

ŽIDOVI U POVIJESTI SPLITA

**THE PLACE OF JEWS IN THE
HISTORY OF THE CITY OF SPLIT**

BY DUŠKO KEČKEMET

CONDENSED ENGLISH VERSION

BY ŽIVKO VEKARIĆ

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2024

SPLIT 1971

THE PLACE OF JEWS IN THE HISTORY OF THE CITY OF SPLIT

The decision to write the history of the Jewish community in the city of Split was prompted by two facts, i.e. by the important and positive part played by the Jews in the city's past, and by the dwindling of their number and vanishing of old traditions, particularly in the wake of the tragic events associated with the madness of World War II. These two facts fully justify the collection of the data still available and its publication before it is too late.

We hope that the present paper will attract attention from various quarters, that is to say not only in the region of which Split is the natural centre, owing to the fact that a Jewish community has continuously been present in the city for about two thousand years and that, taking an active part in city affairs, particularly from the 16th century on, they climbed the social ladder, winning general appreciation.

Despite their small number, ranging between 200 and 300 persons, the part played by the Jewish community in the city's distant and recent past was so significant that its history generally coincides with the history of the city and vice versa.

Archaeological excavations carried out in the area of the large and wealthy Roman city of Salona, the capital of the Roman province of Dalmatia, have yielded traces of a well established Jewish community in that city (the parent city of Split) during the earliest centuries of the Christian era. The finds involved witness the existence of religious practices of the Jews of Salona, their separate cemetery, etc.

The data referring to the presence of Jews in the Middle Ages are not abundant, and the Jewish communities in the Dalmatian towns are rarely mentioned in existing mediaeval documents.

The Roman city of Salona had been destroyed in the early 7th century A. D. whereupon the surviving citizens, including the members of the Jewish colony, took refuge within the strong walls of the neighbouring large palace of the emperor Diocletian. The Jews had then been co-founders of the new settlement from and around which gradually grew the city of Split.

We are allowed to conclude, from some later documents, that a Synagogue existed in the most prominent, i.e. the southern, part of the new city soon after its founding. This seems to be confirmed by the fact that even in 15th and 16th centuries that part of the city was dubbed Synagogue. Because of the reduction of their number in the city and the increasing dislike of Jews by the Catholic church, the old Synagogue was given up and another building, probably a modest one, was adapted as their place of worship.

The mediaeval Jewish community in the city of Split was long remembered by the surviving term »zueca«, usually applied to localities occupied by tanners and dyers in various Dalmatian towns, and the Split Jews were for centuries engaged in the above-mentioned trades.

The 16th century documents, however, abound in interesting data concerning the Jewish community settled in the city of Split. Quite a number of Spanish-Portuguese Sephardim immigrants, attracted by the considerable exchange of goods between the Republic of Venice, to which the city then belonged, and the Ottoman Empire, that reached as far as the mountain chain extending along the Dalmatian coast, encircling some of its cities, chose Split as the port of transshipment where the sea-borne trade was taken over by caravans and vice versa.

A Spanish Jew, named Daniel Rodriga (short for Rodriguez), played a leading role in promoting further development of that exchange of goods between Europe and the oriental countries. Realizing the paramount importance of the port of Split in that two-way trade, Rodriga feverishly set to work by explaining his foresighted plans and by engaging all his great abilities, all his efforts, and even his property, in order to help Split become a large port of transshipment with a lazaretto for quarantine purposes. Rodriga tried to persuade his contemporaries that the caravan-carried trade following the old mainland routes was much safer than the sea-borne trade and that Split was the most favourable starting point of the ancient caravan routes leading not only to Turkey, but to the rest of Asia as well.

Rodrigo conceived the idea of building a large lazaretto in the port of Split where men and goods coming from the eastern countries would be put under quarantine before being carried by ships to Venice and thence to the rest of Europe. The goods coming from the western countries would be discharged at Split and then carried eastwards by caravans.

Despite all the problems which he encountered, Rodrigo's efforts were eventually crowned with success, and by the end of 16th century Split became an important port of transshipment with a huge lazaretto, one of the largest in Europe, answering the requirements of a large volume of the two-way trade for nearly three centuries.

Aided by his Jewish friends in Venice and Constantinople, Daniel Rodrigo succeeded in organizing the sizable goods traffic via Split. The Venetian Republic more than once acknowledged his merit, rewarding not only him, but also the Jewish communities of both Venice and Split with special privileges, and showing great confidence in him on every occasion. By successfully completing various political missions in Turkey, Rodrigo proved worthy of that confidence. Similar tasks were also performed by some other members of the Jewish colony of Split.

In recognition of their merits, the Venetian authorities showed a high degree of tolerance towards the members of the Jewish minority; as far as the city of Split is concerned, they were entitled to almost all the privileges of its regular citizens. This fact stands out in stark contrast to the treatment of Jews in other European countries of that time. The two-way trade flowing via Split, to be sure, was in the hands of influential Turkish and Venetian Jewish families, but the citizens of Split, including the city's Jews, derived considerable profit from it. This helped the city to bolster its economy in the worst period of its history when it was utterly isolated between two foreign powers, the Venetian Republic controlling the sea, and the Ottoman Empire controlling the mainland and was thus completely separated from its natural hinterland.

The periodically occurring Turkish incursions added an extra burden to the citizens of Split, including the Jewish community, i.e. the improvements of the city's fortifications

and also engagement in the armed resistance when needed. In the course of those critical years, the Jews found a way to supply the city with provisions at reasonable prices. While they also afforded support to the local hospital, some of their experienced physicians distinguished themselves through devoted assistance to the sick in the years of catastrophic epidemic diseases. This fact was equally appreciated by the people of Split and Venice.

The Jewish community in the city of Split grew suddenly larger when immigrants from Spain arrived in 16th century. While the total population ranged between five and ten thousand, the number of Jews varied from 150 to 300. Most of them were retailers, selling articles imported both from the western and eastern countries. Their occupations included weaving, tailoring, and sale of cloth or native garments worn by the mountain people in some parts of Dalmatia and Bosnia. They dealt in articles of food as well, a line of business not permitted to Jews elsewhere. According to an agreement with the Municipality, the Jews ran also a bank — an institution of great importance in a busy port and commercial city. Both civilian and military physicians and surgeons of Split earned particular reputation.

With the exception of Dubrovnik, an independent city-state, not subject to Venice, and Split, part of the Republic of Venice for several centuries, Jewish immigrants were not admitted to other cities on the Dalmatian coast. The treatment of Jews by the city authorities and the people of Split was not only a tolerant one, but outright friendly. In the absence of social narrow-mindedness, religious bigotry and molestation, the members of the Jewish community of Split had the feeling of security and protection, and they missed no opportunity to join forces with other citizens in order to add to the development and prosperity of the city.

There is only one recorded attempt made by some local merchants when, wanting to circumvent the Jewish competition in retail trade and tailoring, they formed a guild excluding Jews from it. The Jewish merchants, however, succeeded in having their privileges reaffirmed by the local and state authorities — the privileges they had been con-

ferred upon in the course of centuries in appreciation of their special merits, and their commercial activities continued unrestricted.

A separate Jewish quarter — ghetto — did not exist in the city of Split, and the members of the Jewish community enjoyed civil liberty, exercising their activities all over the city area, associating freely and on equal terms with other citizens (even as business partners) and with noblemen. In the late 18th century, however, toward the end of the Venetian rule, due partly to the influence of the clergy and partly to the general decay of the Venetian economy, a ghetto was introduced in Split, too. It was located in the north-western part of the former palace of Diocletian, where most of the city's Jews lived.

A sudden social and religious revival followed soon after the arrival of the Jewish immigrants from Spain. The still existing Synagogue was then adapted in a building (with no exterior decoration or mark to identify it) situated in the quarter where a major part of the colony lived, i.e. in the centre of the mediaeval city. The Synagogue was restored in the 18th century.

A Jewish cemetery was founded in 1573 when a special site (on the eastern slope of Mount Marjan) was appropriated by the Municipality for that specific purpose. Having been used for four centuries, the cemetery represents a unique monument, being one of the oldest Jewish cemeteries known. Its attractive setting, on the wooded slope overlooking the city, makes the cemetery particularly picturesque.

Having culled a number of facts from documents found in the archives, the author illustrates the social, religious and cultural life of the Jewish community of Split during the Venetian rule.

The political and social disorder, accompanying the dissolution of the Venetian Republic, brought critical days to the Jewish colony. Before the arrival of the French troops, the reactionary elements in the city inveighed against the Jews, considering them to be adherents of the »godless Jacobins«, and led an armed crowd to attack the ghetto in 1797. Sensible citizens, however, succeeded in calming the excited people and to convince them of their error.

While the »Declaration of civil rights«, issued by the new administration established by the French, extended all the civil rights to the city's Jews, the Austrian administration, succeeding the French one in 1813, restricted some of those rights.

The relationship between the Jewish community and the native population of Split in the 19th century was mutually friendly and unbiased. Being notably industrious, the Jews used the resources at their disposal in order to promote commerce and industry in the latter half of the century when the importance of the once busy port of Split started declining, and when some wealthy Jewish families, giving preference to Trieste, the then growing Austrian port, left Split for good. Around the end of the 19th century, however, other Jewish families found refuge in Split while fleeing from Bosnia, then under Turkish domination, where conditions had become intolerable.

Valuable data, illustrating the 19th century life of the Jewish colony and its social and religious organizations has been culled from the surviving books belonging to Jewish families and documents belonging to the Jewish community, that escaped destruction by the Fascists during the occupation by the Italian forces in World War II.

Although numerically small, the Jewish colony made its presence felt not only in the economic area, but in the cultural field as well. In addition to their permanent Talmudic school, a Jewish private elementary school was opened in Split in 1817.

Three Jewish families, Mussafia, Jesurum, and Morpurgo are particularly noted for having given the city of Split outstanding men of letters.

Rabbi Jacob Mussafia prepared a Talmudic dictionary in Hebrew. His son, Abraham Adolfo Mussafia, born in Split in 1834, settled later in Vienna, Austria, where he distinguished himself as a prominent philologist. He taught at the University of Vienna for fifty years and published a number of treatises, dealing chiefly with the historic grammar of the Romance group of languages.

Another notable personality, whose activity was closely connected with the city of Split and Dalmatia in general,

was Vid (Vita) Morpurgo. In the 19th century power struggle between two Dalmatian political parties, one of them autonomist, but culturally leaning toward Italy, and the other unionist, attracted by the ethnically akin Croatia, Morpurgo did not hesitate to side with the people. He realized the positive value of the popular movement and understood the need for the economic development and cultural promotion of the Croat people in Dalmatia, neglected for centuries first by the Venetian and then by the Austrian administration. Devoted to the freely chosen cause, Morpurgo became one of its foremost activists in Split and Dalmatia at large. His bookstore became a meeting place of Dalmatian patriots, including also patriotic members of the clergy. A number of pamphlets, published by Morpurgo, played an important part in the national revival and the intense political struggle with the influential adversary. Two volumes of the »Dalmatian Almanac« (1859, 1861) were published by him, the first book of that kind in Dalmatia. Morpurgo's great experience as printer and publisher was of inestimable value when a newspaper (the »Narodni List«) was founded by a group of Croat patriots. He also became a contributor.

In order to help common townspeople and farmers — then highly dependent on wealthy landowners — Morpurgo founded a bank in 1869 to foster the economic independence of the farmer. The affairs of the bank (named Prva Pučka Dalmatinska Banka, i.e. The First Dalmatian People's Bank), were directed by him until his old age.

The Chamber of Commerce, under Morpurgo's leadership, promoted commerce and trade, endeavouring also to establish a basis for the industrialization of the area. He himself founded a family owned liqueur distillery, a modern wine cellar, and engaged in exploring the region for ores, operating later a coal mine, asphalt mine, and a brick kiln.

Vid Morpurgo died in 1911 and was buried in the old Jewish cemetery on Mount Marjan overlooking the city which he served with devotion, like his distant predecessor, Daniel Rodriga.

The life and activity of the Jewish colony in the period between the two World Wars are separately dealt with by the author. Besides being engaged in commerce and trade, its members became increasingly represented in the learned professions including medicine, law, engineering, economics, etc.

Documents important for the history of the Jewish community of Split, particularly those relative to Daniel Rodriga's activity, were collected and studied by Viktor Morpurgo. The author of the present paper is indebted to them for a number of facts. A novel, basing on autobiographical data, was published by Luciano Morpurgo, a Roman publisher and author. By his vivid nostalgic description of his young days spent in Split, the author attracted a number of admirers. In »Manhunt«, another book by this author, published after World War II, Luciano Morpurgo drew a sombre picture of the persecution of Jews by the Fascists.

As soon as Dalmatia, including also Split, were occupied by the Italian army in the early spring of 1941, dark days set in for the Jewish community of Split. The anti-Jewish feelings of the Italians, however, found a rather verbal outburst, and this did not prevent Jews fleeing from other parts of the dismembered Yugoslavia — then occupied by the German army — to find a haven in Split, where the refugees were aided by their local coreligionists who also found ways to help Jews interned in concentration camps.

A group of fanatical Fascists broke open the Synagogue in 1942, demolishing and plundering it. The furniture, archives, and ritual books were piled on a heap in the central city square and set on fire. The flames of that huge bonfire devoured invaluable material connected with the history of the Jewish community, while most of the sacred silver and vestments were stolen by the plunderers.

Harder times, however, were still to come. The real tragedy began with the occupation of Split by the German army, which followed the collapse of Fascism and surrender of Italy in 1943. Having already established close ties with the resistance movement during the occupation, younger Jews had left Split before it was taken by the German army, joining the partisan units operating in the woods and

mountains of Yugoslavia. Roughly a third of the Jewish community took part in the struggle for national liberation and, to honour those killed in action, a memorial tablet has been set up by the community.

The members of the Jewish colony who did not leave the city — mostly older people and children — were rounded up by the Germans, sentenced to forced labour and then sent to concentration camps from which they never returned. The total number of casualties was a high one indeed. Two thirds of the Jewish community lost their lives both in action and in concentration camps.

The surviving third returned to Split when the war torn country was finally liberated. While some members chose to emigrate to Israel, the remaining few joined forces with their co-citizens in the feverish postwar reconstruction effort and endeavour to promote the society of which they themselves have become an integral part.

English version by ŽIVKO VEKARIĆ

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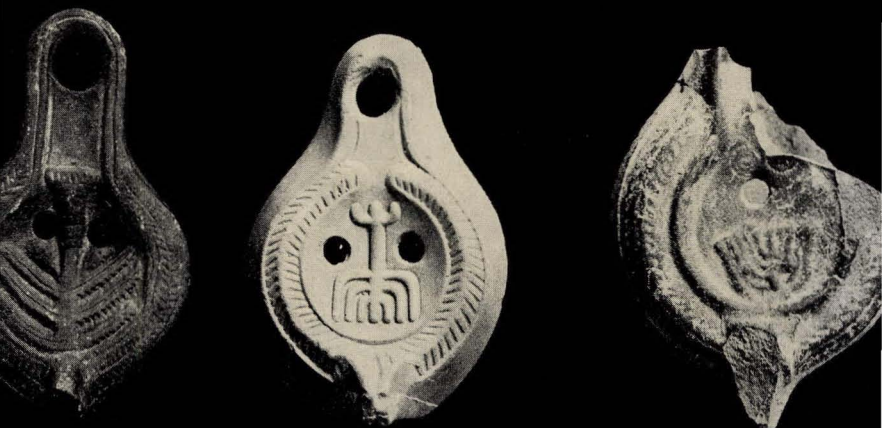
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1. Antički židovski privjesak iz Salone. (Arheološki muzej u Splitu).

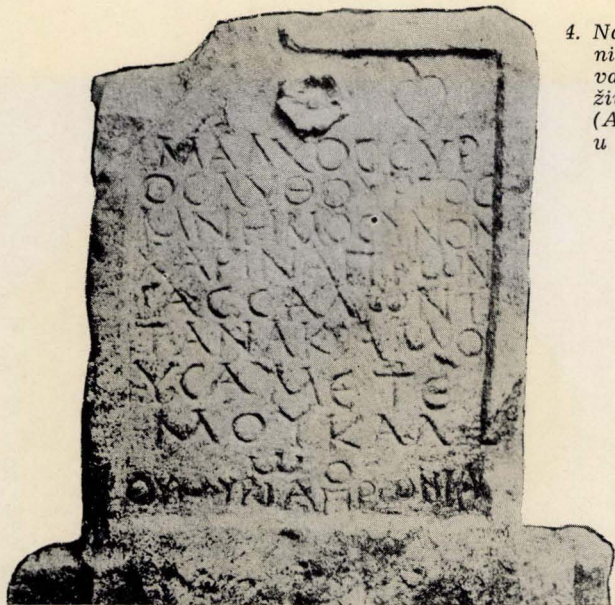
2. Antičke glinene židovske svjetiljke iz Salone.



3. Ulomak antičkog židovskog sarkofaga iz Salone. (Arheološki muzej u Splitu).

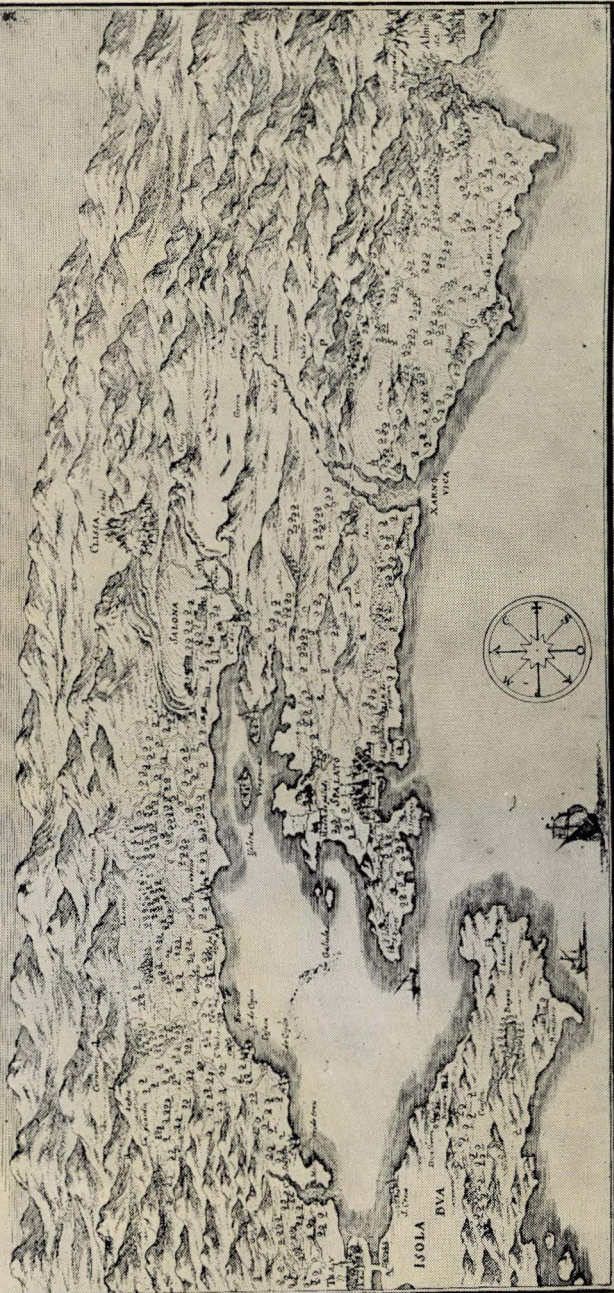


4. Nadgrobni spomenik sirijskog Židova Malhosa koji je živio u Saloni. (Arheološki muzej u Sofiji).

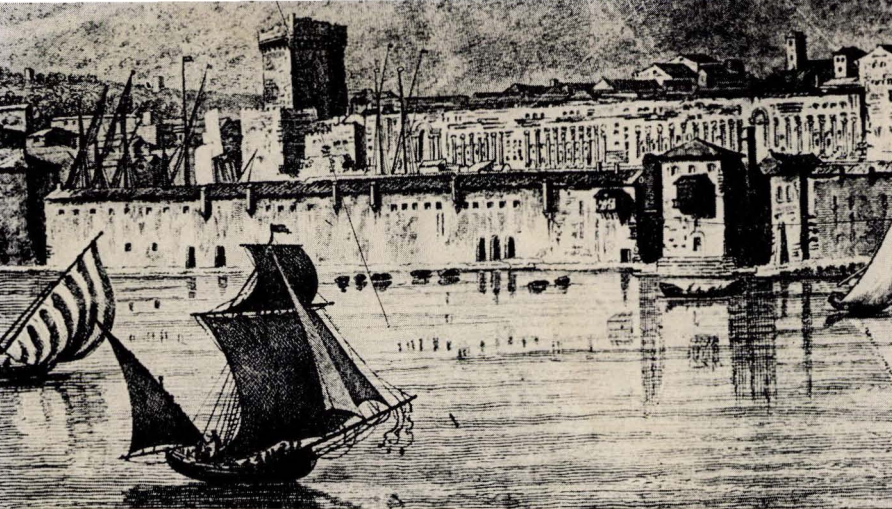


Delineatio Situæ Provincie circa Clissam & Spalatum

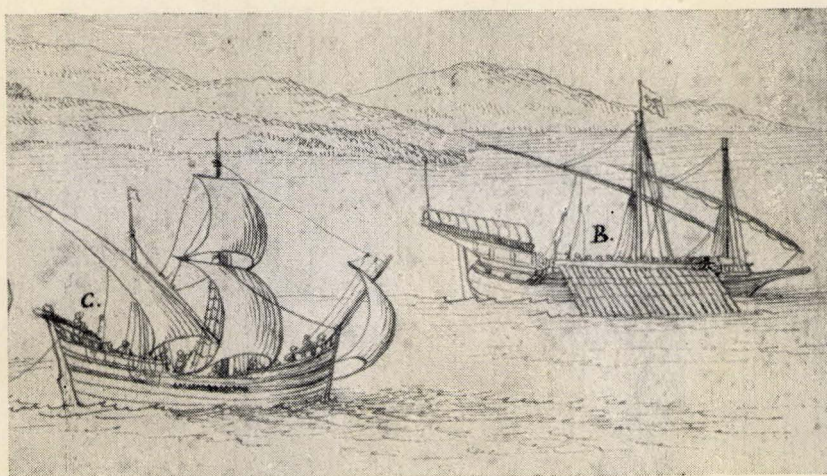
Abbildung oßer Situation der Landtschaft um Clissa und Spalato 1688



5. Split i okolica u XVII stoljeću



6. L. F. Cassas: Pogled na Split s lazaretom (XVIII st.).

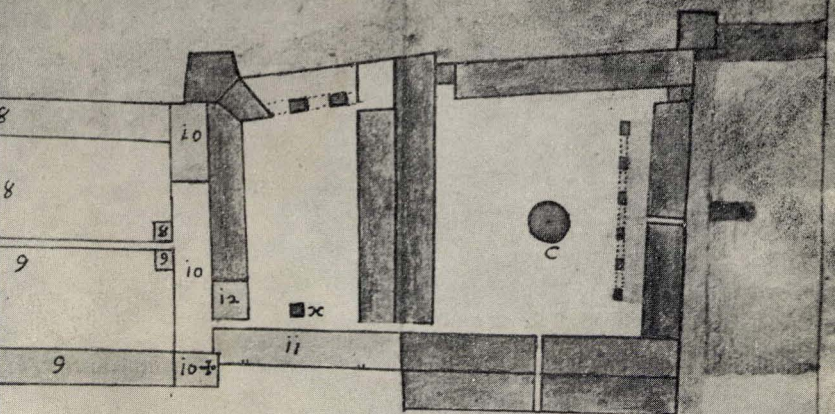


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8. L. F. Cassas: Splitska luka (XVIII st.).





azione della Carica Generalizia e suo Corte in Spalato fatto da me
 Ecc^{to} Sig^o Angelo Emo Frouet Senet.
 e Mercanti e Mercanzie
 xinali e suo Corte. il tutto fatto con ogni diligenza come appare nel
 Plan dell' E. S.

auto con Decreto dell' Ecc^{to} Senato
 Camere un Stallon ed un Camerin per il Guardian
 in per il Guardian
 auto Stallon

e Magazoni 5 con suo Stallon
 in ed un Camerin per il Guardian
 lon ed un Camerin per il Guardian

in faccio l'habitatione per il Prior e di sotto un Magazone
 Magazone d'Appartamenti d'Artiglierie n^o 12 Camere per il Guardian
Dandres

P E R

L'Università degli Ebrei della Città
di Spalato.

1647
1630
1617
1547

P 17

Decreto Senato circa la Scala di Spalato.

1590. 20. Zugno. In Pregadi.

['Anderà parte che appresso a quauto fin' ora è stato preso in proposito della Scala di Spalato li Capitoli sottoscritti siano eseguiti come stanno, e giaciono, cioè.

Primo. Che sia prorogato per Anni cinque il Capitolo nella Parte presa in questo Consiglio a 20. Ottobre 1577. che dice che le robbe che veniranno, o anderanno per Levante in ogni tempo, & occasione, & le persone di che Nazione si voglia che si trouano nella Città di Spalato, & in quella Doana siano sicuri per quanto aspetta alla Signoria Nostra, senza esser molestati in alcuna meniera, di modo che il Traffico di essa Scala non sia perturbato &c.

Omissis.

Terzo. Che tutti li Ebrei Leuantini, e Ponentini che già Anni 5. si sono partiti da questa Città, e da poi il prendere della presente parte vi torneranno, e quelli anco che veniranno per l'auenire, che non abbiano a contribuire con li Ebrei Todefchi, ne siano

STAMPA

Mercanti Cristiani della Città
di Spalato

C.

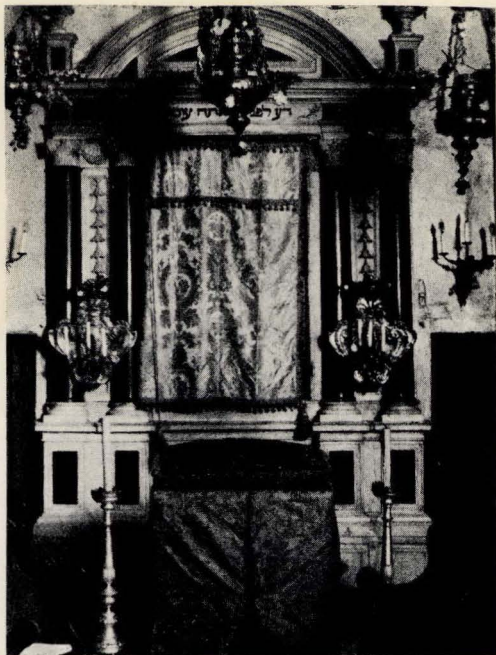
L'Vniversità degl'Ebrei.

A L L A U D O.



15. Unutrašnjost sinagoge u Splitu s otvorenim ehalom.

16. Ehal splitske sinagoge



17. Srebrni predmeti u nekadašnjoj splitskoj sinagogi.

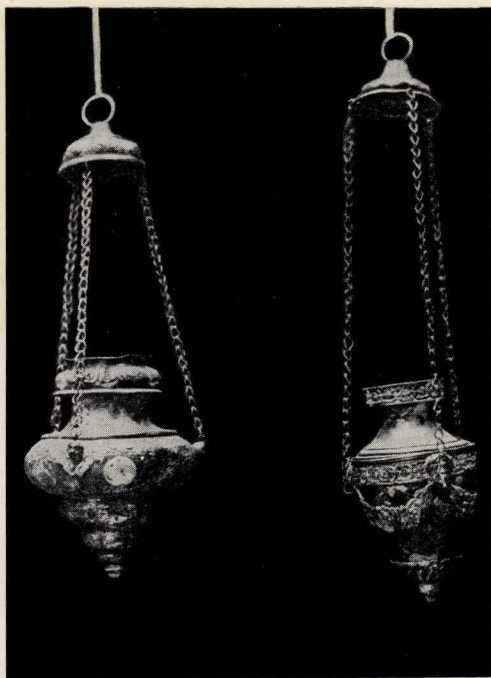


18. Ženidbe
(ketubah)
obitrlji

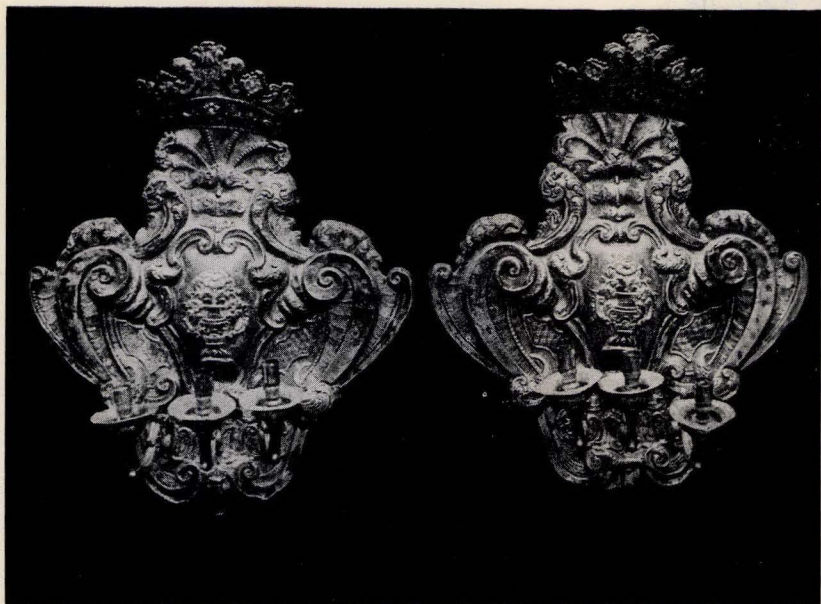


19. Vezeni parohet u
splitskoj sinagogi,
dar obitelji Jesurum.

svijećnjaci
i šadai sinagoge.



21. Srebrni predmeti iz
splitske sinagoge (ša-
dai i rimonim)

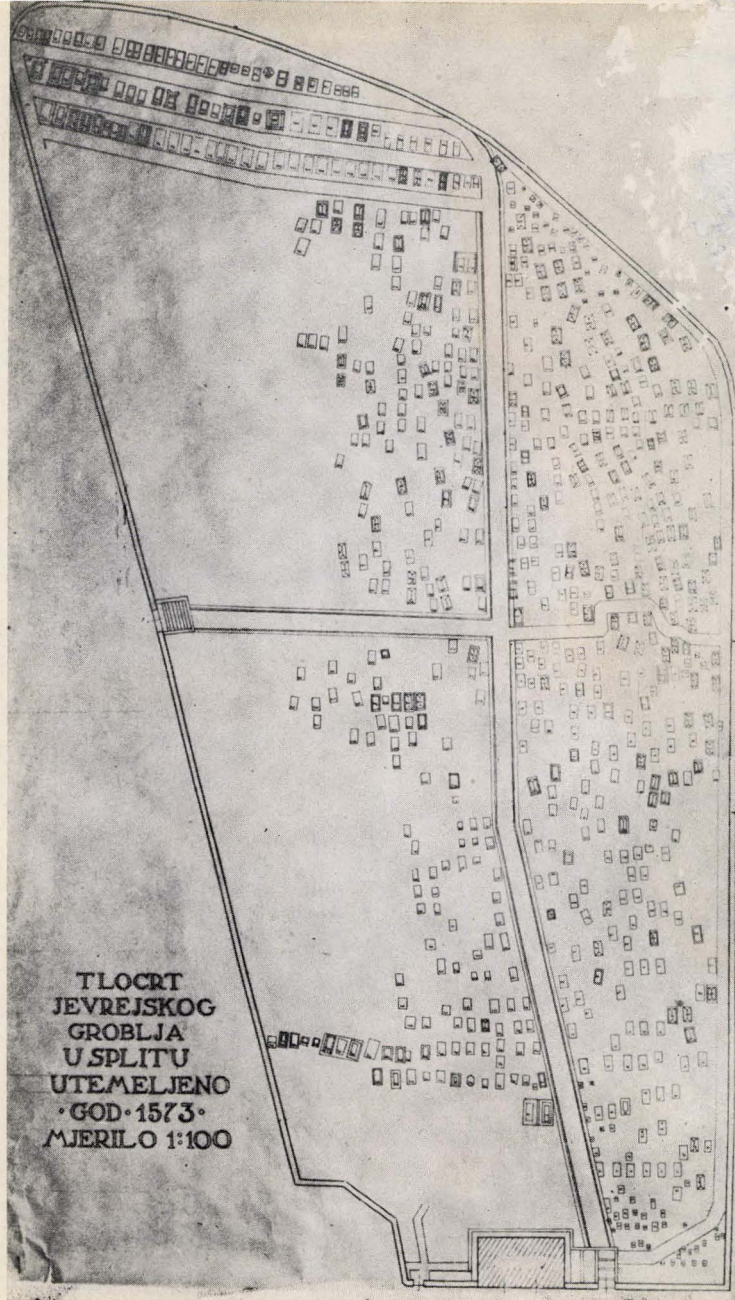


22. Srebrni zidni svijećnjaci iz splitske sinagoge.



23. Srebrni hanukias iz splitske sinagoge.

Nella perseguitazione che io, Simon Radeli sindaco della città di
 Hofstadelli benedice, in maniera, era notoriamente di era
 conosciuta e appropriazione, ne chiesi che dalli kálbei in parte
 nominata la concessione della quale pretendono che erano loro
 o loro il loro dove celebravano li loro santi per che
 ragione della medesima concessione pretendono
 E per ciò confesso lo Simon Radeli sindaco come sindaco ha
 ha e ne può a' suoi inspectori per ottenere una uffici
 della giustizia ma come galas della città sopra una concessione
 fatta alli suoi del 1579. per il signor Aligardoni la quale
 ricevire e per loro causa, galas la presente
 lo Simon Radeli after me



25. Tlocrt židovskog groblja na Marjanu.

dovsko groblje na Marjanu.

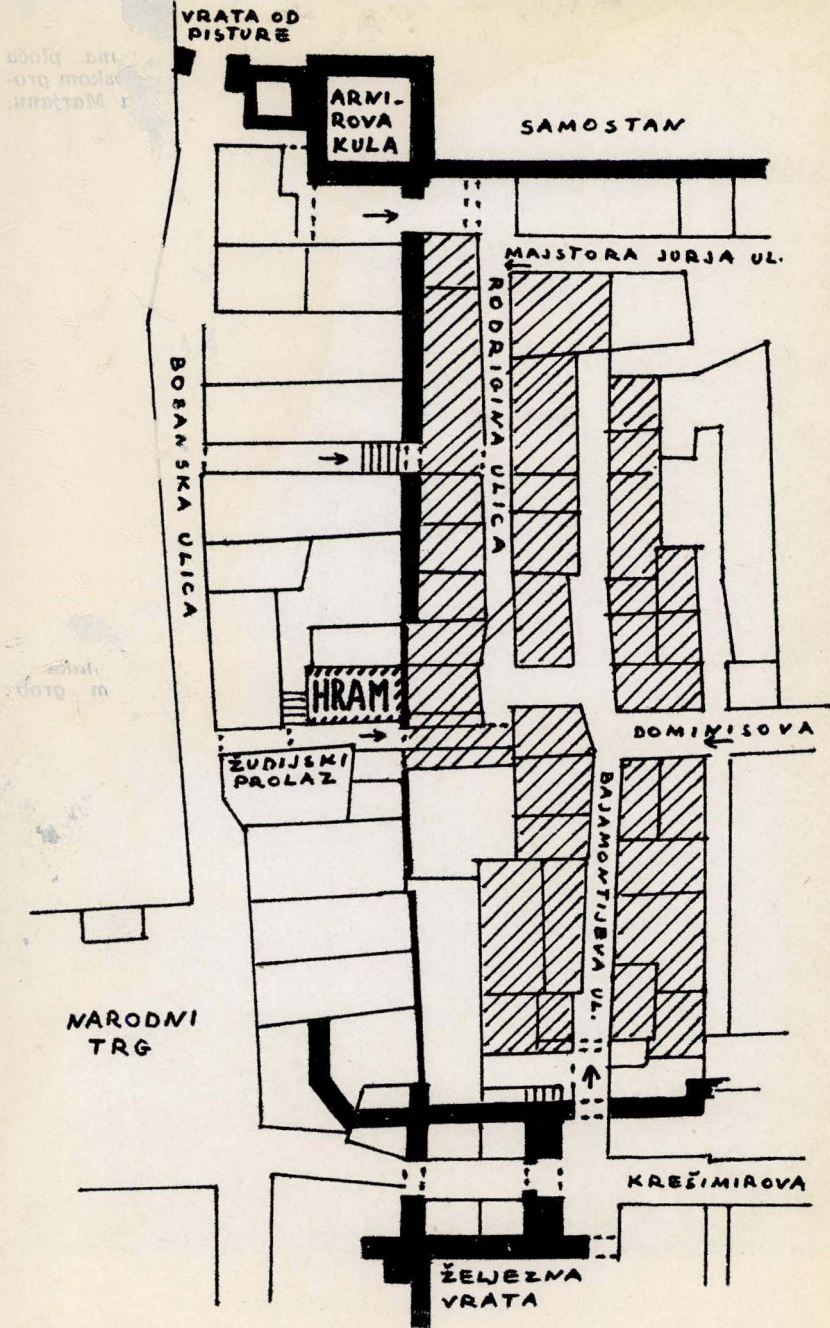




27. Nadgrob
na židov
blju



28. Grobnice uglec
nih pokoj na
židovsko
lju.



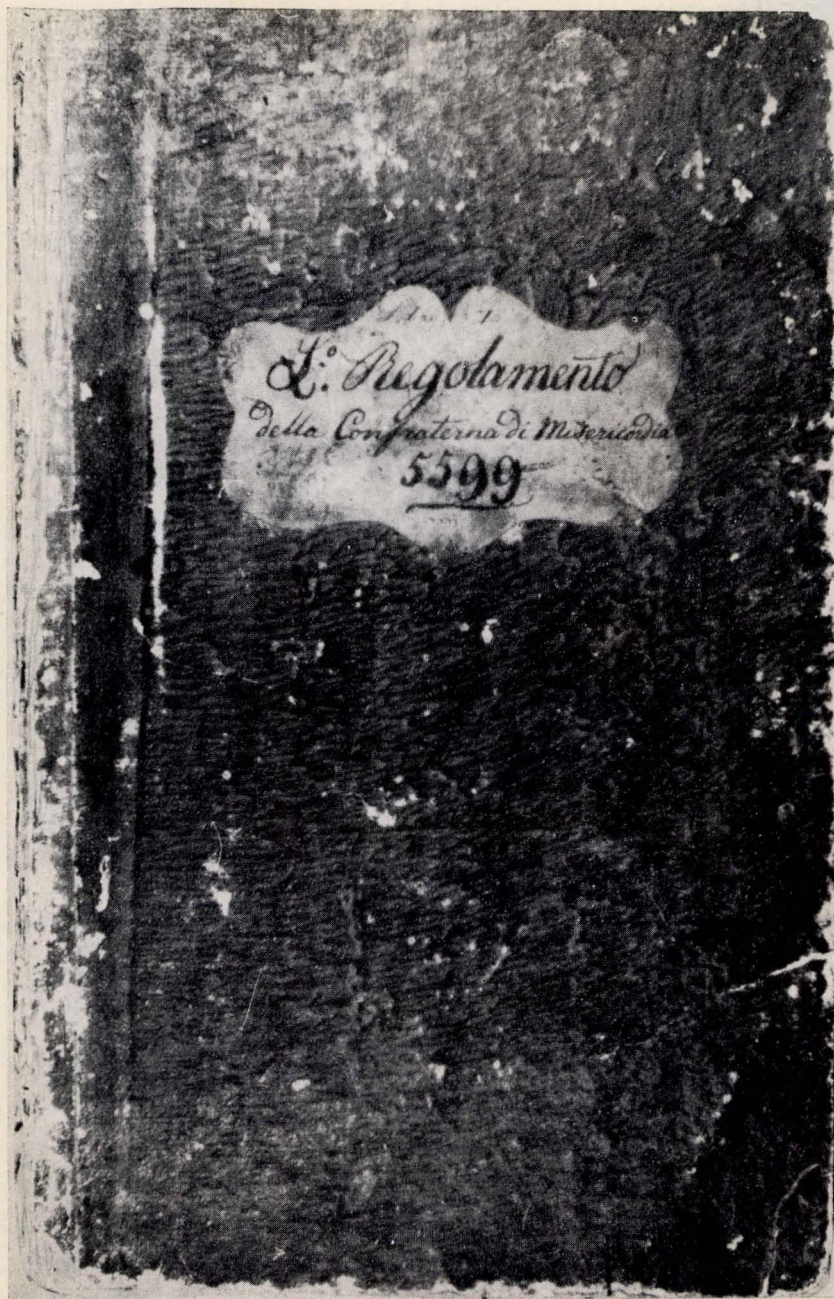
29. Vjerojatni položaj splitskog geta u sjeverozapadnom dijelu Dioklecijanove palače.



30. Dio Arnirove kule i položaj jednih od vrata geta.

31. Jedna od dvije središnje ulice splitskog geta. (Danas Bajamontijeva ulica).







DA PARTE
DELLA CESAREA REGIA SCUOLA ELEMENTARE
ISRAELITICA
DI SPALATO.

Viene certificato che *Morpurga David* Scolare della
3^a Classe si è comportato *ottimo* nella moralità, ed appreso li
prescritti oggetti per il semestre dell'anno 182²/₃ come segue:

La Dottrina Religiosa		<i>ottimo</i>
La Grammatica		<i>ottimo</i>
Lo scrivere sotto dettatura		<i>ottimo</i>
La Storia Sacra		<i>ottimo</i>
Composizioni per iscritto		<i>beni</i>
Leggere	la stampa Italiana	<i>ottimo</i>
	il manoscritto Italiano	<i>ottimo</i>
La Calligrafia		<i>ottimo</i>
Il Conteggiare		<i>ottimo</i>

Questo Scolare si è meritata dunque

vedi. Agnolo Patrucco
Intendente

Spalato

14 Settembre

1823

Giuseppe Agnolo Macchia

Prima Classe con Onore



36. *Vid Morpurgo.*

ANNUARIO
DALMATICO

ANNO I.

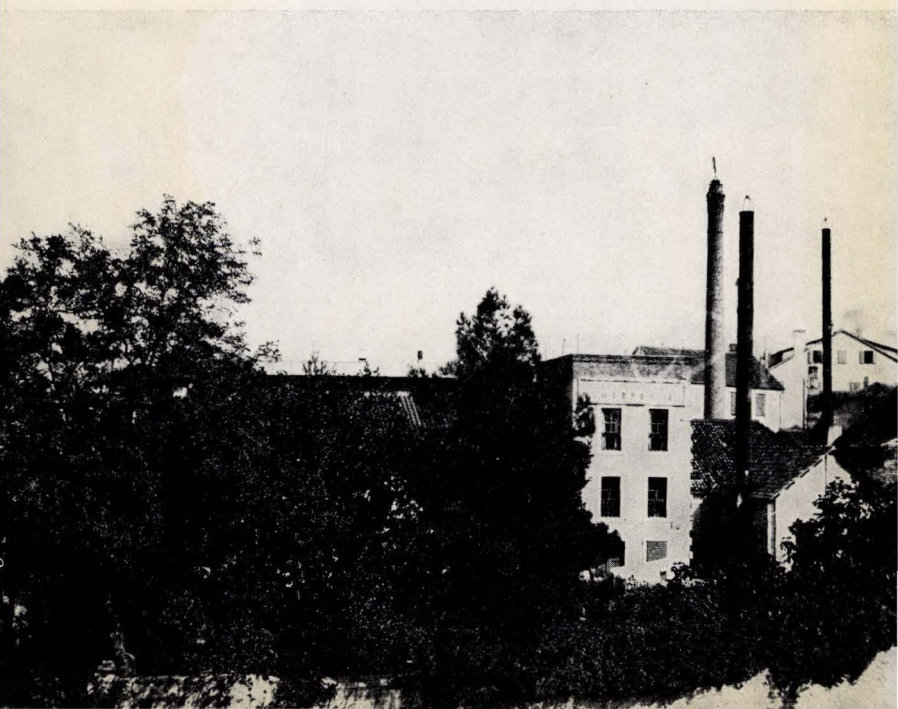


SPALATO
LIBRERIA SAVO
1859.



38. Knjižara Morpurgo u Splitu.

39 *Tvornica vina i likera Vida Morpurga.*





40. *Poprsje filologa Adolfa Mussafije na Sveučilištu u Beču.*

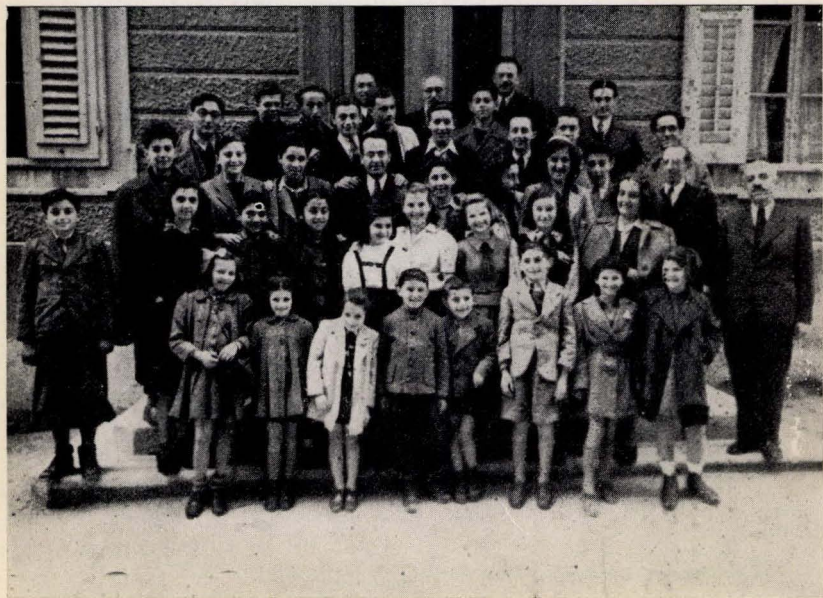


41. Inž. Viktor Morpurgo. (Po slici A. Franičevića).



42. Antisemitski plakati talijanskih fašista na kupalištu Bačvice 1941.

43. Ispraćaj prihvaćene djece bez roditelja iz Splita u Italiju 1942. god, sa upravom Jevrejske općine.





44. Židovski hram u Splitu nakon devastacije talijanskih fašista 1942. godine.

45. Obnova pločnika na Narodnom trgu s tragovima fašističke lomače.

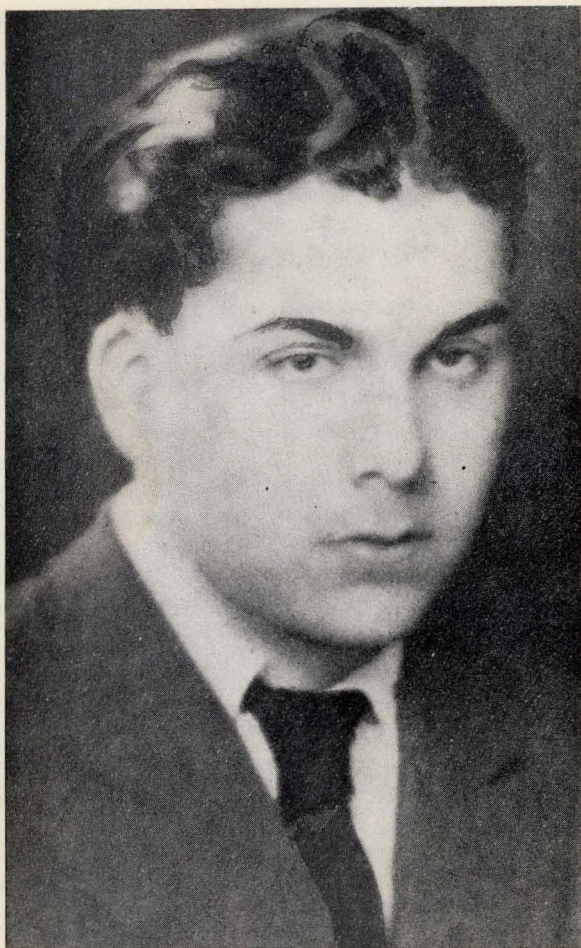




46. *Mento Papo.*



47. *Albert Altarac.*



48. *Dr Izidor Perera-Matić.*

GRADJANSTVU SPLITA

Svi židovi bez razlike vjere i državljanstva imaju se od
28. septembra najkasnije do 12 sati-podne kod njemačke ko
mande na pristaništu (Hotel Ambasador) prijaviti. Ako se
prijavi biti će vješan.

Sa svakim splićaninom, koji židove krštene ili nepokrštene
ili neprijavi, biti će kao sa židovskim slugom na isti način postu

Kućevlasnici imaju odmah sve židovske i komunističk
natpise i parole OTSTRANITI SA SVOJIH KUĆA.

Komandant Mjest



50. Odvođenje uhapšenih splitskih Židova 1943. godine.

51. Splitski Židovi u Metkoviću, na putu za logore, 1943. godine.





52. Tina Morpurgo: Autoportret, 1935.