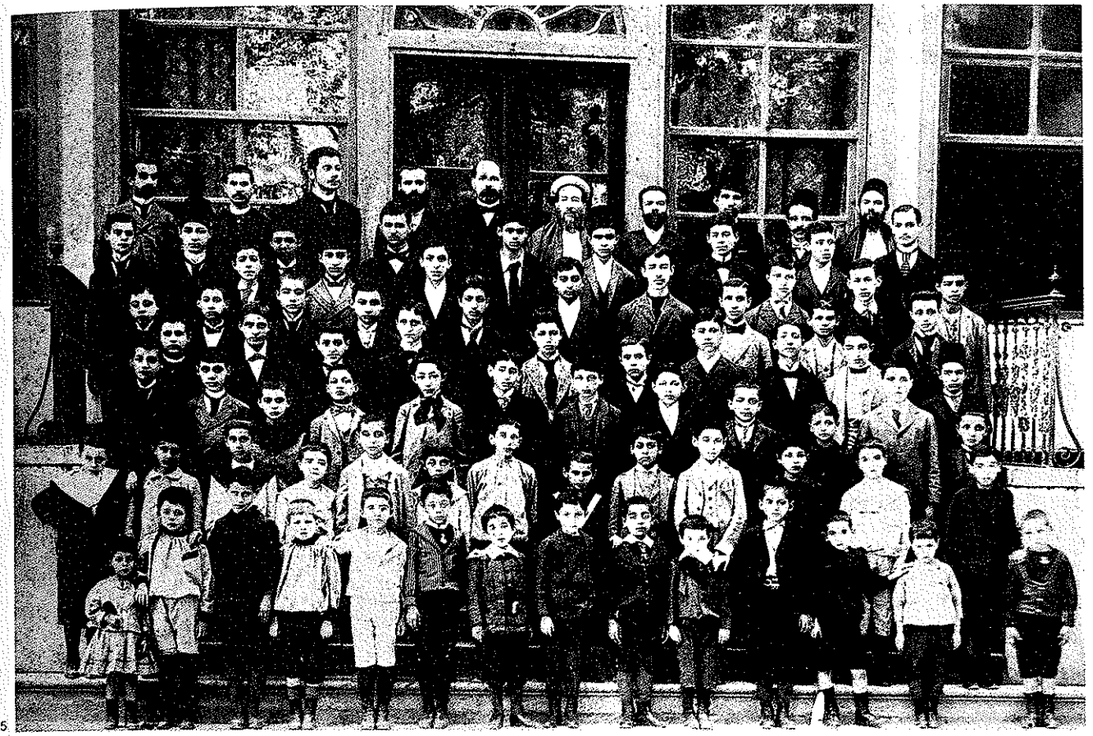
In Istanbul, the Romaniotes and the Sephardim – two societies, two cultures – met and lived side by side, coexisting but always in conflict with each other. They struggled for control of the communal reins, for the leadership responsible for establishing policy in day-to-day halakhic (legal) and social matters. The Romaniote and Sephardi rabbis differed on a number of central issues: family law; the position of *conversos* (Marranos); *kashrut*; liturgy and other religious customs. At times, their differences reached the level of fierce polemical battles and personal insults. However, in the period following the expulsion from Spain, the Romaniote leaders' influence dominated most communities, particularly when it came to halakhic rulings and the establishment of religious practice. It took more than a hundred years for the Sephardim to achieve hegemony and absorb the Romaniote community.

In communities where the Romaniote population had been removed – such as Salonika – Sephardi dominance was a *fait accompli* already in the sixteenth century.

The communities

Jewish communities in the Ottoman Empire were made up of various sub-communities. The Turkish and Balkan congregations comprised Romaniote and Spanish-Portuguese Jews, an Ashkenazi minority, and, at times, Italian or Karaite Jews. From the seventeenth century on, one also found Jews known as Frankos – merchants of Portuguese origin who had settled in Italian cities and then moved to the Ottoman Empire. In the Arab regions and Erez Israel, alongside the Must'arabs and Sephardim, there were Ashkenazi, Italian, and Maghreb (North African) Jews, and a few of other backgrounds.

From the sixteenth century onwards, the principal Jewish



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centers were Istanbul, Salonika, Adrianople, and Safed. The community in Izmir (Smyrna), which later became known as one of the Empire's most important Jewish centers, was only a small, insignificant town when captured by the Ottomans in 1424. It had no existing Jewish community nor did it attract Jewish migration at the time. It was only when Izmir became the Empire's main port city in the late sixteenth century that Jews began to settle there, eventually creating an important community in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Izmir community plays a significant role in research on the development of Ottoman Jewry in the sixteenth century (primarily in Turkey and the Balkans), since Izmir was the destination of many Jews from across the Empire and from beyond its borders: from Istanbul, Salonika, Ankara, Safed, and so on, and also from Italy and Portugal, with an influx of Portuguese *conversos* (like those settled in Western Europe) who returned to Judaism in the seventeenth century.

The seventeenth-century Jewish immigration to Izmir

3. Fabric merchant in front of his store
Salonika
Postcard
The Ben-Zvi Institute, Jerusalem
Perahia Collection

4. Jewish porter
Salonika, before 1913
From: N. Mayer, *The Jews of Turkey*, 1913

5. Alliance School
Salonika, before 1917
Photo Archives, Diaspora Museum, Tel Aviv

already displays various nuances of tradition and custom which developed not in Spain, but in the Empire itself. For example, Istanbuli customs may be distinguished from those of Salonika, which differed in turn from the practices of Portuguese *conversos*, whose return to Judaism was quite recent. The disputes dividing the seventeenth-century migrants from Salonika from the Istanbuli contingent involved dietary laws, ritual slaughter, and a host of other issues – mourning practices, the counting of the Omer, Tishah be-Av, etc.

Legal status

The Ottoman Empire's official religion was Islam, and Jews and Christians living in the Empire were accorded the special protected (*ahl al-dhimma*) status reserved for the non-Islamic religions. Yet, in spite of the official law, it is impossible to speak of a universal imperial policy on this issue: because of the Empire's vast size and long duration, the position of its minorities varied from time to time and place to place. In general terms, it may be said that the Ottomans' attitude towards non-Muslim subjects was relatively tolerant. However, as time went on – and particularly from the seventeenth century onwards when the central government's authority began to falter – the position of the Jews in Ottoman provinces and outlying towns deteriorated.

Since the Jews had originally been invited by the ruler himself, their position upon arrival was secure and comfortable. Ottoman Jews, unlike their co-religionists in Europe, were able to trade and travel freely. Already in the sixteenth century, many of them achieved key economic positions or filled important roles as advisors or senior officials in the imperial administration. Jews served as money-changers, treasurers and physicians. In some ways, their position – especially in the sixteenth century – was better than that of Christian subjects because the authorities saw the Jews as a loyal, constructive minority. Their eminent status occasionally permitted the Ottoman Jews to come to the aid of other Jewish communities.

As non-Muslims, Jews were bound by the limitations set down by early Islam in the "Pact of Omar" (which most probably dates from the eighth century): for example, they had to pay a poll tax (*jizya*) and wear clothes of a particular color, and they were not allowed to build new synagogues (although the restoration of existing buildings was permitted). In fact, these restrictions were not always applied. Most synagogues in the Empire were built during the Ottoman era, and not always on the ruins of older structures. For example, while there were only a few Byzantine synagogues in Istanbul, in the sixteenth century the city boasted dozens of synagogues – almost all built under the Ottomans, within an Islamic

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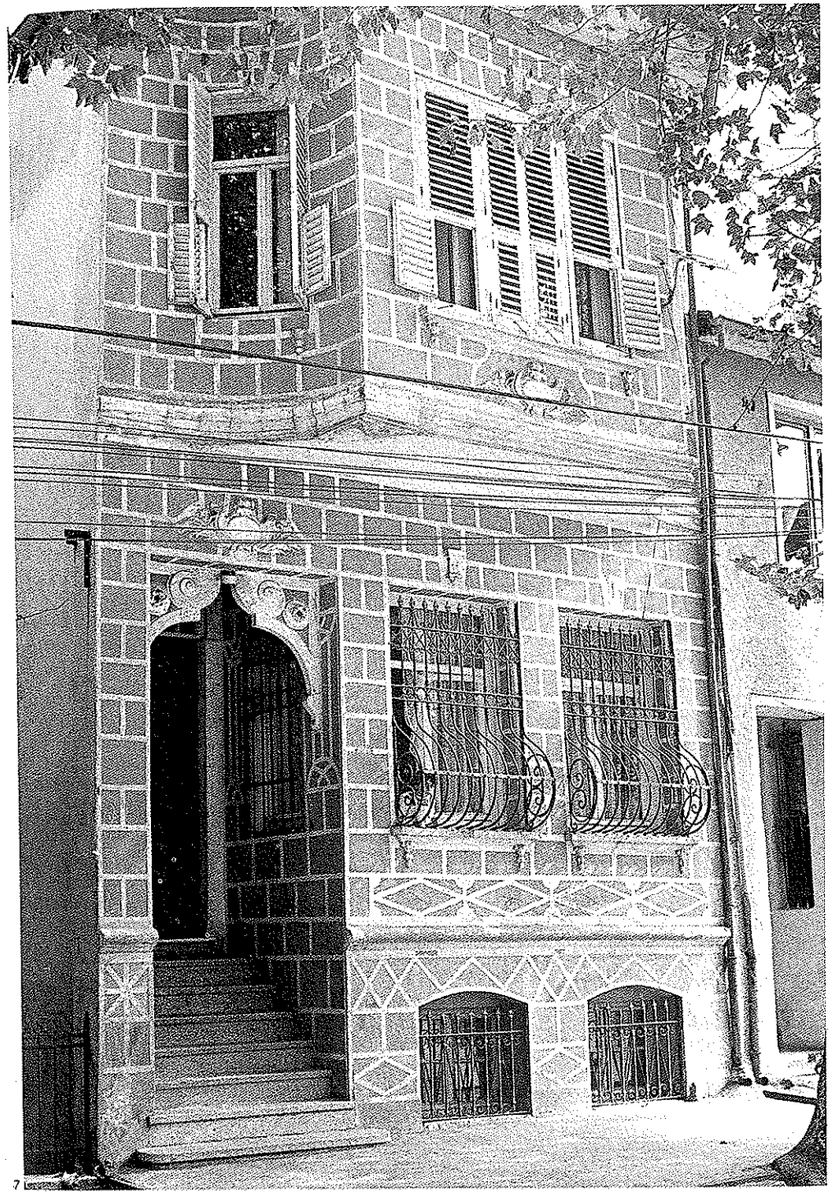
empire and in express opposition to its laws. Similarly, in Izmir, where there was no Jewish community whatever before the Ottoman conquest, six new synagogues were built in the early seventeenth century, and others followed later.

The Jewish communities generally maintained contact with the authorities by means of special functionaries known as *kâhya*, or sheikhs in Arab lands who were usually appointed by joint agreement of the communities and the government. The *kâhya* were Turkish-speaking Jews with a respected position in both the court and their own community.

In the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire was strong and its administration functioned smoothly; however, with the Empire's decline from the seventeenth century on, the central government also began to show signs of disintegration. Increasingly, the status of subjects in cities and provinces came to depend on the whim of local rulers. As the Empire fought wars in Europe and suffered economic crises, more



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6. Broom pedlar
Salonika, before 1913
From: N. Mayer, *The Jews of Turkey*, 1913

7. House once occupied by the Rabbi of Kuzguncuk
Istanbul
Photo: 1983, Photo. Arch. 5948

and more taxes were levied in order to maintain the army and political administration. During this period, the Jews suffered along with the rest of the population, although the tax burden on minority groups did tend to be heavier.

Communal organization

Spanish exiles arriving in Turkey and the Balkans generally found communities organized on the basis of longstanding traditional principles. In Istanbul, which (as we have seen) contained many Romaniote deportees, the community was divided into *kehalim* (congregations) based on the Jews' various places of origin in Byzantium. This structure reflected imperial policy, as well as the desire of the Jews themselves to maintain contact with people from their former communities. When the Sephardi Jews arrived, they adopted this system, organizing their own *kehalim* according to geographic origin in Spain and Portugal. Each *kahal* had its own synagogue, which served as its social and religious center. In large centers like Istanbul and Salonika, dozens of *kehalim* were established in the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries, and even small communities contained several such congregations.

Thus, initially, first years, Ottoman Jewry might be characterized as a community of immigrant groups living in their own areas and maintaining their own institutions and organizations, each group a sort of *Landsmannschaft*. As mentioned above, this communal structure also suited the authorities' wish to deal with population groups – via their especially appointed representatives – rather than individuals. Communal organization enabled rulers to stay in constant contact with their subjects and was particularly helpful when it came to levying taxes.

However, it must be noted that (apart from the case of the fifteenth-century *sürgün*) the Ottomans did not force the Jews to organize themselves into separate residential areas or *Landsmannschaften*; the organizational structure was chosen by the Jews themselves. Over the years, the demographics of the various neighborhoods changed as Jews left the separate *kehalim* and mixed with other Jewish groups. In the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, the congregations therefore lost their distinctive *Landsmannschaft* character and, in general, merely retained the old name (the *kahal* of Lisbon, the *kahal* of Portugal, and so on).[2]

Thus, what characterized the major Turkish and Balkan communities in the sixteenth century was their fragmentation into *kehalim* and the dominance of the latter over the one *kehillah* organization that represented the entire Jewish community of a city.

In the seventeenth century, this fragmentation began to cause problems, and the communities evolved a central umbrella organization to represent them in both internal and external affairs. In most cities, the *kehillah* with its centralized leadership therefore achieved pride of place: the *kehalim* tended to retain their authority in ritual and synagogue matters and day-to-day endeavors such as charitable organizations, whereas the central leadership of the *kehillah* assumed responsibility for taxation, judicial affairs, and contact with the authorities.

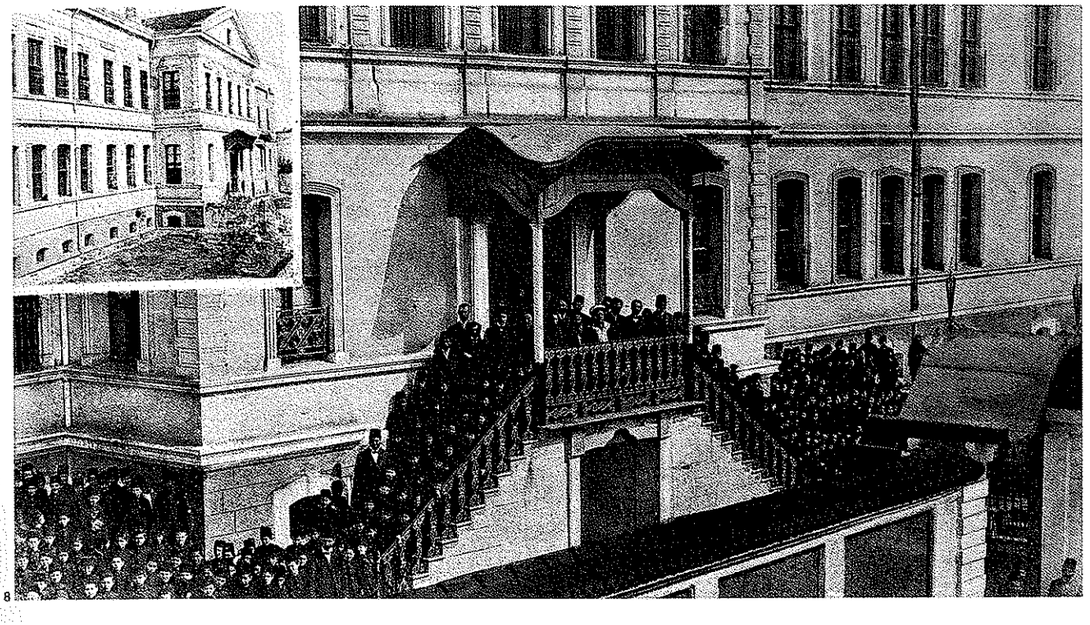
In the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, the *kehillot* did not unite to create a higher joint leadership, and each community acted as it saw fit. As a rule, a large community exerted influence over the smaller ones in its region, particularly over those in the same *sancak* (the Ottoman administrative division). The Istanbul community had a special (if not formally recognized) status because of its proximity to the central government. Provincial communities often had to ask its help in matters requiring contact with the central – and even the local – authorities.

Kehillah leadership was assumed, first and foremost, by rabbis. In Turkey, they were called *ḥakhamim* or *marbizei Torah*. The other leaders included *ma'arikhim* (tax assessors), *memunim* (*parnasim*, or functionaries appointed to administer the *kehillah*'s day-to-day affairs), and the *kakhya* (those appointed to deal with the authorities).

Each *kehillah* had a *ma'amad*, an organization elected by its taxpayers, which appointed its various functionaries and decided on important communal regulations (*takkanot*). Less important *takkanot* were enacted by the functionaries in consultation with the *kehillah*'s rabbis. Another important institution was the Jewish court system (*beit din*), which handled litigation among Jews when both parties agreed. Cases involving Jews and non-Jews – and occasionally cases where only Jews were involved – were judged in the Muslim *shari'a* courts. At times the authorities intervened in the Jews' judicial and administrative affairs, and therefore it cannot be said that the communities always enjoyed complete autonomy.

The center of *kahal* and *kehillah* life was the synagogue, where the community's religious, educational, and social activities took place. The synagogue was not only a house of prayer; it was also a house of study and the meeting-place for all sorts of communal organizations and endeavors. At times, the government used the synagogue to publicly admonish and penalize community leaders, even though there were regulations preventing government officials from entering synagogues. Occasionally, synagogues or *batei midrash* (houses of study) were mortgaged, since they usually represented the *kahal*'s only asset. The *kahal*'s income came from synagogue activities, endowments, contributions made by those who were called up to the Torah, and so on.[3]

Educational institutions were established alongside the *kehalim*: *yeshivot* and smaller *batei midrash* for the talmudists



who studied "for a living." The *kehalim* themselves also set up a network of different-sized schools (*Talmud Torah*) in which children – or rather, boys – received a religious education.

The *kehillah*'s administration was regulated by *takkanot*. These regulations and by-laws guided every aspect of the individual's relations with his community. Although their authority derived from the halakha, some *takkanot* were specific responses to contemporary or local necessity. Most regulations pertained to taxation, housing (property deeds), business ethics, morality and modesty, or the prohibition of luxurious dress and expensive jewelry.

Jewish communities in the Empire faced two systems of taxation. First, there were imperial taxes, consisting mainly of the poll tax (*cizye* or *harac*), property (house) taxes, and customs duty paid directly by the individual to the government. (Eventually, however, the poll tax was paid in a lump sum by the *kehillah*.) Second, there were communal taxes, divided into direct taxes which the individual paid on his property and income (as assessed by the *ma'arikhim*) and indirect taxes (*gabela*) on staples such as meat, wine, salt, and so on. Only the middle and upper classes were affected by the direct assessment, but all – including the poor – had to pay indirect taxes when they bought staple goods.

8. Alliance School
Edirne
Postcard
Gérard Lévy Collection, Paris

Economy

The Ottoman rulers seem to have welcomed Jewish immigration for economic reasons. The Jews of Spain had a centuries-old tradition of enterprise and involvement in all spheres of the economy such as international trade, finance, and the use of the advanced technology of the time in areas such as munitions, printing, and textile manufacture. Many Iberian Jews were highly educated members of the social elite with a variety of professions, including medicine. They were therefore considered useful, and their economic activity was encouraged by the Ottoman authorities. Since Ottoman policy embraced freedom of trade and movement, the Jews soon became involved in building up the Empire.

In Istanbul and a number of other cities, there was a significant Jewish influence on economic development. Jews attained key positions as government advisors and court physicians. Well-known examples are Don Joseph Nasi and Dona Gracia, who, as part of their wide-ranging economic activities, also farmed the imperial taxes in the sixteenth century, or Moses Hamon, personal physician to Sultan Süleiman the Magnificent, and his descendants.

Many Ottoman Jews had lively and successful careers in trade, both on the local and the international level. Some were tax-farmers. Others owned textile factories and employed thousands of fellow-Jews. When it came to international trade, the Ottoman Jews benefited from the presence of Sephardi Jews in countries beyond the Empire's borders.

The Jews clearly preferred to do business, whether international trade or industry, with other Jews, but the sources indicate that their economic activities really knew no ethnic or religious boundaries. For example, trade between Venice and various Ottoman cities – in Turkey, the Balkans, and the Arab provinces – flourished. Venice received lead and woollen textiles from Salonika, hides, wax, and clothing from other Turkish and Balkan cities, ginger, pepper, linen, cotton, and far-eastern precious stones from Egypt. In exchange for these goods, Venice provided the Ottoman Empire with the finest silk.

In the industrial sphere, two centers of Jewish textile manufacture are especially noteworthy: Safed in the sixteenth century (after which the industry disappeared) and Salonika up until the nineteenth century.

Economic, and, to a great extent, social life in the Ottoman Empire revolved around the guild. The guilds even had elected bodies that acted as their representatives to the government. In the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, besides the many mixed guilds with members of all religions, there were also numerous Jewish guilds. Trading and artisan guilds (in Turkish, *esnaf*, *hirfet*, *taife*, and *rofit*) shared the means of production and the retail monopolies, and also provided a strong support system of charity and mutual aid for their members. Important Jewish guilds included: makers of silver buttons; boatmen; musicians and entertainers; butchers; goldsmiths and silversmiths; metalworkers; druggists and perfumers; alehouse-owners, silver thread-makers, silk- and cloth- dyers, cheese- and yogurt-makers, wool-cleaners; sellers of meat scraps; fishermen; and dock-workers.

As a rule, it might be said that as long as the Empire remained politically and economically stable, its Jewish communities did not face any severe social or class struggles. It is only around the middle of the eighteenth century that we begin to see cracks in the Jewish social structure, and these may be traced in part to the general economic crisis.

Intellectual and cultural life

The Ladino-speaking exiles from the Iberian peninsula brought with them a rich tradition of creativity that had peaked in medieval Spain; moreover, they brought printing presses (along with Hebrew characters) and were the first to operate such presses in the Ottoman Empire. In 1494, two years after the expulsion from Spain, they had already established their first printing press in Istanbul. There was great variety to the Jewish works published in the Empire, but the dominant types of literature from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century were rabbinic, in particular halakhic and kabbalistic, writings. The nineteenth century saw a proliferation of Ladino literature, primarily journalism and belletristic writing.

The Sephardi exiles and their descendants established their most important intellectual centers in Safed, Salonika, and Istanbul in the sixteenth century, and in Izmir in the seventeenth century. In Safed, with its houses of study and great sages, R. Joseph Karo wrote the *Shulḥan Arukh*, the foundation on which the halakha of subsequent generations was built.

The *batei midrash* in sixteenth-century Safed also produced the kabbala of R. Iẓḥak Luria (*Ha-Ari*) and his disciples, giving a hitherto-unparalleled momentum to Jewish mysticism.

The Ottoman conquests and the expulsion from Spain created widespread messianic speculation among sixteenth-century Jews. Against this background of ferment and expectation, the rabbis of Safed attempted, as a messianic act, to reinstate the traditional authority of the Sanhedrin (*semikhah*). And then, in the mid-seventeenth century, the greatest messianic movement of Jewish history, Sabbateanism, was born in Turkey and went on to engulf the entire Jewish world.

The founder of this movement was Shabbetai Ẓvi, born in Izmir in 1626; his message was developed primarily by his prophet, Nathan of Gaza, and other disciples of antinomian messianism. The profound effects of Sabbateanism rocked

the Jewish world in the eighteenth century, and the movement was particularly strong in Turkey and the Balkans. In Turkey, many Jews continued to believe in Shabbetai Ẓvi even after his conversion to Islam (1666) and his death (1676), and hundreds of them converted in his wake and astablished the *Dönme* (Turkish for "converts"), a sect that survived into the twentieth century with its center in Salonika. On the public, visible level, the *Dönme* were entirely Muslim – in their names, dress, and religion – but at home, they practiced a Sabbatean way of life which included Jewish traditions and customs.

Links to Erez Israel

The Turkish and Balkan communities had extensive links with the Jewish population of Erez Israel, also controlled by the Ottomans. In part, the links were really family ties, since many of the Spanish exiles had friends and relatives who came to the Holy Land. Their bond was not only one of financial

9. "Oun Kapan Square in Salonika"
Postcard
The Ben-Zvi Institute, Jerusalem
Perahia Collection

support; hundreds and thousands of Ottoman Jews also went on pilgrimages to the holy sites (*ziyara*). Emissaries (*shaddarim*) from Erez Israel visited the Turkish and Balkan communities regularly, sometimes staying on as communal rabbis. The connection with Erez Israel was strongest in the eighteenth century when the Istanbul Committee Officials of Erez Israel, made up of the Jewish elite of Istanbul, was established. The Officials administered contributions to the Jewish settlement in Erez Israel and organized immigration and pilgrimages to the Holy Land.

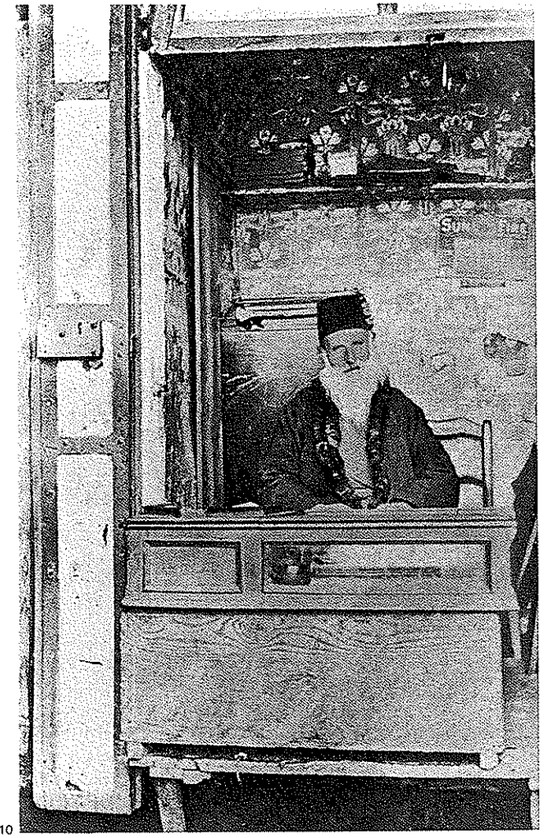
The Istanbul Committee also represented the settlement to the central government in Istanbul and the local authorities in Damascus and Sidon, and, in fact, it dominated the community in Erez Israel. For example, the Jewish settlement in Tiberias was restored in 1740 by R. Hayyim Abulafia from Izmir, with the assistance of the Galilean governor, Dahir al-Umar, and through the mediation of the Istanbul Committee Officials.

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries

The Ottoman decline from the seventeenth century onwards, during which the Empire suffered economically and militarily and slowly lost territory in Europe, was a long, drawn-out affair. It thus did not affect the Jewish population immediately. It is only in the second half of the eighteenth century that we see the first signs of crisis, affecting even the central Jewish communities. For example, the three largest communities, Istanbul, Salonika, and Izmir, accumulated substantial debts from this period on. The financial crisis forced the *kehillah* to raise taxes levied from its members, and thus produced a degree of social unrest.

Economic decline was accompanied by increased social tension, both internal and external. In the nineteenth century, the confrontation between Jews and Christians (Greek Christians and Armenians) in Turkish and Balkan towns became more and more pronounced. The tension began with intense economic competition and developed into religious hostility. The Christian community, which shared the legal status of *dhimma* (non-Muslims) with the Jews, became stronger and stronger as the Empire declined, due to European penetration and minority nationalist (primarily Greek) rebellions in the Balkans. In 1830, the Greeks achieved sovereignty over a large portion of Greek territory, although Salonika and Macedonia remained under Ottoman rule until shortly before the First World War (1912).

As a result of the new situation, the Christians, backed by the European powers and their diplomatic envoys in the Ottoman Empire, obtained key economic and political posts and began to create their own national and religious organizations. This change had negative consequences for the Jews: not only were they overshadowed economically, but the Christians threatened them with persecution and blood libels, which were on the increase during the nineteenth century.



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10. Jewish money-changer
Salonika, before 1913
From: N. Mayer, *The Jews of Turkey*, 1913

11. "Type of Old Jew"
Salonika, c. 1915
Postcard
Gérard Lévy Collection, Paris

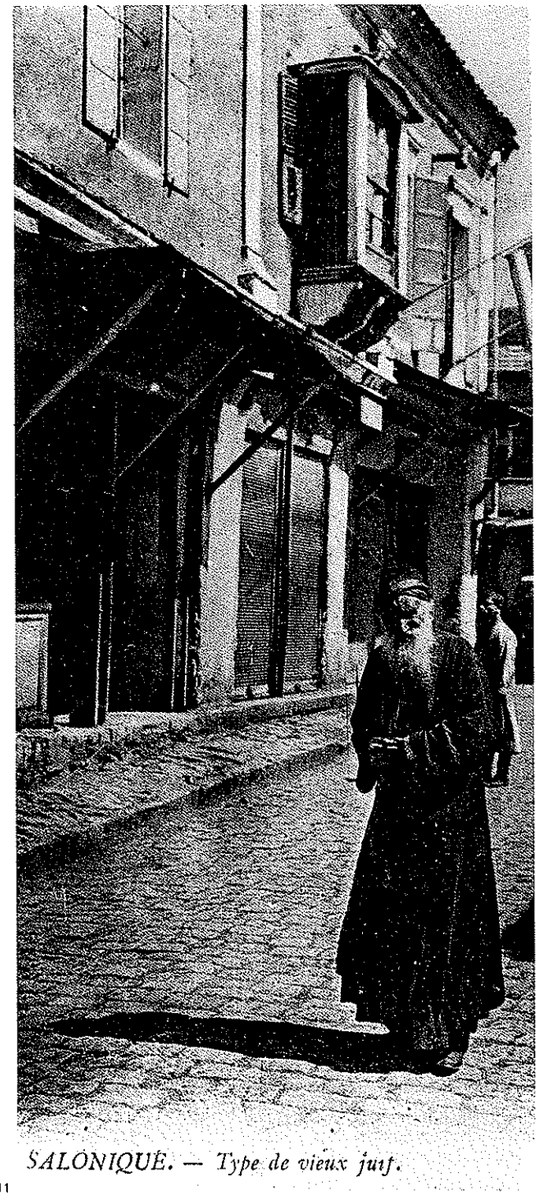
The best-known case is the Damascus blood libel of 1840; in fact, throughout the nineteenth century, there were dozens of blood libels across Turkey and the Aegean Islands. It was the Ottoman rulers who tried to protect, with varying degrees of success, their Jewish subjects.

In the very same period, the late eighteenth century, the Jewish communities suffered internal crises. Acute class differences led to unrest and increased class struggle in the larger communities. The economic crisis had created a poor proletariat of considerable size. These workers, who were usually guild members, rebelled against the veteran establishment of the wealthy and wise that they had in fact been subsidizing. They demanded representation in the *kehillah* leadership, which traditionally included only wealthy or prestigious families and was determined on a dynastic basis. This fierce struggle damaged the status of the traditional leadership. The position of the rabbinical leadership was also affected by the economic crisis, and the spiritual-intellectual life of Ottoman Jewry deteriorated.

Demography and economics

In the nineteenth-twentieth centuries, the principal Jewish centers continued to be Istanbul, Salonika, and Izmir, but the communities underwent demographic transformations. The Jewish population of Salonika grew tremendously in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, so that the community numbered approximately seventy-five thousand (as opposed to fifty thousand in Istanbul and twenty thousand in Izmir). It seems that this sudden growth had two main causes: the Greek uprisings, which led Jews to leave Greek Balkan territories and move to Salonika, still under Turkish rule, and the rapid economic development of Macedonia, the geographic bridge between Europe and the Ottoman Empire. Thus, just when the Turkish Jewish communities faced economic and social decline, Salonika became a thriving center, fully recovered from the early nineteenth-century slump caused by the disbanding of the Janissaries in 1826 and its disastrous consequences for the Jewish textile industry which had provided the army with its uniforms.

After the Greek rebellion, Macedonia began to produce and export tobacco, and Jews dominated the developing tobacco industry, as both bosses and workers. Jews also controlled the port in Salonika. Thousands were employed in the various occupations it generated: there were Jewish porters, customs brokers, and ship-owners, and on the Sabbath the port



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actually shut down. Because of the great number and stable economic position of Salonika's Jews at this time, the city was called "the Balkan Jerusalem."

Although the Jewish economic position elsewhere in Turkey was deteriorating, Jews were still involved in many different occupations and branches of trade. However, their work was less intensive and, financially, much less rewarding than before.

A Viennese Jewish traveller, L.A. Frankl, recorded the following list of Jewish occupations in Istanbul in 1856: "A great many of them are employed in manual labour of different kinds: 100 masons, 150 glaziers, 400 nailers, 1,000 tinsmiths, 2 proprietors of hot-houses, 150 manufacturers of mirrors, 2 manufactureres of cotton thread, 100 manufacturers of silk lace, 500 manufacturers of gold and silk lace, 180 dyers of cloth and silk, 100 shoemakers, 500 tailors, 100 furriers, 50 embroiderers in gold and silver, 150 gold and silver-smiths, 1 polisher of jewels, 200 enchasers of rubies and emeralds, 900 fishermen, 100 *restaurateurs*, 550 pastry cooks, 100 sugar-bakers, 200 distillers of brandy, 50 tobacco-cutters, 100 gunsmiths, 300 manufacturers of weights and measures, 1 engineer, 1,000 bookbinders, 20 clerks, 500 physicians, 40 surgeons, 700 barbers, 50 apothecaries, 500 musicians, and 10 rope-dancers."[4]

The reforms

In the nineteenth century the Ottoman Empire instituted a number of reforms, partly at the instigation of modernizing elements in the court and army, but primarily as a result of European influence and expansion in the disintegrating Empire known as "the sick man of The Bosphoros." These reforms (called the *Tanzimat*), designed to put the tottering Ottoman Empire back on its feet, found the Jewish community in a state of social and economic crisis.

The European powers pressured the Ottomans to adopt reforms in administration, government structure, and the status of non-Muslim subjects because they wished to implement post-1789 principles of government efficiency in Turkey. In addition, however, this pressure stemmed no less from their desire to gain rights for their "protégés," the Empire's many Christian subjects. The Jews were therefore unintended beneficiaries, as they acquired citizenship and an improved status along with the Christians. Instituting the reforms, which were outlined in two edicts (firmans) of 1839 (the *hatti-i sherif* of the *gülhane*) and 1856 (the *hatti-i humayun*), was a long process that extended through much of the nineteenth century. These edicts abolished the legal discrimination against the *dhimma* that had been the rule for centuries, but actual discrimination did not disappear all at once.

In the 1830s, as the process of reform began, the government started to think about reorganizing the non-Muslim minorities. Their interest was due in part to European intervention and in part to their own desire to keep an eye on the churches now that Christian subjects had more freedom. The previously existing idea of the *millet*, or religious community, was therefore institutionalized at this time: every church was now organized as a *millet* with its central leadership in Istanbul protected by the government.

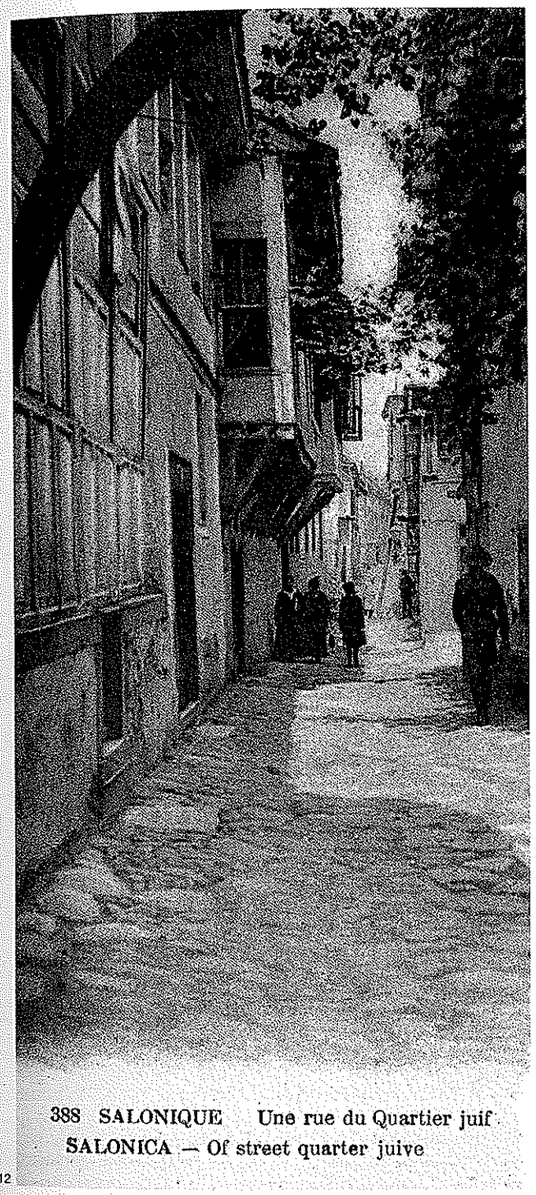
These and other reforms were originally directed at the Christian community since the Ottoman authorities did not consider the Jewish minority a problem. However, the Jews, until then organized (as we have seen) into separate autonomous communities, now demanded equality with the Christians and were therefore granted a similar legal status as a *millet*. One result of this new status was that the authorities now appointed chief rabbis by means of a *berat* (certified by the sultan). The rabbis were given the title *haham başı*, and the first *haham başı* was appointed in Istanbul in 1835. The authorities subsequently appointed rabbis in provincial capitals and towns. In the 1840s, the *haham başı* of Istanbul was given the authority to advise the central government on the appointment of chief rabbis in other cities, so that he became, in effect, the leader of the Jewish *millet* for the entire Empire.

Like the Christian *millet*, the Jews were granted a constitution or set of by-laws (which they themselves requested) known as the *haham-hane*. This charter of 1864 regulated the election of the community's central leadership organizations located in the capital. Historical evidence shows that the regulations were not always followed; for example, from the mid-1850s on, the sultan no longer appointed the *haham başı* for Istanbul or provincial communities.

The Jews' desire to emulate the Christian minority and find a place in the newly-reformed system led, paradoxically, to the loss of their autonomous ability to elect their own leadership without government interference. Moreover, Jewish integration into Ottoman society in the nineteenth century was slow and extremely superficial, despite their reformed status. Few Jews entered the ranks of Ottoman bureaucracy, serving on municipal councils or in other administrative bodies, and only a small number participated in the "Young Ottomans" or "Young Turks" society that overthrew the sultan's rule in 1908.

During the First World War, the Empire's largest Jewish center, Salonika, which had been under Ottoman rule for centuries, became part of Greece. Turkey was declared a nation-state and defined according to its present borders. The legal status of Turkish Jews was now that of a minority with equal civil rights but in fact separate from Turkish society.

After the war, Turkey and Greece carried out population exchanges. Hundreds of thousands of Greeks were transfer-



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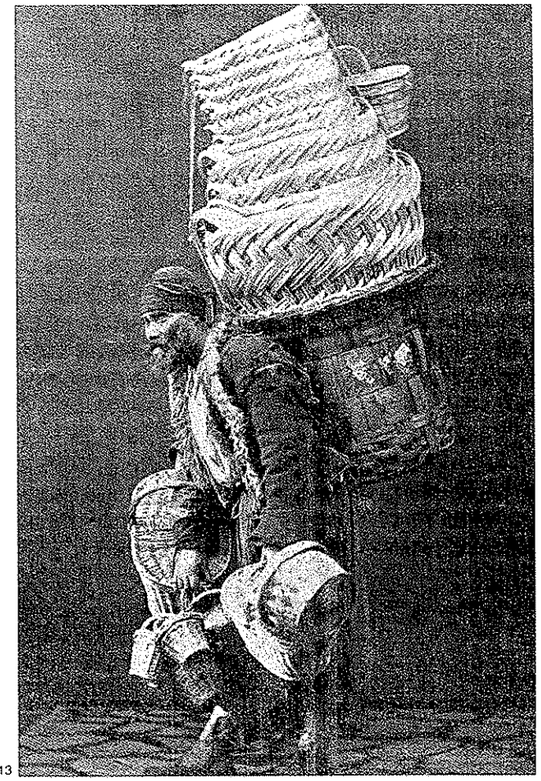

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12. Street in the Jewish quarter
Salonika, c. 1915
Postcard
Gérard Lévy Collection, Paris

13. Basket seller
Izmir, 1892
From: *Jewish Missionary Intelligence*, Dec. 1892, p. 199

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red to Greece, and Muslims (including the Sabbatean *Dönme* sect) moved to Turkey. Most of Salonika's Jews remained where they were, although some emigrated to other countries and to Erez Israel. Those who stayed were to perish, along with the rest of the Greek and Aegean Jewish community, in Nazi extermination camps.

The Jews and the surrounding culture

From the time that the Sephardi exiles settled across the Ottoman Empire, Jews were part of urban life and the economic scene. Although Jews, Christians, and Muslims tended to live in separate quarters or streets, there was no law forcing them to do so, and occasionally they lived together in mixed neighborhoods.

Although the social and religious life of each religious community was self-contained, there was still some degree of contact and mutual influence between the various groups. Jewish, Christian, and Muslim men constantly met at the workplace and in the markets; they spent hours together, working and drinking coffee in coffeehouses. The women, however, almost always remained at home, and the few who ran stalls in the market had little contact with the surrounding society. The men developed personal and cultural ties thanks to mixed guilds, businesses requiring close cooperation, and the interaction between buyers and sellers. Many Jews spoke Turkish, Greek, or Arabic, and words from these languages began to infiltrate Judeo-Spanish, the Sephardi's first language. The surrounding culture also influenced popular music and dance. Thus, despite their closed religious and family life, there was an openness to the day-to-day contact between the various communities.

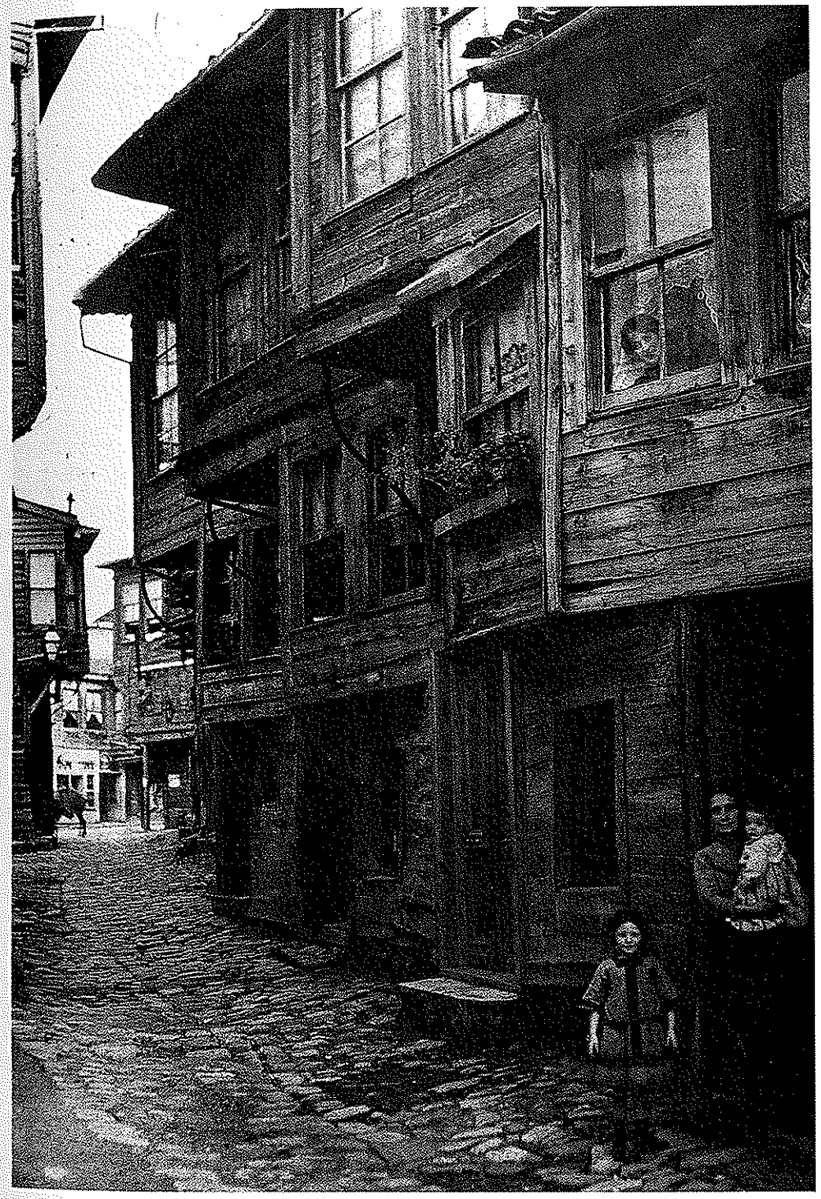

Plate 1

14. Abuav Orphanage
Salonika, 1926
Photo Archives, Diaspora Museum, Tel Aviv

pl. 1.
Jewish quarter in Istanbul
1912
Photo: Stephane Passet;
Collections Albert Kahn, 1135,
Musée départemental des Hauts-de-Saine, Paris

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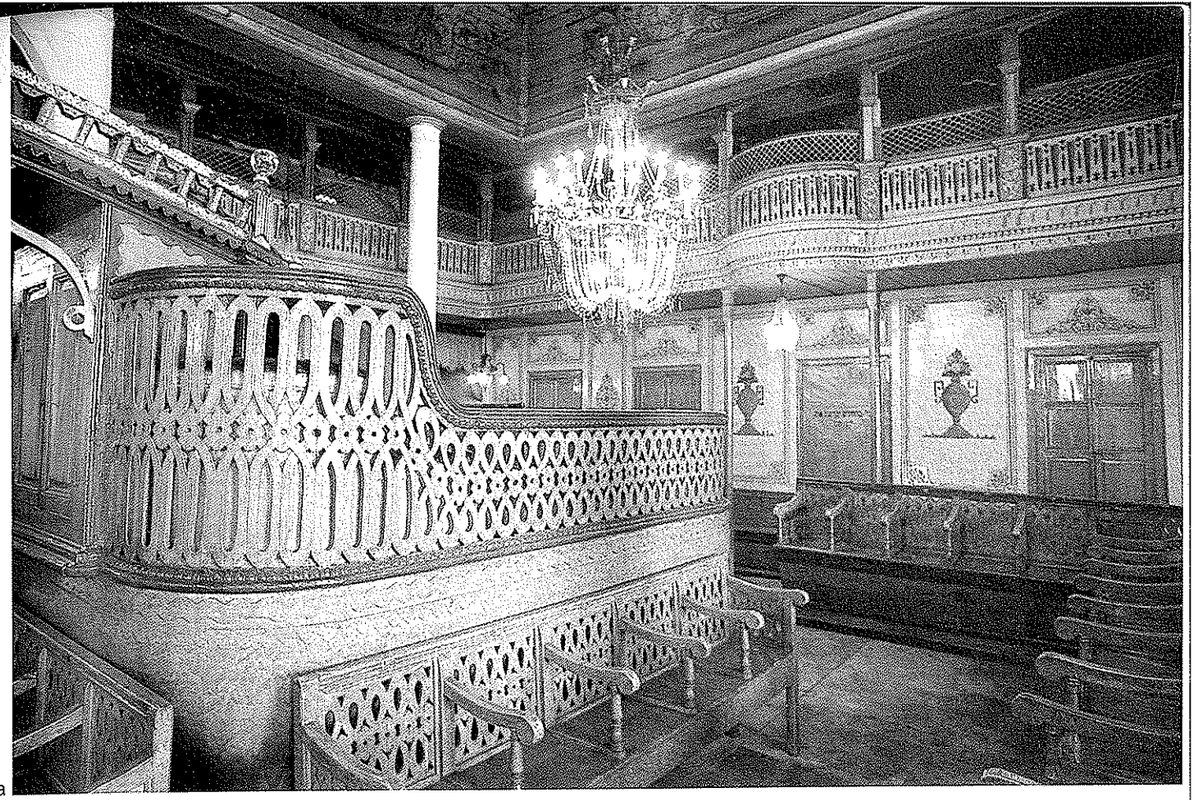
Plate



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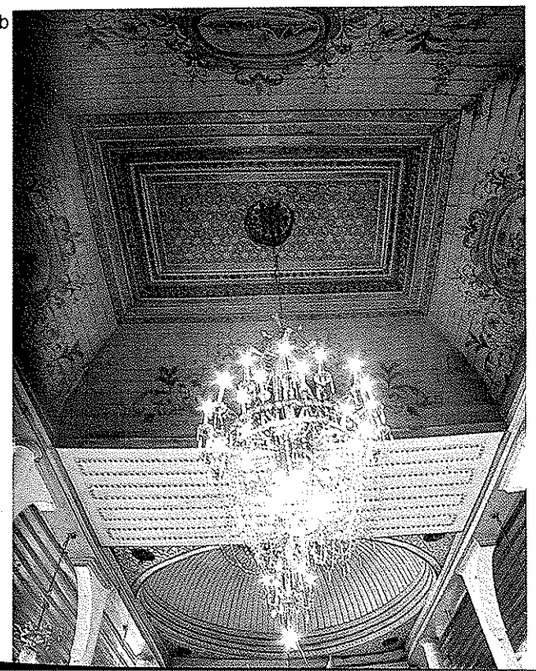

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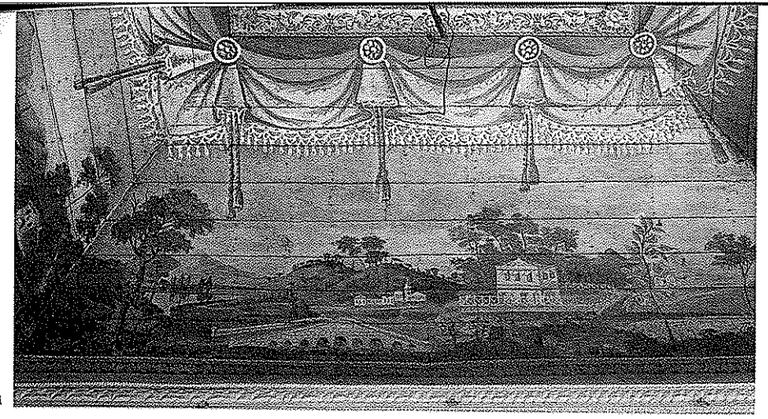
Plate 3

Pl. 2.
a. Courtyard in the Jewish quarter of Bursa
1913
Photo: Auguste Leon
Collections Albert Kahn, 2258.
Musée départemental des Hauts-de-Seine. Paris
b. Karataş,
Jewish quarter in Izmir
Photo: 1977, Slide Arch. 932
c. Courtyard (*kortižo*)
Karataş,
Jewish quarter in Izmir
Photo: 1977, Slide Arch. 917

Pl. 3.
a. The *tevah*, back wall and women's gallery
Ochrida synagogue,
Balat quarter, Istanbul
Photo: 1983, Slide Arch. 5412
b. Decorated wooden ceiling with a rounded dome and a ribbed truncated dome
Ochrida synagogue, Balat quarter, Istanbul
Photo: 1983, Slide Arch. 5457

a



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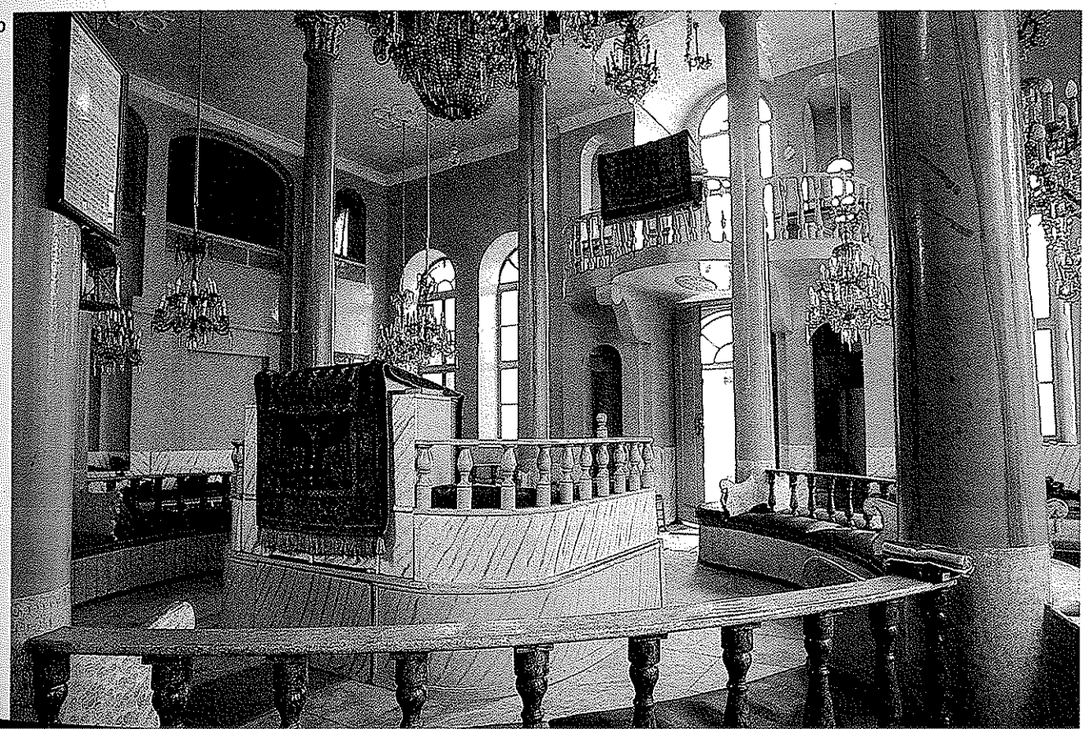
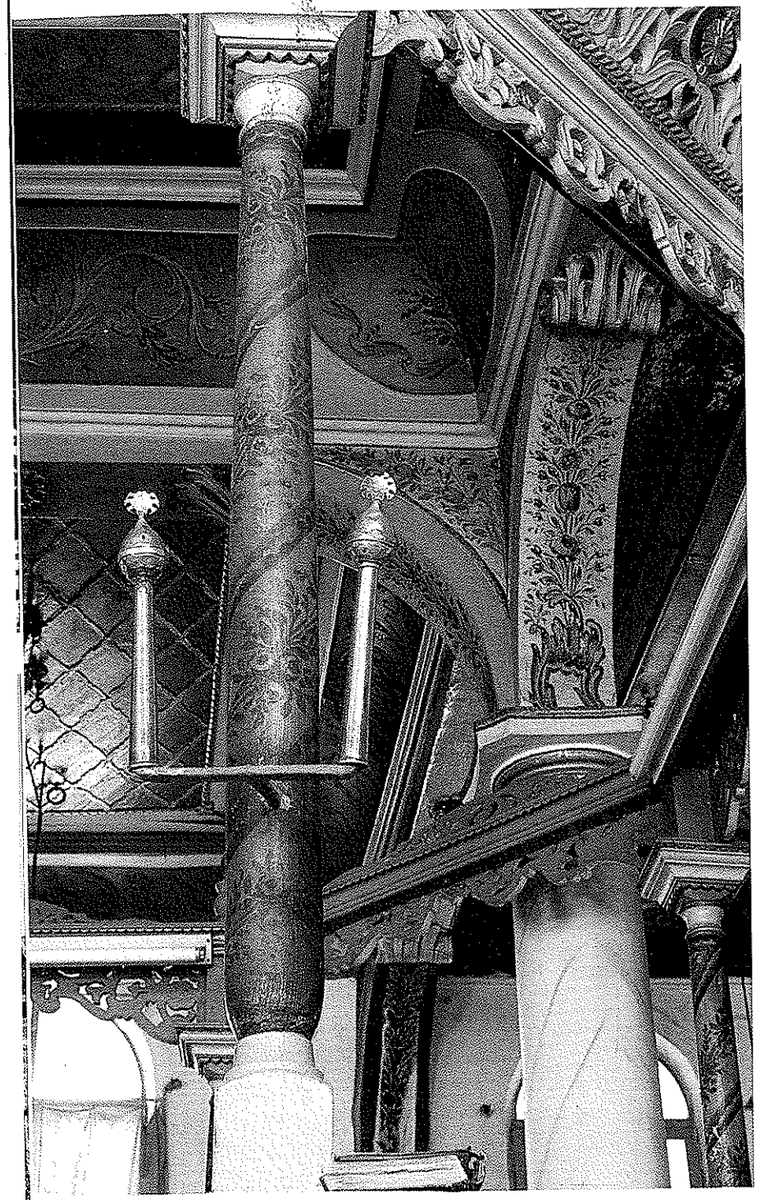
Pl. 4.
a. Detail of a landscape decorating the ceiling of the Yambol synagogue
Balat quarter, Istanbul
Photo: 1983, Slide Arch. 5500
b., c. Details of the decorated ceiling of the Ochrida synagogue, Balat quarter, Istanbul
Photo: 1983, Slide Arch. 5481, 5491

Pl. 5.
a. Interior of the Algazi synagogue
Izmir
Photo: 1983, Slide Arch. 5751
b. Interior of the Gerush synagogue
Centralized synagogue. To the right, the *hekhal*, at the center, the *tevah*, an additional *tevah* above the entrance door opposite the *hekhal*
Bursa
Photo: 1983, Slide Arch. 5679

a

b





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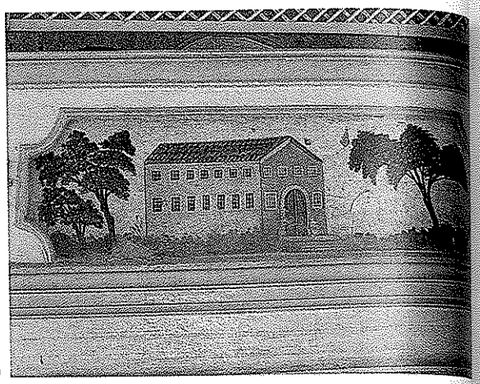

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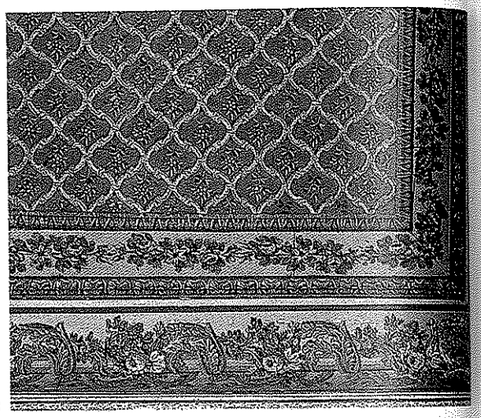

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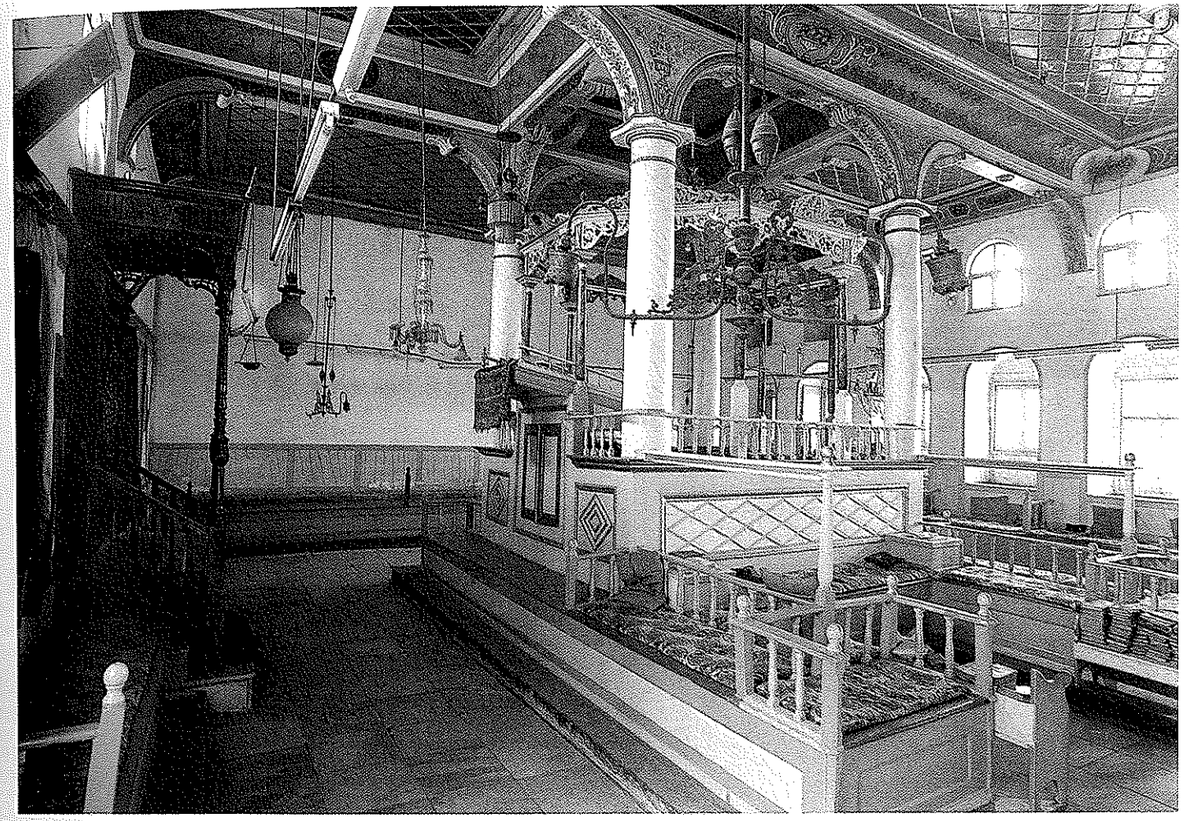
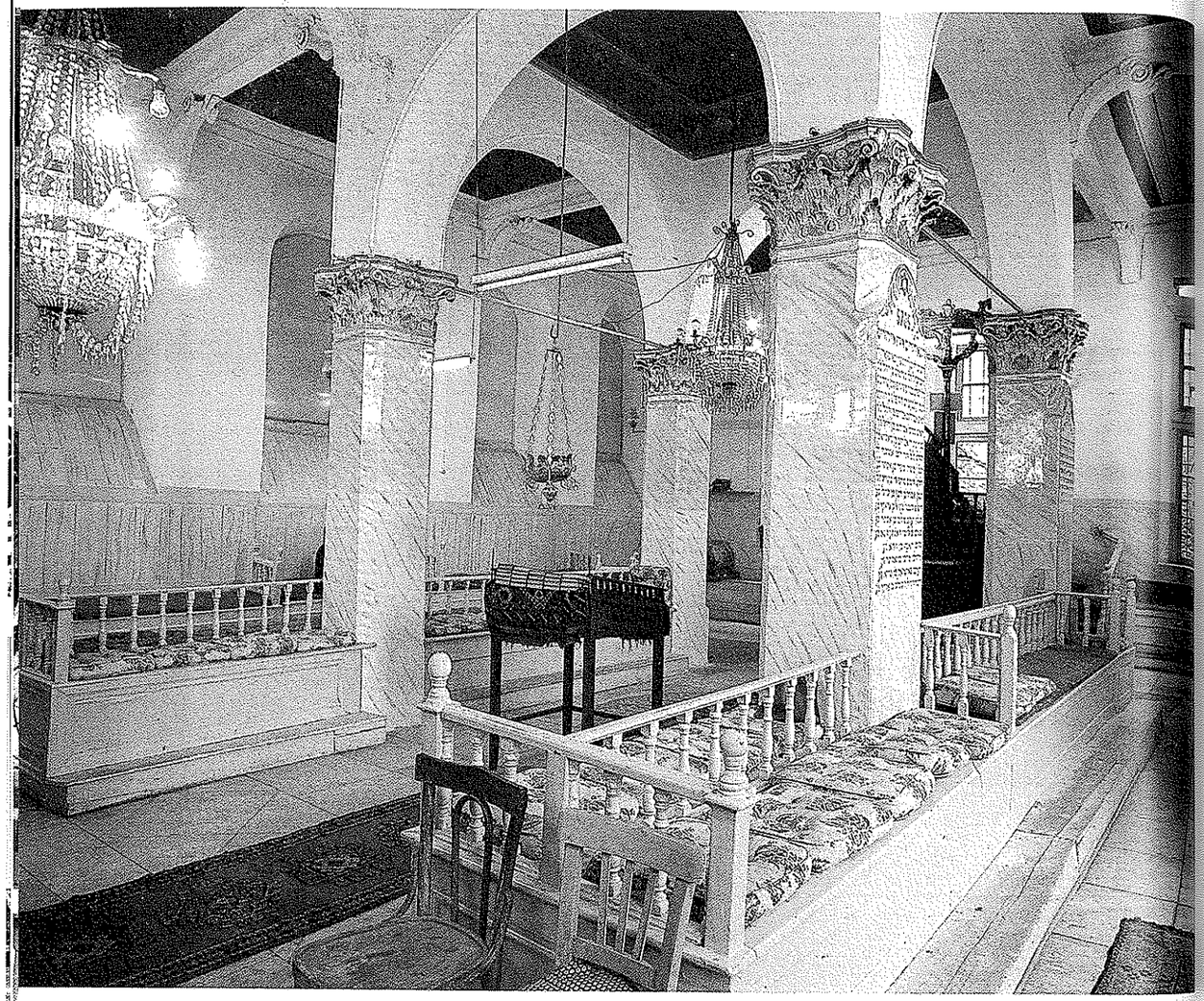
Pl. 6.
a. Painted ceiling and wooden octogonal frame on columns
Bikkur Holim synagogue
Izmir
Photo: 1983, Slide Arch. 5875
b. Synagogue building, detail of wall painting
Geveret (*Senyora*) synagogue
Izmir
Photo: 1983, Slide Arch. 5832
c. Detail of painted ceiling
Shalom (*Aydinlis*) synagogue
Izmir
Photo: 1983, Slide Arch. 5855



Pl. 7.
Interior of Bikkur Holim synagogue
In the center, the *tevah* within four columns with octogonal wooden decorated frame supported by columns
Izmir
Photo: 1983, Slide Arch. 5875



Pl. 8.
View of the *tevah* from the *hekhal*
Shalom (*Aydinlis*) synagogue
Izmir
Photo: 1983, Slide Arch. 5837

15. Jewish refugees after the fire
Salonika, after 1917
Postcard
Gérard Lévy Collection, Paris

Plate

The process of modernization

In the Ottoman Empire, modernization was linked to Western influence and expansion which, as we have seen, reached its peak in the nineteenth century. Political penetration also led to cultural influence. Moreover, an internal process of development (also inspired, in part, by the West) led certain segments of Ottoman society to try to find some means of salvaging the faltering Empire. The modernization of the Ottoman Empire therefore proceeded along two lines, foreign influence and internal change.

This general trend also affected the Jewish community, but a number of additional factors were involved in the changes in education, scholarship and culture, and the Jews' entire way of life. For one thing, as a result of their own enlightenment and emancipation, Western Jewry had begun to take an interest in the Jews under Islamic rule. *Maskilim* (enlightened Jews) in Western Europe wishing to "improve" the Jews and turn them into "useful citizens" attempted to apply these ideas to Oriental Jewry. Second, a small, clearly defined group of Ottoman Jews also had a strong desire to bring enlightenment to their community. Many members of this group – although not all – were Frankos, descendants of the Portuguese Frankos who, beginning in the mid-seventeenth century, had moved from Leghorn (Livorno) to Turkish and eastern Balkan cities; it was these people who heralded the enlightenment of Ottoman Jewry.

By the time the beginnings of enlightenment and modernization reached the Empire, it was in a critical state of decline. Likewise, the nineteenth-century Jewish community faced its most serious social and economic breaches, and tension between the leadership and Jewish masses was at its peak. The fiercest confrontation was between poor workers belonging to guilds and the combined forces of the rich and the rabbinical establishment.

The turning point for European Jewish involvement in the Ottoman Empire came in 1840, the year of the Damascus blood libel. Although initially the specific cause of massive European intervention was the blood libel, the involvement of Western Jews gradually became more general, as they imported enlightenment ideas and built medical institutions and modern schools for their Oriental fellow-Jews.

In the early nineteenth century, the Christian Mission was active in the Ottoman Empire, and its endeavors included the

establishment of schools, clinics, and charitable institutions. Other groups, in particular the Italians, also established modern schools in Turkish cities. The new schools attracted a considerable number of Jewish pupils, which pushed the *kehillot* to create their own modern educational institutions. Much of this activity took place in the 1830s, but the climax came in 1860, when the Alliance Israélite Universelle was established in Paris. The Alliance, created in the wake of the Emancipation and based on Enlightenment principles, was committed to the idea of furthering Jewish integration and acculturation and making Jews useful, productive citizens of their respective countries. Its principal target was Oriental Jewry, and so, in the second half of the nineteenth century, hundreds of modern Alliance schools were established in Islamic regions, most of them under Ottoman rule. Thousands of youngsters – an entire generation – were educated at these schools, and by the end of the century many of them became leaders of their communities.

Thus, the late nineteenth century was Ottoman Jewry's period of modernization. Its leadership underwent tremendous changes. A new elite, more secular and completely different in nature from the group that had controlled the community for hundreds of years, was created.

The community's literature also underwent a radical transformation, becoming secular rather than religious. The European classics were translated into Ladino and published. Ladino, which for centuries had served primarily as a spoken rather than a written language, became the foremost language of publication in the nineteenth century, overtaking rabbinical Hebrew.

It is well-known that as European Jews left the ghetto and gained emancipation, the enlighteners and reformers were involved in a fierce struggle with traditional orthodoxy – the clash between two diametrically opposed world views and ways of life.

A similar struggle took place in the Ottoman Empire: modernizers versus conservatives, supporters of the new schools and institutions, advocates of a changed community structure versus the old establishment of rabbis, functionaries, and communal leaders. However, the Oriental clashes were much more temperate than their European counterparts. In some of the large communities, such as Istanbul, Izmir, and Salonika, a number of rabbis did protest the establishment of modern schools and institutions, but they were outnumbered, and the controversy died down quite quickly without producing an orthodox counter-enlightenment movement. It would seem that the difference between the two struggles and their outcome stems from an initial difference between two types of enlightenment.

In Europe, the *Haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment) was more than a search for knowledge; its ideology was based on the principles of the European Enlightenment and advocated a non-religious outlook and Jewish integration into the secular non-Jewish world. This was not the case in the Ottoman Empire: in Ottoman communities, the idea of enlightenment tended to mean the simple acquisition of knowledge and was therefore not opposed by the rabbis or communal establishment.

The process of modernization and the creation of a new generation of young Jews with a secular education, combined with the ongoing political and economic crisis in Turkey and the Balkans, led to massive emigration. Most of those who left moved to North and South America, Western Europe (France), or Egypt, where they established their own Sephardi communities.

Translated by Anna Barber

Notes

1. Capsali, *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, pp. 218-19.

2. For the list of *kehalim* of Istanbul, see Gerber, *Economic*, pp. 117-18; for the list of *kehalim* of Salonika, see Hacker, pp. 224-25.

3. Rosen, pp. 194-96.

4. Frankl, p. 141.

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1. Interior of Yambol synagogue
Balat quarter, Istanbul
Photo: 1983, Photo. Arch. 5901

Synagogues

Esther Juhasz

The aim of this short survey and accompanying photographs is to describe the synagogues of Turkey as they appear today. A broad and complex field, the study of Turkish synagogues is still in its preliminary stages. Some of the problems involved will be addressed at the conclusion of this article.

Visiting the synagogues of Turkey – in Istanbul, Izmir, Bursa, as well as in such small towns as Tire and Bergama – one cannot but sense the strong presence that the Jews of Turkey once had in these cities. Some of these synagogues are still in use today, others have been abandoned. In Istanbul and Izmir, where the Jews have moved into new neighborhoods, they worship in synagogues near their homes. In quarters which formerly held large Jewish populations, such as the Balat quarter of Istanbul and the market area (previously called Judería) of Izmir, we find groups of synagogues, one next to the other. The synagogues, where no Jewish population remains, were abandoned, and were often converted into other types of buildings, such as granaries or storehouses. Recently, however, concerned Jews have undertaken to renovate some of these synagogues, seeing to their maintenance and worshipping in them on Sabbaths and festivals. Examples of this are the Beit Ya'akov synagogue in the Kuzguncuk quarter of Istanbul, on the Asian side of the Bosporous, and Hemdat Yisrael in the Haydar-Pasa quarter.

The typical synagogue is surrounded by a wall, perhaps so that it would be difficult to identify from the outside (fig. 17). Within the demarcated area we find a courtyard, in which there is a space designated for the construction of a *sukkah* and sometimes, as in the Beit Ya'akov synagogue, a small *beit midrash* (house of study). In some cases, the courtyard also contains a stone basin, either free-standing or built into the wall, used for ritual washing (figs. 6, 9, 12). Many of the synagogues are made of stone or plastered brick, while their ceilings are made of wood. Some synagogues were made entirely of wood, but only a few of these have survived, such as the Kastoria synagogue in the Balat quarter of Istanbul, which, alas, is virtually in ruins (fig. 2).

The internal structure of the synagogues in Turkey is not uniform. In Istanbul alone we find a number of different types. Of the rectangular synagogues, some are of the long room type, such as the Zulfaris synagogue in the Galata quarter and Midrash Tehilim (or Virane) in the Kuzguncuk quarter, and some are of the broad room type, as the Ochrida synagogue (fig. 5, pl. 3) in the Balat quarter and Beit Ya'akov in Kuzguncuk. There are also centralized synagogues, such as the synagogue that once stood in Oun Kapan. In some instances, the *tevah* (pulpit) is situated in the center, as in the Yambol synagogue in the Balat quarter (fig. 1); in others, it is located at the edge of the room, near the back wall, as in Ochrida (pl. 3a) and Beit Ya'akov. While some of the *tevot* are large and prominent, others are no more than a small portable stand.

In both the synagogues of Bursa, Gerush and Mayor (figs. 8-12 and pl. 5b), the *tevah* is large, either round or oval, located in the center of the room and surrounded by columns that support the domed ceiling. These synagogues also have an additional *tevah*, placed just above the entrance, which was used on the High Holidays.

In the Algazi, Geveret (or Seniora), Talmud Torah, Shalom (or Aydinlis), Ez Hayyim, and Bikkur Holim synagogues of Izmir, as in the synagogues of the surrounding small towns such as Bergama and Aydin, a regional style can be discerned. The synagogues of this area are either square or rectangular. In the center of the hall are four columns that support the ceiling and divide it into nine equal squares. In most instances, the central square is emphasized by decorative motifs and inscriptions (figs. 13, 14 and pls. 5a, 6, 7, 8). In between the columns, space is allotted for the *tevah*. Sometimes the columns form an actual part of a permanent *tevah*, as in the Bikkur Holim synagogue (pl. 7), and sometimes they serve as a kind of frame for a portable *tevah*, as in the Geveret (Seniora) synagogue (fig. 13). The interiors of the synagogues are often wood or wood paneled. The architectural structure and the decorated ceiling reflect a marked intention to draw attention to the *tevah*. The manner in which the ceiling and columns are decorated recalls architectural forms from the Izmir region – both Turkish mosques and private homes, and luxurious Greek homes, commonly found also on the nearby Greek isles.[1] The decoration is characterized by a combination of wooden strips and stucco bas-reliefs, both painted, which highlight the division of the ceiling space as well as the columns (fig. 14, pl. 6). Some of the motifs are geometric, consisting of rhomboids and squares sometimes filled with various floral patterns, flowers in vases or wreaths,

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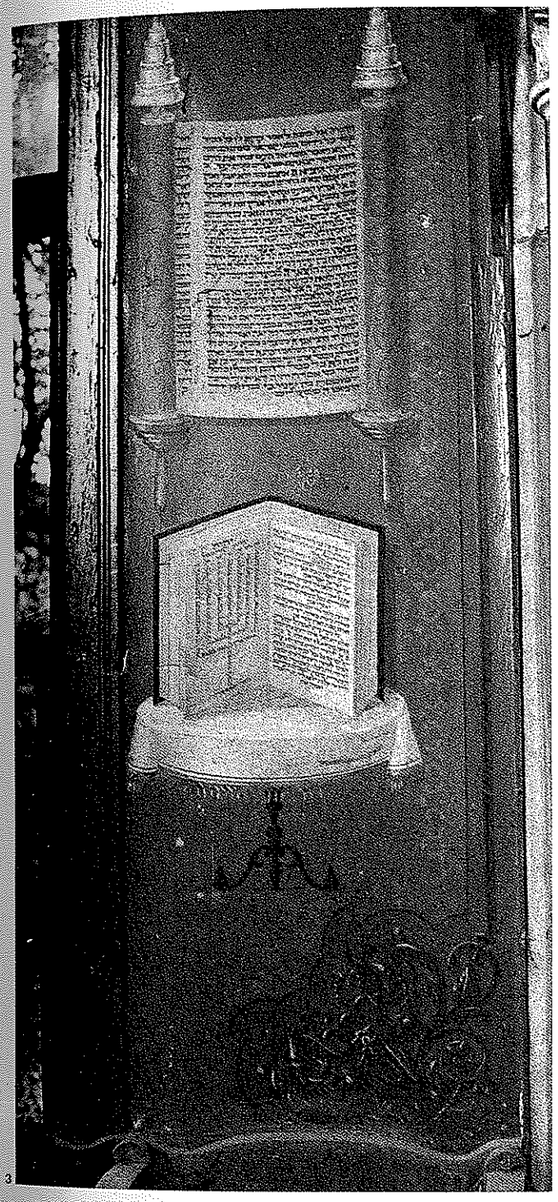

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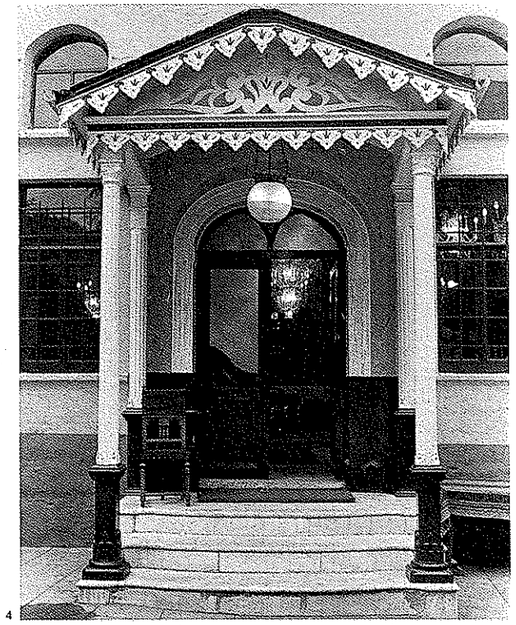

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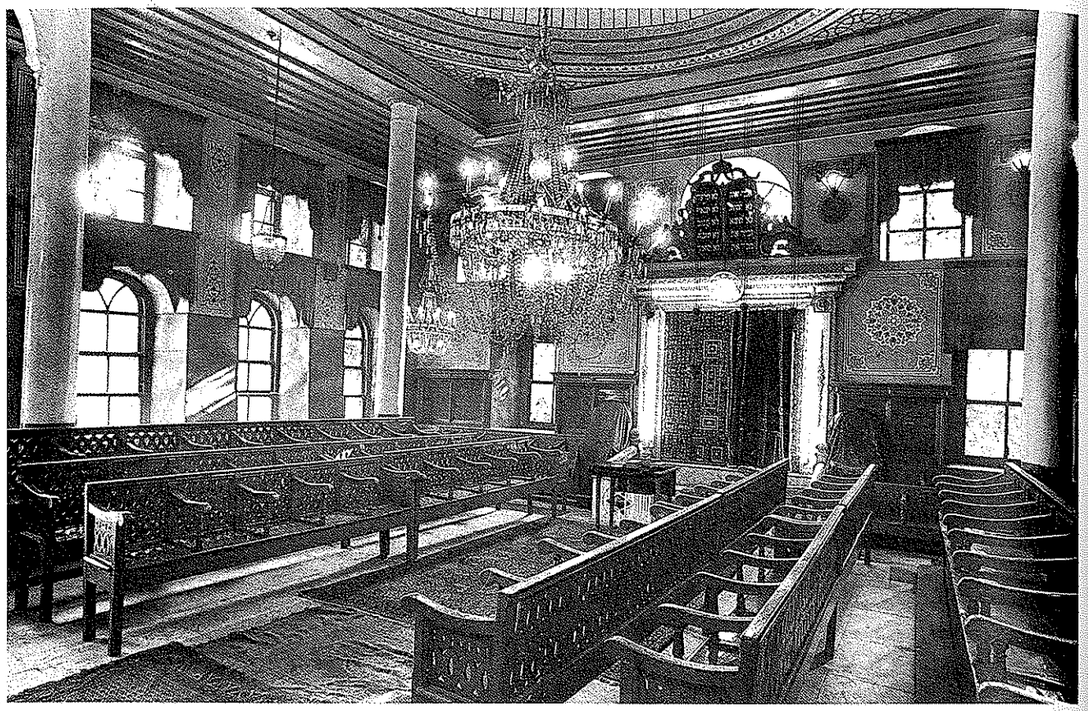
2. Kastoria synagogue, built of wood
Balat quarter, Istanbul
Photo: 1977, Photo. Arch. 3063

3. Wall painting next to the *hekhal*
Kastoria synagogue
Balat quarter, Istanbul
Photo: 1977, Photo. Arch. 3063

4. Entrance to the Beit Ya'akov (Ez Ḥayyim) synagogue
Kuzguncuk quarter, Istanbul
Photo: 1983, Photo. Arch. 5913



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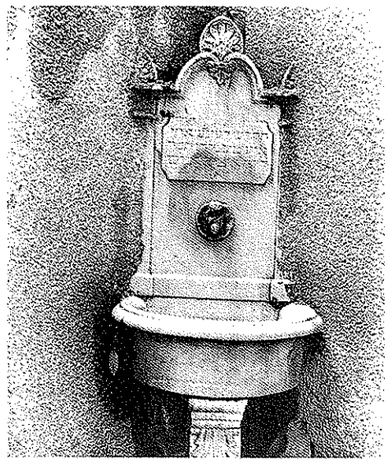

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while others depict scenic views or other pictures within frames or cartouches. The seats are arranged along the walls and around the *tevah*, facing outwards, while additional rows often face the *hekhal* (the term used by the Sephardim to refer to the Torah Ark).

Muslim law in the Ottoman Empire prohibited the erection of new synagogues, and limited the renovation or repair of existing ones.[2] Nevertheless, many synagogues were in fact constructed under Ottoman rule both in new communities such as Izmir, which was founded in the seventeenth century and in which several *kehalim* (congregations) were established, and in the new Jewish neighborhoods. Similarly, synagogues that had been burned or destroyed were rebuilt, although this often involved repeated appeals to the authorities and even bribery.

A significant number of documents granting permission to build or repair synagogues, have been published,[3] and many others, of which we are still unaware, probably exist. These documents lend insight into the history of some of the

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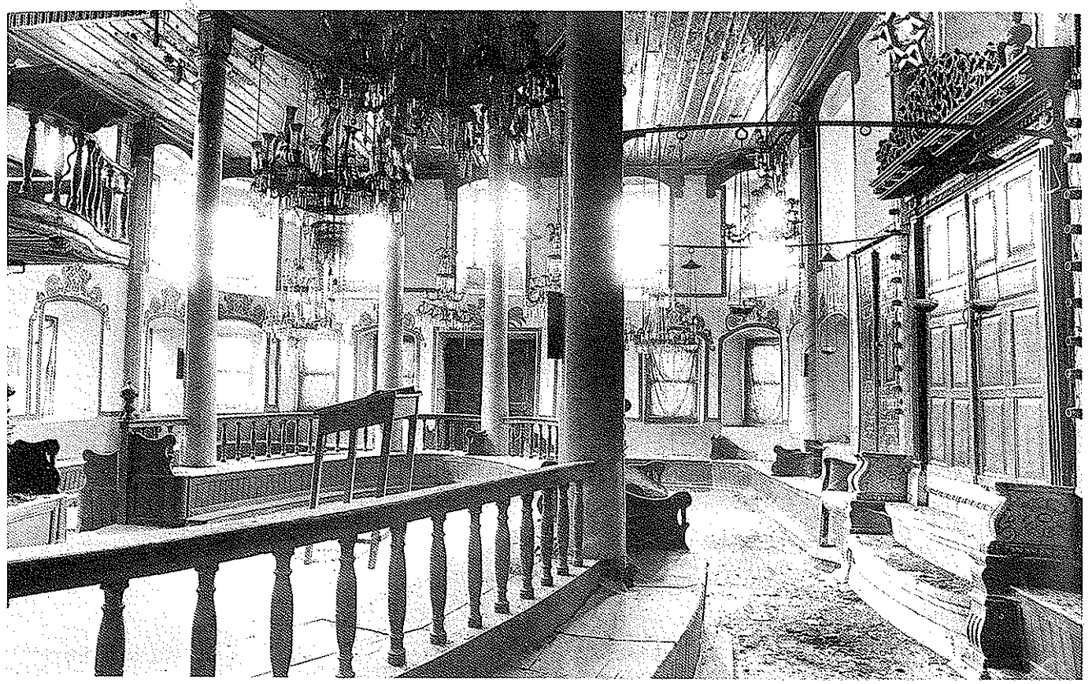
synagogues, their location, the size of the plots on which they stood and the size of the buildings themselves. Some cite the building materials used or mention prohibitions against other materials and height restrictions. The documents also tell of incidents in the synagogues' past, such as fires that damaged them, and contain instructions as to how the synagogues should be repaired.

It is our hope that a thorough study of synagogues in Turkey will be conducted in the near future, before additional damage takes place. Such a study will have to combine a general historical perspective and knowledge of the history of each synagogue with a careful examination of the architecture, interior structure and decoration of the buildings as they exist today. Similarly, it will be necessary to consider the organization of the synagogue with respect to the customs of the congregation – the seating arrangement, the place of the cantor, and, in a broader sense, the social and communal roles of the synagogue and how these were reflected in its structure.

5. Interior of Ochrida synagogue, view of the *hekhal*
Balat quarter, Istanbul
The synagogue was restored and repainted (except for the decorated ceiling) for the last time in 1955
Photo: 1983, Photo. Arch. 5912

6. Hand washing basin at the entrance to the Italian synagogue
Kahal Kadosh Italianos (*Kal de los frankos*)
Built in 1887 (according to Galanté)
Galata quarter, Istanbul
Photo: 1983, Photo. Arch. 5900

7. Interior of Ḥemdat Israel synagogue, view of the *hekhal*
Rebuilt and inaugurated in 1899 (according to Galanté)
Haydar Paşa quarter, Istanbul
Photo: 1983, Photo. Arch. 5899



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In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Jews of the Ottoman Empire organized themselves in *kehalim* according to their cities of origin, each *kahal* having its own synagogue. Membership in a congregation was determined by the synagogue in which an individual worshipped and was recorded in the sultan's poll tax registers which served as the basis for tax collection.[4] The name of the synagogue, which was the same as that of the congregation, often pointed to the place of origin of its congregants – either in the Ottoman Empire or Spain. Thus the synagogue of Ochrida expatriates was called Kahal Kadosh Ochrida, while the synagogues of the Sephardim were called Aragon, Catalonia and Toledo. Each synagogue reflected the customs of its congregation with regard to such matters as liturgy, etc. An interesting question, however, is whether the congregations also had different traditions concerning the structure of the synagogue and the location and form of the *hekhal*, the *tevah*, the seats, and the women's section.

In the sixteenth – nineteenth centuries, the congregations became much less homogeneous owing to division, reorganization and the voluntary or involuntary migration to new neighborhoods. In these neighborhoods new synagogues were built, but there is no way of knowing according to which models. By the end of the nineteenth century, most of the synagogues served Sephardi congregations – even those that had once belonged to the Romaniote community. A few non-Sephardi synagogues still existed, however, such as the Ashkenazi synagogue in the Galata quarter of Istanbul.[5] It would be interesting to investigate the impact of the local tradition of the Romaniote Jews, or the earlier local tradition, on the synagogue structure. Did Sephardi exiles take with them to Turkey their own architectural tradition and build their synagogues accordingly?

The synagogues must also be examined within the local context to determine their relation to Ottoman architecture, in terms of both structure and decoration. It is particularly important to compare them with other consecrated buildings, namely mosques and churches. Only this way would it be possible to ascertain the relative influence of local architecture, on the one hand, and internal factors, i.e., tradition and the function of the synagogue, on the other, in the design. Additional questions that must be addressed are:

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8. Interior of Mayor synagogue
Right: the *hekhal*, center: elliptical *tevah*, left: upper *tevah* above entrance door
Bursa
Photo: 1983, Photo. Arch. 5898

9. Facade of Gerush synagogue, with basin for washing hands
Bursa
Photo: 1983, Photo. Arch. 5910

10. Gerush synagogue
Inscription next to the *hekhal* with date of restoration and name of donors, 1872
Bursa
Photo: 1983, Photo. Arch. 5910

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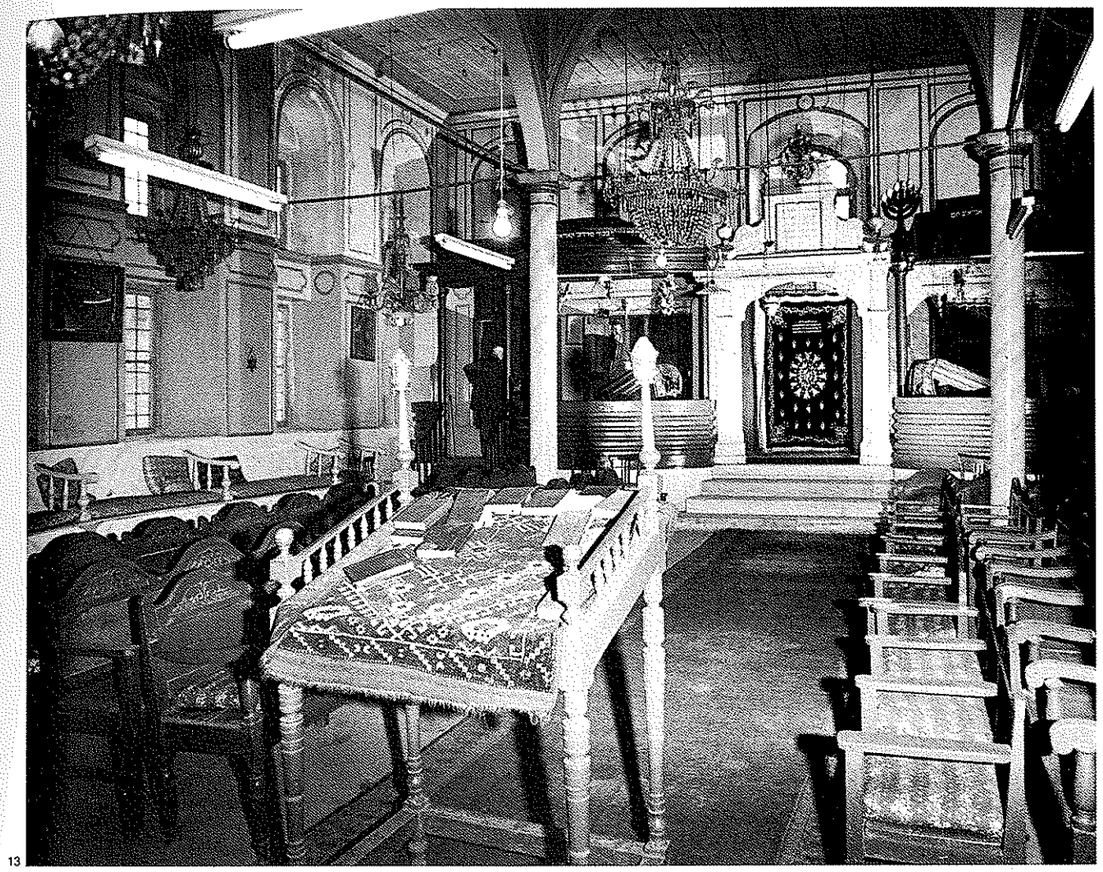
11. Interior of Mayor synagogue, view of the *hekhal* from the *tevah*
Bursa
Photo: 1983, Photo. Arch. 5898

12. Hand-washing basin, 1798
Mayor synagogue
Bursa
Photo: 1983, Photo. Arch. 5898

13. Interior of Geveret (*Senyora*) synagogue
View of the *hekhal* from the *tevah*;
pulpits on each side of the *hekhal*, a small portable *tevah* under columns in the middle
Izmir
Photo: 1983, Photo. Arch. 5915



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Who built the synagogues and who had a role in their planning? Were they constructed according to a prearranged plan or built haphazardly, subject to prohibitions and other constraints and eventually suited to the needs of the community? An example of a constraint that determined the development of synagogues is the great fire of Izmir in 1772. The authorities permitted the reconstruction of synagogues that had burned down, such as Bikkur Ḥolim, Ez Ḥayyim, and Shalom, only after thirty years. In the meantime, the congregants worshipped in rooms in private homes which had been adapted to suit the requirements of a place of prayer.[6] In other cities as well, synagogues were established in private homes.

It would also be interesting to discover what happened to synagogues built according to a specific tradition that determined the place of the *tevah*, *hekhal* and the seats once the character of the congregation changed. Was their architectural structure adapted to suit other requirements?

Many of the synagogues in existence today were built on top of earlier ones. Some are connected by tradition or myth to Byzantine times, and their names enable us to identify them with early congregations mentioned in documents and rabbinic sources. In most cases, the earlier structure was altered through repairs or renovations; sometimes it was rebuilt entirely, if for example the original building was destroyed by fire. The improvements, carried out during different periods, are often documented by plaques found within the synagogue

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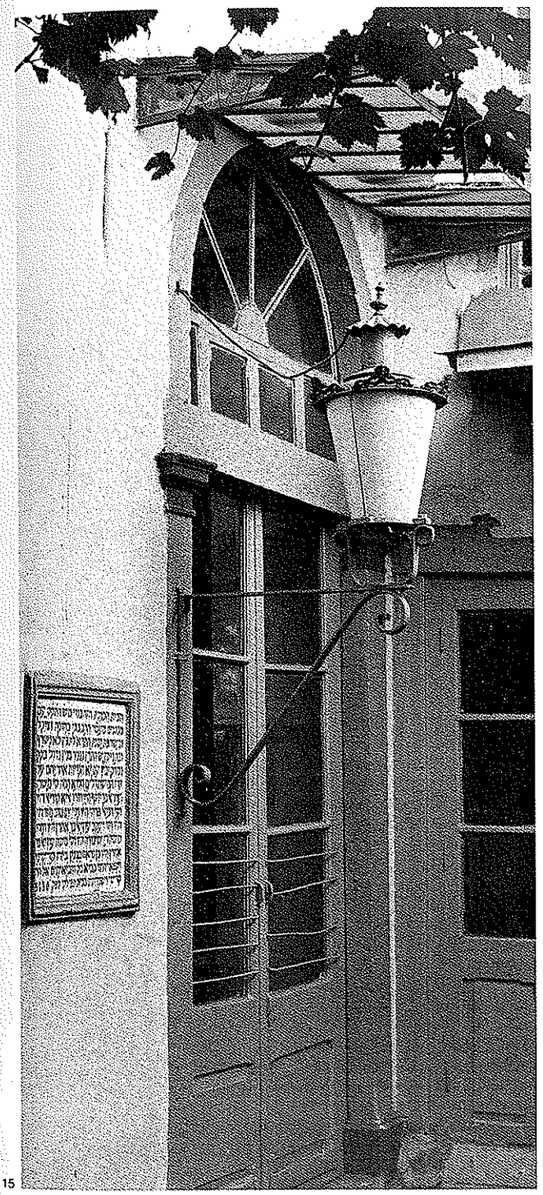
14. Interior of Geveret (*Senyora*) synagogue
Back of the synagogue, entrance door surmounted by women's gallery
Izmir
Photo: 1983, Photo. Arch. 5915

15. Entrance of Shalom (*Aydinlis*) synagogue
According to inscription, built in 1800
Izmir
Photo: 1983, Photo. Arch. 957

16. Ceiling of the *tevah*
Ez Ḥayyim synagogue
Izmir
Photo: 1983, Photo. Arch. 5894

17. Entrance through the outer wall of the Algazi synagogue
Izmir
Photo: 1983, Photo. Arch. 5847



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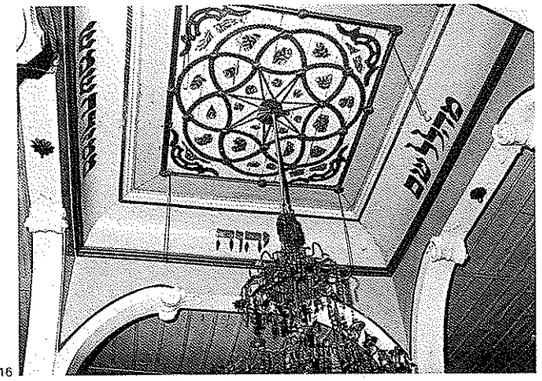

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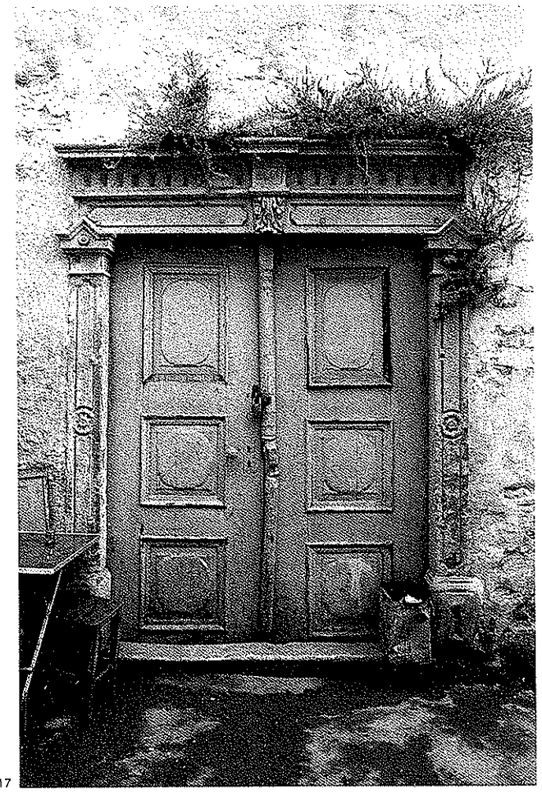

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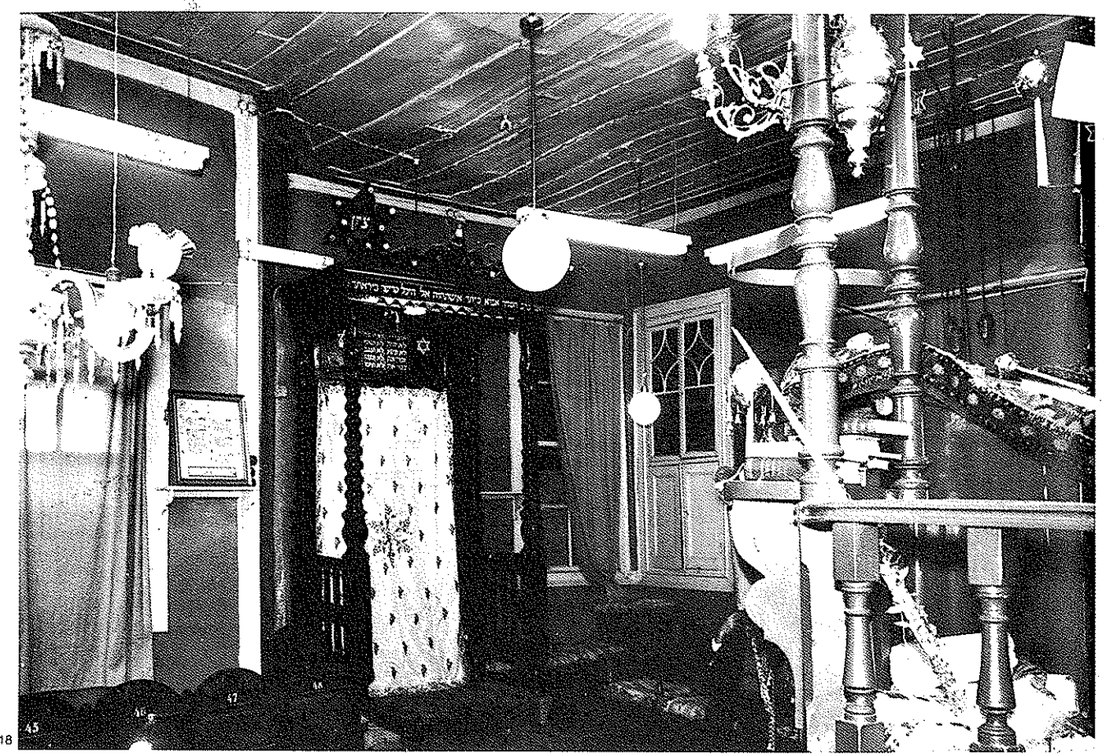

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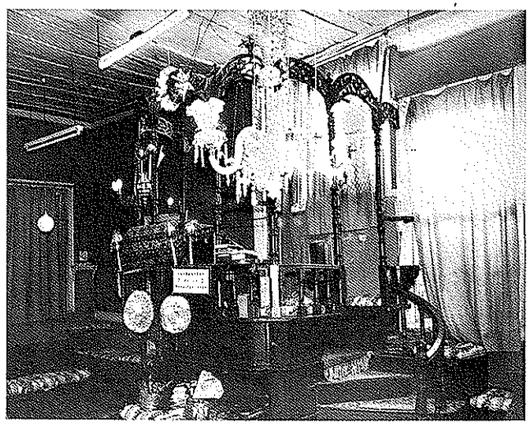
itself, citing the date of the repair and the name of the donor (fig. 10). The renovations were made, layer upon layer, until a rather late period. Thus it is impossible to determine the form of the orignal building and the nature of the intermediate stages. There is no doubt, however, that this method of repair is one of the salient features of the synagogues. An interesting example of this has to do with the change in location of the *tevah* in several synagogues in Izmir during the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. In the Talmud Torah, Shalom and other synagogues, which, as mentioned above, feature four columns in the middle of the room, the *tevah*, probably under Italian influence. was moved to the back wall (fig. 21), thus transforming them into bifocal synagogues.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, several new synagogues were constructed in Izmir, Istanbul and Edirne, greatly influenced by the structure and design of Italian synagogues. One instance is the Beit Yisrael synagogue of Izmir, the largest and most elegant in the city, in which



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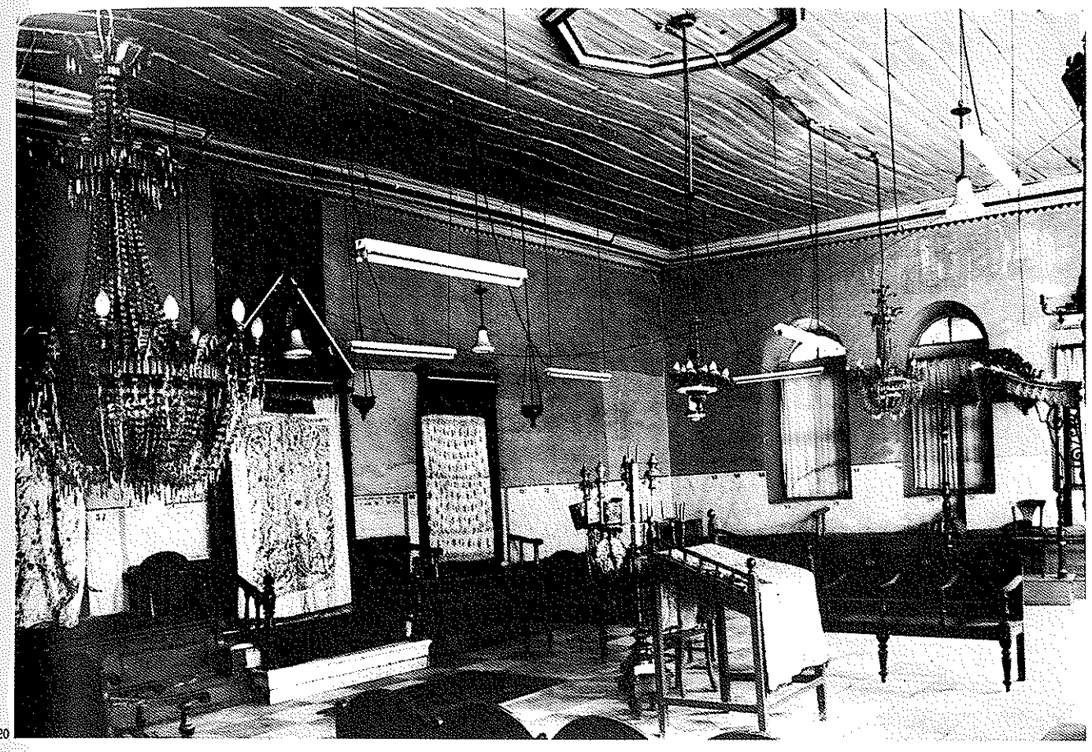

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weddings are held until this very day. At the time of its construction, craftsmen were brought in from Italy to create the matching *hekhal* and the *tevah*, which were carved from wood in the Italian fashion.

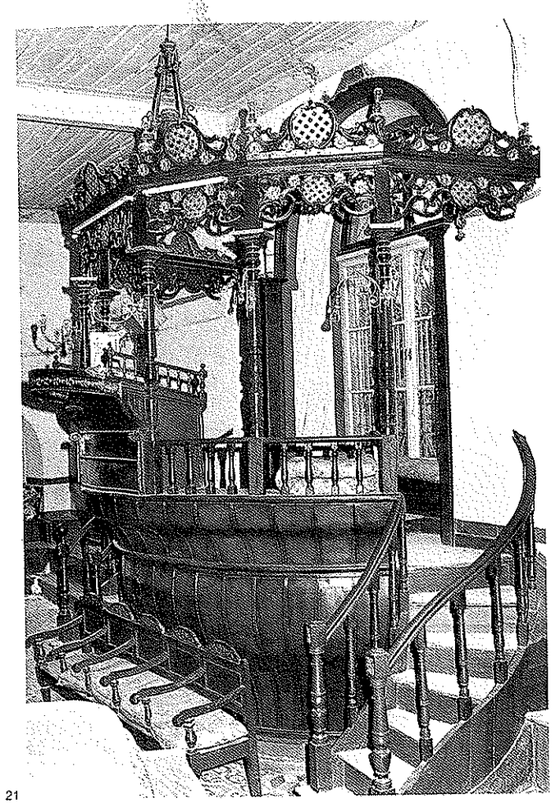
While it is impossible to find stylistic unity among the synagogues, we can distinguish between several different structural groupings. In certain cases, it seems as if a regional style developed that reflected the local architectural and decorative trends. We may therefore assume that to some extent the synagogues reflect the style of Ottoman art that prevailed at the time of their construction.

Until we have answers to the questions raised above, and to other questions that are bound to arise, it will be difficult to determine the characteristics of the Sephardi synagogue, in this region or more generally, despite the almost complete dominance of the Sephardi communities in Turkey and the Balkans during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Nonetheless, the great number of synagogues and

18. The *hekhal*
Beit Hillel synagogue
Izmir
Demolished in 1986 (belonged to the Palaggi family)
Courtesy of Dov Cohen, Jerusalem

19. The *tevah*
Beit Hillel synagogue
Izmir
Demolished in 1986 (belonged to the Palaggi family)
Courtesy of Dov Cohen

20. Portugal(?) synagogue
Izmir
Burned in 1976
Courtesy of Dov Cohen



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variety of structures and decorations constitute one of the last testimonies to the life-styles of the communities who used them. It is therefore essential that steps be taken as soon as possible to preserve the remains of these synagogues in photographs and in drawings, for as mentioned above, many of them are now in varying stages of disintegration.

Translated by Nancy Benovitz

21. *Tevah* on back wall of Talmud Torah synagogue Izmir
Photo: 1983, Photo. Arch. 5907

22. Prayer time-table "Written by Nissim ben Shelomo Mizrahi, 1950" Hemdat Israel synagogue Haydar Paşa quarter, Istanbul
Photo: 1983, Photo. Arch. 5899

Notes

1. For this style of architecture and decoration in Turkey, see Renda, *Resim*, especially pp. 77-200; and Arik. For Greece and the Greek Isles, see, for instance, Vostani-Kouba and Diamantopoulou.

2. For the prohibition against the construction and restoration of synagogues, see, for example, Bornstein, pp. 30-32. We can learn of the complexity of the authorities' attitude towards this matter from the discussion on a document dealing with the restoration of synagogues in the Hasköy quarter of Istanbul. See Gerber, *Istanbul*, pp. 32-33.

3. Many firmans containing details of building and restoration permits have been published. See, for example, Galanté, *Recueil*, pp. 5-15. One of those firmans grants permission to rebuild five synagogues in the Hasköy quarter of Istanbul where eleven synagogues had been previously burned to the ground. Another document, published in Galanté, *Appendice*, pp. 9-13, grants permission to restore the Ez Hayyim synagogue in the Ortaköy quarter of Istanbul.

4. See Hacker, p. 228; for the poll tax registers of the Ottoman government as a very important source of information on the existence of *kehalim* and synagogues. See Heyd.

5. Detailed lists of the synagogues in Istanbul and Izmir were published by Galanté in Galanté, *Istanbul*, vol. 2, pp. 162-175, and Galanté, *Izmir*, pp. 37-45. In his other publications on Anatolia he also cites the synagogues of each community, making note of those existing at the time of writing and of others of which he learned from written sources. Concerning the Sonsino (Mahazikei Torah) synagogue in Izmir, for instance, he relates that after it was built in 1772, a high official expressed his astonishment at the resemblance of the synagogue to the Hisar Cami mosque, and ordered its destruction. Only much pleading with the authorities rescinded the decree and a firman was published allowing the synagogue to exist. Galanté often gives the dates of the synagogues, but some of these have been refuted in recent studies in which additional sources have been consulted.

6. For the fire and its consequences, see, for instance, Benayahu.

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23. Torah scrolls in the *hekhal*
Shalom synagogue (*Aydinlis*)
Izmir Photo. Arch. 3051

24. Torah crown
Dedicated in 1876
Silver, repoussé, engraved and punched
H. 16 D. 21
Israel Museum Collection, 146/46; 377.82

25. Torah crown
Dedicated in 1912
Silver, repoussé, engraved and punched
H. 17 D. 22
Israel Museum Collection, 146/46; 1436.78

26. Table in Beit Israel synagogue, with Torah crwon and alms boxes
Izmir
Photo. Arch. 3047

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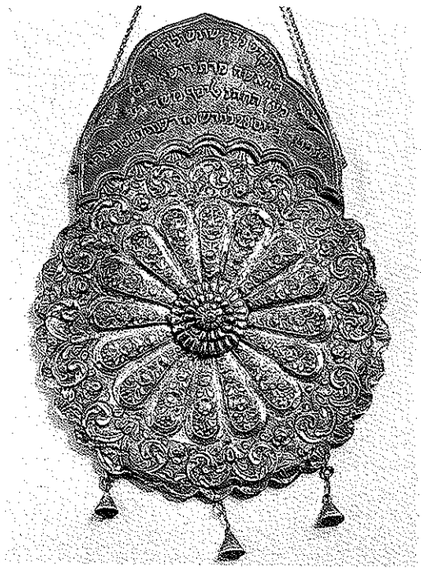

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29

27. Torah shield
Dedicated in 1915
Silver, repoussé, pierced and punched
L. 46 W. 29
Israel Museum Collection, 148/217; 751.74

28. Torah shield (made from the back of a mirror)
Dedicated in 1907
Silver, repousse and engraved, partially gilt
L. 36 W. 25
Israel Museum Collection, 148/228; 740.74

29. Torah case and crown
Dedicated in 1909
Silver, repoussé, punched and stamped
Israel Museum Collection, 145/21; 1438.78

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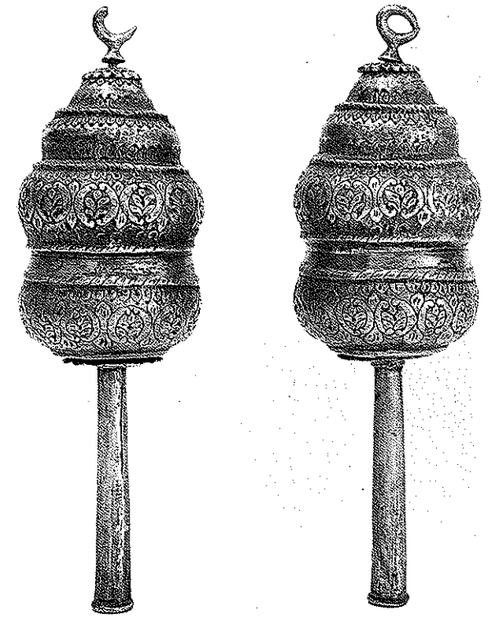

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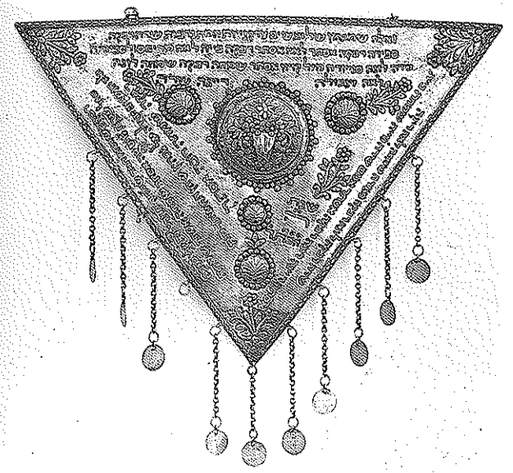


32

30. Torah finials
Istanbul, l9th century
Silver, repoussé, engraved, pierced and cast, partially gilt
H. 39 D. 10
Israel Museum Collection, 147/214; 111.68

31. Torah finials
Dedicated in 1895
Silver, repoussé, engraved and cast, partially gilt
Israel Museum Collection, 147/262; 778.79

32. Torah shield
Dedicated in Ankara, l865
Silver, repoussé and punched
H. 26 W. 37
Israel Museum Collection, 148/202; 443.69

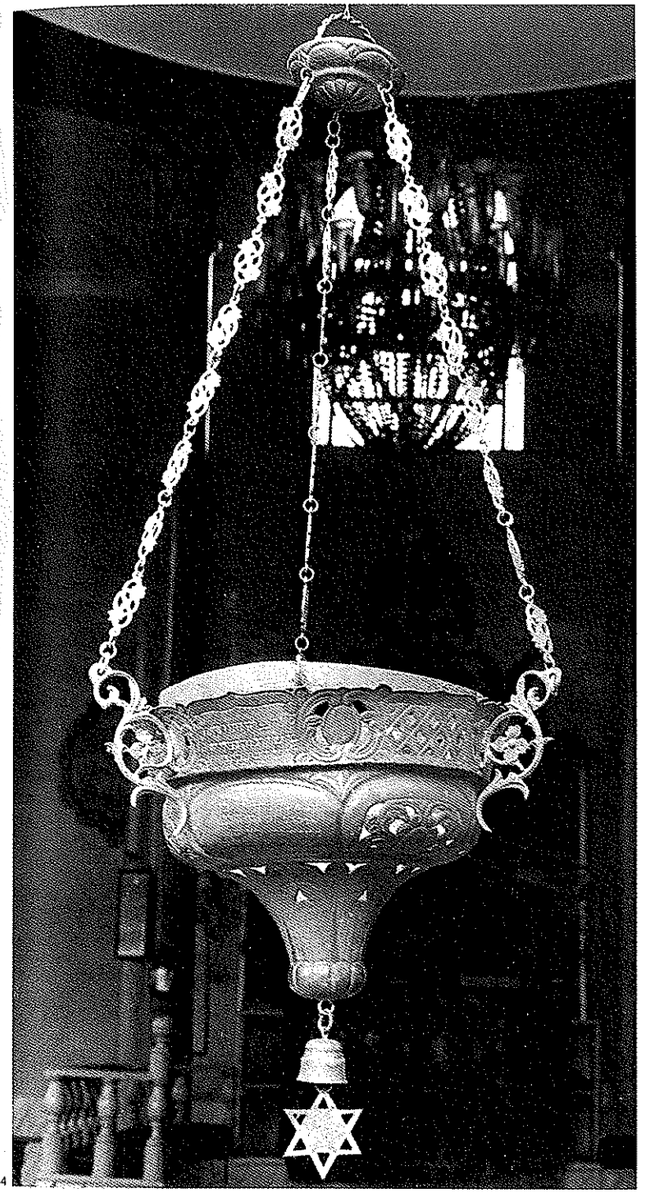
33

33. Torah crown and finials
Istanbul, l9th century
Silver, repoussé and engraved
Crown: H. 10 D. 20
Finials: H. 35 D. 11
Israel Museum Collection,
146/39; 771.79; 147/213

34. Lamp (*ner tamid*)
Gerush synagogue
Bursa

35. Torah shield
Izmir, 19th century
Silver, repoussé, engraved and punched
L. 35 W. 24
Israel Museum Collection,
148/259; 374.82

36. Torah shield
l9th century
Silver, repoussé and punched
L. 22 W. 20
Israel Museum Collection,
148/257; 372.82



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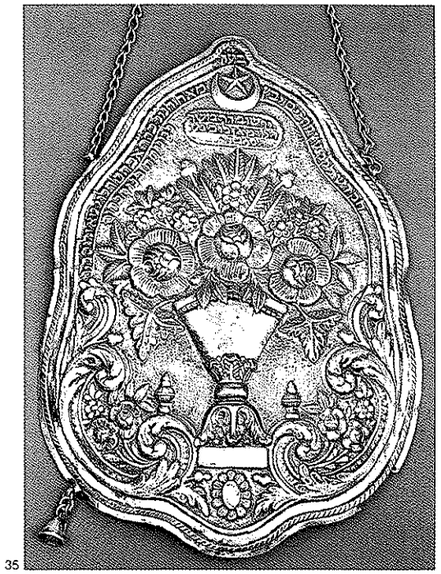

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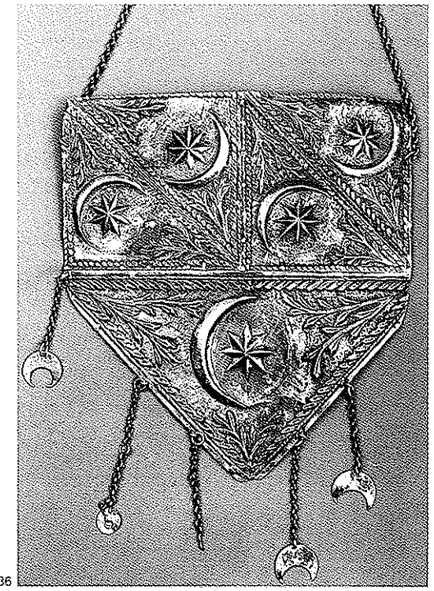

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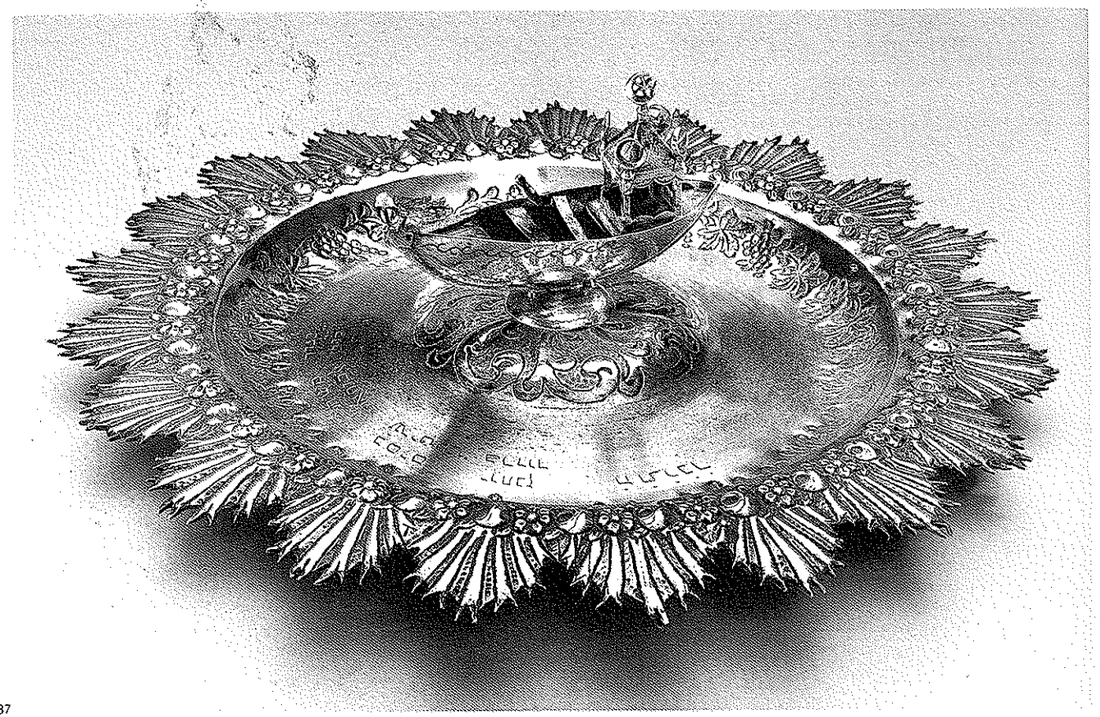

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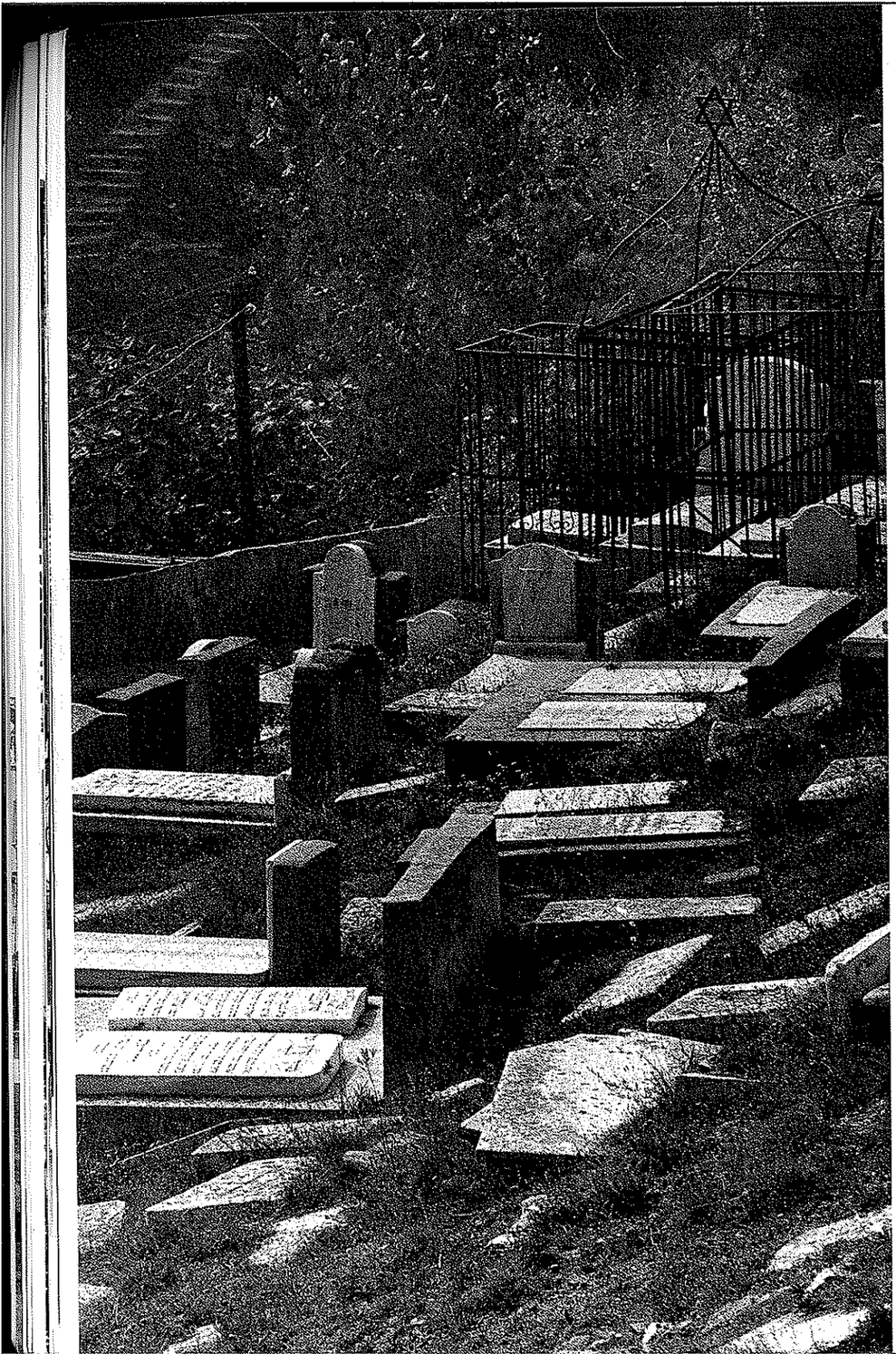
37. Alms plate(?)
Dedicated in 1864
Silver, stamped, punched and engraved
D. 32
Israel Museum Collection, 136/31; 1147-3-55
Gift, E. Burstein Collection, Lugano

38. Alms box
1882
Silver, engraved and cast
H. 15 D. 8
Israel Museum Collection, 130/1; 287-5-51

39

39. Hands (to be fixed on Torah crown?)
Silver



1. Kuzguncuk Cemetery, Istanbul
Photo: 1983, Photo. Arch. 5964

Jewish Cemeteries in Turkey

Mina Rosen

The cemeteries which still exist on the sites of many extinct Jewish communities are some of the most important, and indeed at times the only testimonials of Jewish life in Turkey in the seventeenth to twentieth centuries. Unfortunately, this evidence too is fast disappearing. The cemeteries, which at the time of their establishment were generally located outside residential areas, are today usually found in the center of expanded urban communities. Public building, new highways, etc., all contribute to their effacement. Consequently, the cemeteries of Bursa and Edirne have been almost totally obliterated, and the ancient cemeteries of Istanbul – Hasköy and Kuzguncuk – severely damaged. Cemeteries which are situated in residential areas are vandalized, the gravestones used by the local residents for flooring and fence building.

The importance of preserving these historical monuments is not sufficiently realized, even in Istanbul where there is a lively Jewish community. The most ancient cemetery of Istanbul, for example, established in the Balat quarter, was destroyed with the building of the highway. There remain four cemeteries in Istanbul which contain gravestones from before the twentieth century: Kuzguncuk, Hasköy, Ortaköy and the Italian cemetery. In the first three, the stones date from the sixteenth to the twentieth century, and in the last, the only one to survive intact, there are tombstones from the second half of the nineteenth century to our times. The Italian cemetery differs from the first three in style, and serves as a model for the "modern" cemeteries of the Jewish community.

The gravestones of the three ancient cemeteries can be divided into several major types. The most ancient, from the late sixteenth to the early seventeenth century, are medium-sized and made of limestone. They stand horizontally or vertically on the graves and their short inscriptions give the name of the deceased and the date of his passing. From the seventeenth century, the tombstones evince a greater monetary investment: they are larger and increasingly imposing, and their inscriptions are longer – an elaborate carving consisting of verses and information about the deceased. This phenomenon is not only the result of the improved economic conditions of the Jews of Istanbul during that period, but is also due to the drop in the price of marble which, from the eighteenth century, was quarried from around the Sea of Marmara.

From the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, two kinds of gravestones are predominant: prism-shaped and slab. The prism type is reminiscent of a coffin: its sides are carved with floral motifs and with inscriptions mourning the departed and expressing the sorrow of the family. It generally lies directly on the ground, although there are cases in which the monument is raised on a rectangular base (figs. 2, 3). The marble slab stone, which was popular chiefly in the eighteenth century, is often up to six square meters in size, standing vertically on the ground. It too was elaborately decorated with floral motifs and expressive inscriptions. The inscriptions are almost always in Hebrew, although Ladino can be found from the seventeenth century onwards, French from the nineteenth century, and Turkish inscriptions from the turn of this century.

The Italian cemetery differs in style and in the shape of its tombstones. It is densely planted and the greenery often covers the stones themselves. The stones are constructed as complex structures and are adorned with statues as was customary in Italy of the second half of the nineteenth century. The inscriptions are usually in a European language, such as Italian, French or German, and those of recent years may also be in Turkish. A Hebrew inscription is rare.

In Izmir, only one of the two ancient cemeteries has survived: Iki Çeşmelik. Situated on a hill from which two springs emanate, it is today completely covered with a natural forest and dense foliage. Most of the stones in it date from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with the addition of several tombstones of famous rabbis from the seventeenth century which were transferred from the oldest cemetery when the highway was built. The styles of the stones are mixed. There are many in the "Italian" style, but plain stones, standing vertically or horizontally, are also common. The inscriptions are simpler than those found in Istanbul and generally relate to the deceased and his family. The languages vary, from Hebrew and Ladino to Italian and French.

Rural cemeteries yield a different picture: The stones are almost always placed on the ground, and many are "recycled" stones that served for flooring or wall parts in buildings from the Roman and Byzantine periods. The decoration on these stones is often the original ancient decoration, at times with the addition of carved floral designs. The inscriptions are generally in Hebrew and describe the deceased. In these

2

small communities, the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century stones offer a moving testimony to the use of Hebrew as a living language. Rather than a sophisticated reworking of biblical verses, they are often original and inventive creations.

The past year or two has seen the beginning of the documentation, photographing and systematic registration of the tombstones in the main ancient cemeteries of Turkey, undertaken by the Annenberg Research Institute for Judaic and Middle Eastern Studies, in Philadelphia. The initiator of this complex project is the head of the institute, Professor Bernard Lewis, and it is aided by the Committee for the Commemoration of the Fifth Centennial of the Immigration of the Spanish Jews to Turkey.

Translated by Judith Levy

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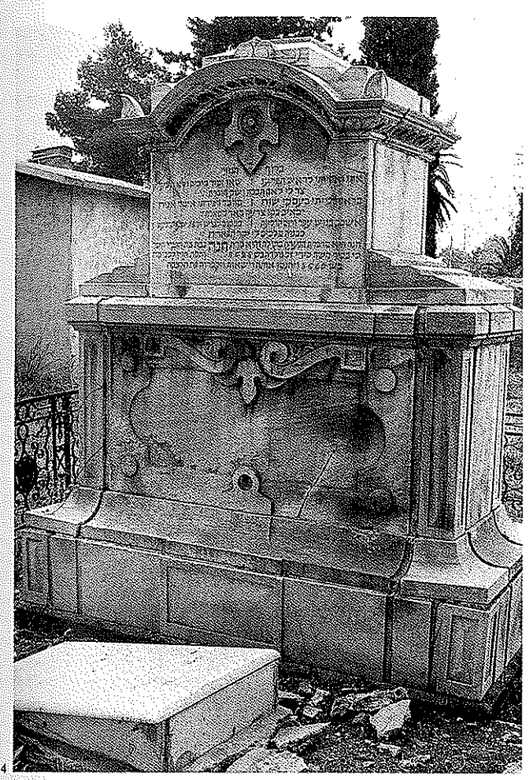

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2. Prism-shape tombstone on plaque
Kuzguncuk cemetery, Istanbul
Photo: 1983, Photo. Arch. 5964

3. Tombstone
1894
Italian Cemetery, Izmir
Photo: 1983, Photo. Arch. 5965

4. Tombstone
1907
Italian Cemetery, Izmir
Photo: 1983, Photo. Arch. 5965

5. Front side of prism-shaped tombstone
Kuzguncuk cemetery, Istanbul
Photo: 1983, Photo. Arch. 5964

6. Flat tombstone
1679
Kuzguncuk cemetery, Istanbul
Photo: 1983, Photo. Arch. 5964