

SEFARAD

החברה לחקר יהדות ספרד ופזורתה | סוסיידל די איסטודיאום סיפ'ארלדיס
Sociedad de estudios sefaradis | Society for Sephardic Studies



Moshe David Gaon Center
for Ladino Culture



Center for Visual
Culture of Balkans

The Tenth Annual Conference of the Society for Sephardic Studies,
organized in cooperation with the Moshe David Gaon Center for Ladino Culture



Prezidente

Dr. Eliezer Papo
President

Komite dirjente

Prof. Tamar Alexander
Prof. Yaron Ben-Naeh
Prof. Ricardo Muñoz Solla
Prof. José Alberto Tavim

Executive Committee

Koordinadora administrativa

Avishag Ben Shalom

Administrative Coordinator



of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev,

the Center for Studies of Jewish Art and Culture,

the Center for Visual Culture of Balkans

of the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade

and the Center for Sabbatean Sephardic Culture,

will take place at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Belgrade

from the 24th to the 26th of June 2020,

and will focus on the topic of



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ד"ר אליעזר פאפו
פרזידנט

הועד המנהל

פרופ' תמר אלכסנדר
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פרופ' ריקרדו מוניוז סולה
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ממונה על המנהל

אבישג בן שלום
קואורדינאדורה אדמיניסטרטיב'ה



Sephardic Jews between Religious, Ethnic, and National Identity

Even our era of fluid and overlapping identities has not ended the age-old tension between different aspects and perceptions of Jewish identity. Is the principal determinant of Jewish identity a person's relationship to "Judaism", or should Jewishness be perceived primarily as an ethnic culture and identity? After all, the term *Iudaismos* (Judaism) is not a Jewish one; it was coined by the ancient Greeks to designate the laws and customs of the people of the Israelite state of Judah. The pre-modern Hebrew language did not even have a word for "religion". Classical rabbinic texts generally do not speak of "Jews", but rather of the collective "Israel", whose redemption would be communal and occur in history, within this world.



אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב
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However, during their long Diaspora, the overwhelming majority of Jews lived in one of the two hemispheres, Christian or Islamic, and in both they were recognized as an ethno-confessional entity, with rare ruptures between the two components of this syntagm. Rupture in one of these components was usually accompanied by rupture in the other. However, the Hispano-Christian “crusade” against Judaism (led mainly by local clerics, theologians, and preachers), which led to the near-destruction of Castilian and Aragonese *aljamas* from 1391 to 1415, and to the concomitant problem of *judeoconversos*, subverted the validity of this syntagm. For the first time, the religion and ethnicity of tens of thousands of people once known—and still widely regarded—as Jews were at odds. The New Christians were Jewish in terms of their social and economic relations, their ethnic culture, and their social reputation; yet their religious identity was at least theoretically identical to that of the majority population. The Expulsion sought to end the Jewish subversion of the assimilation of New Christians into their new faith, but the “problem” endured well into our own days.

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In subsequent centuries, while the overwhelming majority of their Ottoman brethren reembraced the securities of the double but mostly indivisible ethno-confessional identity, the Conversos played major role in shifts and changes in the ways that Jews and Christians understood the relation between religion, society, and state.

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With the two Serbian revolutions of the early nineteenth century, followed by the Greek and Bulgarian uprisings, the Ottoman Jewish rabbinic elite (including such figures as Ribbi Yehuda Bivas and Ribbi Yehuda Alkalay) led a revolutionary change of Jewish identity, creating the Jewish national idea and the Zionist movement.

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With our Tenth Conference, we are looking forward to bring together scholars involved in research into the history (social, cultural, or history of art), languages, and literatures of the Sephardic Jews, before and after the Expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula. We encourage the participants to focus on Jewish, Christian, and Muslim perceptions of Jewish identity (general/national or ethnic: Sephardic or other), as reflected in their specific field of research.

While the conference is aimed to combine experience of scholars from diverse fields of study (anthropology, folklore, literature, arts, history, geography, museology etc.), covering diverse areas and periods, we would like to especially encourage papers which will focus on following points:

- Collective and individual identities of Iberian Jews before the Expulsion, their perception of Jewish peoplehood and of their own ethnic group within it;



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- The complex identities of the Anusim and the contribution of thinkers of Converso origin to the idea of the separation of State and Church;
- Expulsion and confrontation of identities: Iberian Megorashim vs. the Toshavim in Morocco, the Romaniotes in the Ottoman Empire, or Bene Roma and Tedescos in Italy;
- Livorno and the development of the Levantine community, identity and even “Levantine language”;
- Shabbetai Şevi’s conversion to Islam (with his hardcore followers) and its repercussions for the Sephardic/Jewish identity;
- Balkan, Christian, and Muslim perceptions of Jewish identity;
- The Ottoman/Balkan context of the conception of the Zionist idea;



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- The influence of the gradual autonomy of Miloš Obrenović’s Serbia within the Ottoman State on the development of Ribbi Yehuda Alkalay’s concept of Jewish autonomy in the Ottoman Land of Israel;
- Zemun, the meeting point between two Empires (Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian) and its mixed Sephardic-Ashkenazi community, with common rabbi, synagogue, and graveyard;
- The Karakash, Kapandji, and Yakubi communities and the Spanish Law of Repatriation.

Please send your abstracts (no more than to 200 words) before 31 January 2020 to: gaon@bgu.ac.il.

All submissions will be reviewed by the Steering Committee of the Society and the Organizing Committee of the Belgrade conference.



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Organizing Committee:

- Dr. Eliezer Papo
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