

Abstracts

Yom Tov Assis: **Jewish diplomats from the Crown of Catalonia-Aragon in Muslim lands (1213-1327)**

Participation by Jews in Catalonia's financial, administrative and political life in the thirteenth century was greater than what one would have expected from their demographic weight. Their involvement in the diplomatic service, particularly their role as intermediaries between Christians and Muslims, was quite outstanding. The reasons behind this success can be explained by the value that the Catalan kings attached to the knowledge the Jews had of the Arabic language, as well as their familiarity with Muslim mentality and their close contact with their Jewish brethren in North Africa.

Besides being entrusted with diplomatic missions, Jews were employed as interpreters, fiscal administrators, and bailiffs throughout the newly conquered territories along the southern border of the Crown of Catalonia-Aragon, and as court officials in various jobs.

A number of Jewish diplomats, such as Jahudà Abenhacen, Abraham Abengalell, Abraham Abenamies or Samuel Alfaquim played an important role in the negotiations carried out in the reigns of Pere II, Alfons II, and Jaume II with Muslim rulers in the latter part of the XIIIth century. Samuel Alfaquim was the architect of the policy that the Catalan kings implemented towards Granada. Abraham Abengalell, accompanied by his brother, was the first Catalano-Aragonese ambassador to Morocco. Various commercial and diplomatic missions to Tlemcen were committed to the care of Jews as well. This article was originally published in Hebrew in *Sefunot*, 18 (1985), p. 11-34.

Josep M. Llobet i Portella: **Two wills and a marriage contract from Jews of Cervera (1395)**

The author offers the transcription, preceded by a short introduction, of three documents from notarial records found at the Arxiu Històric Comarcal of Cervera. The first document, which is in Latin, is the will made by Izach Alfrangi, bequeathing his property to his wife Aster. The second document, also

in Latin, is a long will made by Sentou Jafuda, a tailor in Cervera, providing for the way in which his wife Astruga, in her quality as executrix, should distribute his property after his death. The third document is written in Catalan and establishes the marriage conditions for the wedding of Adret Abram, son of Abram Adret, and Tolrana, daughter of Abram Perfeit Adret. It is noteworthy that these documents were executed in the presence of a Christian notary.

Jordi Casanovas: New fragments with Hebrew inscriptions found in Barcelona

The restoration and remodelling of some of the buildings in various parts of the Ciutat Vella (Old Quarter) have resulted in the recovery in some cases, and the identification in others, of new fragments with Hebrew inscriptions, coming mainly from the Jewish cemetery in Montjuïc, which was disrupted after the violent anti-Jewish riots of 1391.

Eduard Feliu: The controversy over the study of philosophy in the Jewish communities of Provence and Catalonia at the beginning of the 14th century: Some basic documents from the *Minḥat Kenaot* of Abba Mari ben Moses of Lunel

At the beginning of the 14th century, among many political and social problems and under the threat of an expulsion, Provençal and Catalan Jewish communities became involved in a fierce dispute over the role that the study of philosophy had to play in the education of youth. Historians have taken pains to explain the circumstances that caused that confrontation, which was in truth restricted to a few influential notables belonging to powerful Occitan families. This dispute had a parallel in the Christian world in the fight against rationalism that ecclesiastical and academic sectors had waged some decades earlier.

The target of the so-called traditionalist sector was to postpone the study of philosophy until the students would have had a fair chance to be trained in biblical and talmudical sciences. The controversy, which involved, albeit reluctantly, Rabbi Solomon ben Adret of Barcelona, reached its highest point in the promulgation of a *herem* in Barcelona in July 1305, forbidding the teaching and the learning of philosophy by those under twenty-five years of age. Apparently the original text of the ban excluded secular physical sciences from that prohibition, as is clear from Solomon ben Adret's own words in several letters.

The dispute ended suddenly a year later with the expulsion of the Jews from the kingdom of France ordered by Philip the Fair (July 1306). (Curiously enough, Jaume II, king of Catalonia-Aragon, granted permission to sixty exiled Jewish families to settle in Barcelona just three weeks later.)

On pondering on the various aspects of that polemic, we should avoid considering it a new phase of the Maimonidean controversy. The work of the great sage, who had definitely ushered Aristotle into the Jewish thought, was not at stake at this time. In some of the letters included in the *Minbat Kenaot*, Solomon ben Adret emphatically denies the possibility of linking the attitude of the traditionalists with any intention to criticize Maimonides or to curb his influence. Indeed the struggle was not against philosophy in and of itself nor against secular, *i.e.*, physical, sciences, but against the extreme allegorical interpretation of the Bible to which certain philosophers resorted, particularly Levi ben Abraham and, somewhat earlier, Jacob Anatolio. In the eyes of the traditionalists, this interpretation sapped the foundations of the Jewish religion.

The article presents a complete Catalan translation of some essential letters exchanged between the sages of Montpellier and Barcelona, encompassing the main stages of the controversy and including the three documents of the excommunication. These translations are based on the critical edition of *Minbat Kenaot* prepared by H. Z. Dimitrovsky (1990), which has replaced the old and faulty edition made by M. L. Bisliches in 1838.

M. Esperança Barjau and Eduard Feliu: **Amir Gilboa or the dreamer in the bush**

The article introduces the works of Amir Gilboa, one of the most distinguished poets of modern Hebrew literature, and offers the Catalan translation of a number of his poems. Born in 1917 in a small village in the Ukrainian historical region of Volhynia, Gilboa emigrated to Israel in 1937, where he had various jobs over several years. When the second world war broke out, he joined the British Army and took part in the North Africa campaign. After the war he became a member of Masada's editorial staff. Amir Gilboa died in Tel-Aviv in 1984.

The poems chosen belong to the main books published by Gilboa in his lifetime, and to the posthumous *Everything Goes*. The introduction expounds the circumstances in which every group of poems was written and the trend that each represents in the intellectual and aesthetic evolution of the poet. These poems cover the whole span of his life - from memories of childhood in

Europe to his response to his impending death, including the various moments of exaltation prompted by the collective dreams (a key word in the poet's language) which Israeli society had in his times or of the disappointment experienced upon realizing that these dreams had not come true.

Eduard Feliu and Pere Casanellas: **Bibliography on the history of the Jews in the Crown of Catalonia-Aragon and Provence: 1985-1994**

The bibliography presented in this first issue of *Tamid* attempts to restore for the researcher the historical links that united old Provence with the Catalan and Aragonese lands. In the Middle Ages this territory was criss-crossed by all kinds of political, cultural and linguistic ties. It had its own unity. Medievalists should avoid falling into the snare and delusion of splitting it into the two modern states of France and Spain, since by taking such anachronistic point of view they get and convey a blurred image of the particular history of that region. Provence and the Crown of Catalonia-Aragon had a brilliant Jewish population since ancient times, a population that was very active in finance and trade, and created powerful cultural and religious movements.

The compilers of this bibliography aimed to assemble all of the books and articles that were published from 1985 to 1994 in the main countries where Jewish studies are cultivated. This search yielded around one thousand items, which are given here in numbered alphabetical order. The numbers are subsequently used in three different lists that offer the bibliographical material classified by geographical names, individuals and subjects.

This bibliography is the foundation upon which the *SCEHB* is going to build a wide-ranging data base that will be updated regularly and made available to its members. All corrections and additions will therefore be welcome.