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HALAPID



***Journal of the Society for
Crypto-Judaic Studies***

Tudo se ilumina para aquele que busca a luz - Ben Rosh

HaLapid
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Mission Statement

The Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies fosters the networking of people and the exchange of information to create a broader understanding of the contemporary development of crypto Jews, mainly focusing on those of Iberian origin. We are a not-for-profit organization.

Editorial Policy

HaLapid editors reserve the right to proof-read, copy-edit, as well as edit for style, substance and structure all accepted submissions. Many contributions are oral histories, and although they are indeed valid expressions of the author's experience or understanding, they may or may not be historically accurate. We do change obvious misstatements or historical inaccuracies. The opinions expressed in this journal are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies (SCJS) or *HaLapid*. Articles from *HaLapid* may be reprinted only upon consent of SCJS.

Advertisements

Would you like to promote a product, a conference, a book, a service, or another matter pertaining to the mission statement of SCJS? Our rates are as follows: Color quarter back page, \$100; black and white: full interior page, \$75, half interior, \$50, interior quarter page, \$25; business card, \$15.

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SCJS Membership

Would you like to renew your membership? Do you know someone who would like to be a member? SCJS Board of Directors recommends annual membership dues as follows: Individuals \$50; Seniors (age 65+) \$40; students \$25; Institutions \$60; Sustaining \$100; Patron \$1,000. SCJS members will have a chance to approve or reject the Board's recommendations at the SCJS Annual Meeting, August 9, 2011. Dues include yearly subscriptions to *HaLapid, Journal of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies*, as well as *The Journal of Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian Crypto Jews* (JOSPICJ). Please make cheques payable to the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies (SCJS); include your name, mailing address, city, state, zip code, country, phone number, and email and mail them to SCJS, 333 Washington Blvd., #336, Marina del Rey, CA, 90292, USA.

Call for Submissions

Do you have something you would like to share with us? *HaLapid* is seeking submissions in the form of articles, oral histories, papers, short stories, poetry and artistic expressions for its next volume. The text submissions should be formatted in .doc; 12pt Times New Roman font; single space; justified; no indentation on first line of paragraph; 2 spaces separate each paragraph; title of work should be centered; author's name appears directly below title, left side format; Chicago Manual of Style format. Inquire as to suitability of topic before sending full submission. Please submit your work by: September 1, 2011 to halapid.editor@gmail.com. Subject line to read: HaLapid Submission, your last name.

HaLapid Journal Staff

Editor-in-Chief: Lilloet Nördlinger, halapid.editor@gmail.com

Assistant Editor: Lytton Naegele McDonnell

Poetry and Arts Editor: M. Miriam Herrera,
herrera.miriam@gmail.com

Editorial Advisors and mailing team: Art Benveniste,
artbenven@aol.com

Dolores Sloan, dsloanauthor@gmail.com.

Front and Back Cover paintings, "Margaridas, etc." and "A Viagem,"
by Laura Cesana, www.lauracesana.com

Letter from the Editor

With turmoil plaguing Libya in recent months, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, one of the world's longest reigning dictators (1969-present) has become a frequent subject in international news. One particular story about Gaddafi caught my attention: "Is Gaddafi a Jew?"¹ It turns out that in October of 2009 Israeli Channel 2 News aired an interview with an Israeli woman, Guita Brown, and her grand-daughter, Rachel Saada. Brown, originally from Libya, claimed that her grandmother had told her that Muammar Gaddafi was her maternal second-cousin. That is to say that Gaddafi's grandmother and Brown's grandmother were sisters. Brown went on to explain that her great-aunt had married a Jewish man who abused her; she then ran away and married a wealthy Muslim sheikh and gave birth to Muammar Gaddafi's mother, who in turn married a Muslim and gave birth to Muammar Gaddafi. Saada added that therefore Gaddafi was Jewish enough to complete an Orthodox *minyán*.

The interview also included comments from Professor Yehudit Ronen of Bar-Ilan University, who noted that, while Brown's story was interesting and that it should not be ignored, there is no physical proof to corroborate Brown's story (i.e. no DNA or confirmation from Gaddafi himself). Ronen noted that over the years she has heard this same story from a number of different sources and that its popularity rises and falls over time. What really makes this story interesting, Ronen suggested, is what it tells us about Libyan Jews and their relations with their Muslim neighbors. Essentially, this is a love story about a woman running away from a Jewish man to be with a Muslim man, whether it is specifically true with regards to Gaddafi's ancestry has yet to be proven.

As an historian I often rely upon oral histories as sources that help me to interpret and understand the past. Indeed, these oral stories often form the most interesting and rewarding components of my research. How these stories are interpreted depends equally upon who is telling the story as it does upon who is listening to them. Some academic historians argue that memories, and by extension oral histories, are distorted by time and experience. However, for the person telling the story, their memories form their realities, and having someone else interpret their story in any way other than how they intended it, can be aggravating or even insulting.

Can this tension ever be resolved? I believe that the answer to this question is well illustrated in the Jewish story about two people who bring their disagreement before a rabbi. The first person pleads his case. After hearing his story, the rabbi says “You’re right.” The second person presents his side of the matter, to which the rabbi responds, “You are right.” The rebbetzin, who has been listening closely to both cases, then asks her husband, “How can they both be right?” The rabbi responds, “You are also right.” This story points to the notion that although one opinion may dominate, alternate understandings of a single event exist and should be given consideration. Ultimately, in my opinion, it is the fusion of the interpretations that gives us a better understanding of the whole. This double issue of *HaLapid*, like the previous one, will expose readers to a variety of opinions and interpretations.

In the **Conference Proceedings & Reports** section Gérard Nahon provides an overview of the first conference put on by Sefarad, the Society for Sefardic Studies, in Jerusalem. SCJS President, Dolores Sloan highlights aspects of the Board of Directors midyear meeting. Roger L. Martínez describes the *Sephardic Memory and Movement Conference*, which was held this past March at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. In the **Member Close-Ups** section Stan Hordes profiles fellow SCJS member Seth Ward. The **Tours of the Past through the Present** section features contributions from Rachel Bortnick, Jacques Cory, Harry Ezratty, and Inacio Steinhardt. Each author reveals their impressions and findings as they tour through historic crypto-Jewish sites of Spain, the Caribbean, and Portugal. The **Areas of Inquiry** section begins with Juan Marcos Bejarano Gutierrez’s query into the role that *taqqiya* played in influencing Spanish Jewry to choose the option of conversion over martyrdom. Lina Gorenstein reveals the history of the New Christians in seventeenth and eighteenth century Brazil. Jeffrey Gorskey’s article on Antón de Montoro, adapted from his forthcoming book, *Jewish Blood*, explores the phenomenon of the *converso* poet. Ethnomusicologist Judith Cohen endeavours to enlighten us on the practice of contrafactum in Judeo-Spanish song. In the **Poetic, Artistic, and Literary Expressions** section author David Gitlitz contributes an excerpt from his recently published work, *The Lost Minyan*, which is accompanied by an article outlining the research behind his book. Poetry by Eliyahu Enriquez follows; Enriquez’s poems incorporate elements from his own

Jewish Filipino identity. The final article of this section, features artist Laura Cesana, whose works are shown on the front and back covers of this journal, and are inspired by the crypto Jews of Portugal. Included in the **Book Review** section are reviews of Miriam Bodian's book, *Dying in the Law of Moses* and of Mitchell James Kaplan's book, *By Fire, By Water*. Lastly, Joan Nathan provides a **Historical Recipe** for *haroset*; she also gives a brief introduction to the recipe's history.

HaLapid contributors are based all over the globe, including: Brazil, Canada, France, Israel, Portugal, and the USA. We hope you find the articles interesting and enjoyable!

Lillooet Nördlinger McDonnell
Editor-in-Chief

P.S. We want to hear from you! Drop us a line, tell us what you think of the journal, send us a story, comment or question.



halapid.editor@gmail.com

1. <http://jewishrefugees.blogspot.com/2009/10/was-gaddafi-jew.html>

President's Message

Join Us at SCJS's Conference in San Diego, August 7-9, 2011

Twenty-one years! That's right, more than two decades. The Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies (SCJS) was founded in 1991, and our 2011 conference will be the 21st gathering of those interested in "the fostering of research and networking of information and ideas into the historical and contemporary development of crypto Jews of Iberian origins." The quotation is from the mission of SCJS, as established early in its score of years, and we will be hearing a variety of presentations attempting to do just that.

Conference attendees will be hearing papers from scholars and researchers on what our mission calls "this immensely fascinating and perplexing area." They will also be offered a variety of art programs—concerts, readings and exhibits—by artists whose work is influenced by crypto-Judaic themes. They will listen to the experiences of those speaking on their exploration of potential crypto-Jewish family legacies. Some will network with academic colleagues. Others will discover new *primos*, cousins, at the conference, or find links and resources to learning more about their backgrounds and the subject. And conferees will be hanging out—with old friends and new—after sessions and during breaks, in the tropical environment of the hotel grounds and the beneficent climate that goes with San Diego and ocean breezes.

I first learned about crypto Judaism in the early 1990s, from those I met traveling New Mexico for the state's Arts Division. They had shared with me, in confidence, stories about Jewish practices in their mostly Catholic families, descended from Spanish settlers. Then, I attended a lecture by SCJS founder Stanley Hordes, which put this in perspective.

My first SCJS conference was in El Paso in 1998. Moving back to Southern California, I was fortunate to be befriended by fellow writer and SCJS member Trudy Alexi (*The Mezzuzah in the Madonna's Foot*), who made sure I went to a Sephardic Festival in LA. There, I met Art Benveniste, then *HaLapid* Editor, as well as Gloria Trujillo, then SCJS President. They told me about the upcoming conference and I quickly arranged things so I could

go. Gloria and I drove together, in the first of adventures to come, not the least of which was being waved through by a smiling guard at the checkpoint from Arizona into California, with five fragrant bags of NM green and red chilies in the back.

I hope you will respond to the Call for Papers which appears on our website, www.cryptojews.com, as well as on the back page of this issue, if you have something to present that fits what's needed. You will also find a registration form both online and in this issue. Updates to the conference program are posted regularly on the website. You can also write gtruj@aol.com if you have any questions. I hope you will arrange your schedule to vacation and to join us in San Diego in August, for what will be my lucky thirteenth conference.

I close with a tribute to Kathleen Álcara, who, as SCJS President for the past two years, has set a new standard of leadership for this position. Thanks, Kathleen, for your unique combination of steadiness and vision.

See you all in San Diego!

Dolly Sloan
SCJS President



CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS & REPORTS

**The Position and Self-Image of Women
in Sefardi Sources**

First Annual International Conference
Society for Sefardic Studies, Jerusalem, January 9-11, 2011

Gérard Nahon

The first annual international conference of *Sefarad*, the Society for Sefardic Studies was held this past January 9-11, 2011 in Jerusalem. Founded in 2009 by Yom Tov Assis, its current chairman, *Sefarad* is affiliated with the Ben-Zvi Institute and is administered through the *Hispania Judaica*: The Center for the Study of Iberian Jewry, The Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies, at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HUJI). The ultimate purpose of *Sefarad* is to promote and coordinate research in the field of Sefardic studies. This first conference brought together thirty-six lecturers from all over the globe, including participants from Germany, Brazil, Spain, France, Greece, Israel, Portugal, and Serbia.

The opening session was chaired by Michael Glatzer and began with opening remarks by Yom Tov Assis (HUJI). Renée Levine Melammed (Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies) and Shalom Sabar (HUJI) were the first presenters. Levine Melammed presented a paper entitled, "Reassessing Jewish Women's Lives in Medieval Iberia." The presenter successfully explained the status of Jewish women in the medieval Spain. Sabar's presentation was entitled, "Bride, Mother and Heroine: Images of Sephardic Women in the Visual Arts from the Middle Ages until the Modern Era," and outlined a fascinating iconography of various and unusual images of Jewish women.

The first session revolved around "Responsa Literature" and opened with a presentation by Yom Tov Assis entitled, "Widows in Medieval Sefarad: their Economic, Social and Family Position." Assis focused on the economic role played by widows in medieval Spain. In the following presentation, "La 'mujer fatal' en las fuentes judias hispanas," Moisés Orfali (Bar Ilan University), discussed the notion of the *Isha qatlanit*, women who had lost two husbands and, for that reason, were not permitted to remarry. The session ended with José Ramon Magdalena Nom de Deu's

presentation, “El papel de la mujer en la sociedad de Sefarad segun responsa y fuentes hebraicas,” which revealed the many and sometimes dramatic events handled by the rabbis.

The next session, “The Sefardi Diaspora,” (Moises Orfali, Chair) heard Ruth Lamdan (Tel Aviv University) speaking on eulogies honoring Salonika decedents. Her presentation was entitled, “After the Death: Saints, Expressions and Names of Dead Women.” My own presentation followed, and it was entitled, “The Eulogy of Rachel Mendes Dacosta, Bayonne, 5 December 1693.” I discussed how Portuguese New Christians from Bayonne observed Judaism by printing Jewish eulogies in Spanish and engraving cemetery epitaphs in Spanish and in Hebrew. The final speaker, Eleazar Gutwirth (Tel Aviv University), delivered his lecture on “From Ferrara to Salonika: Women Patients in the Sixteenth Century,” and discussed women who remained Jewish while their husbands became *conversos*.

The session “The Perception of Women in Medieval and Early Modern Texts” (Dalia Ruth Halperin, Chair) examined the daily relationship between men and women in the Middle-ages. Nahem Ilan (Lander Institute) spoke about the famous ‘And do not over-talk with the woman.’ Consideration on Several Spanish Mediaeval Commentaries and their Implications.” Nadia Zeldes (HUJI) presented “The Reforms of *Dayyan* Joseph Abenafia on Family Law and Women's status in the Wake of the Aragonese Conquest of Sicily” and discussed the changes related to an event that occurred in 1302. Alisa Meyuhas Ginio (Tel Aviv University) presented “The Perception of Jewish Women according to Rabbi 'Ya'acov Kuli's *Me 'am Lo' ez* on the Book of Genesis,” and examined the perception of women as portrayed through the eyes of a popular eighteenth-century Ladino commentator of the Bible.

In the session “Modern Literature,” (José Alberto Rodrigues da Silva Tavim, Chair) Suzy Gruss (Bar Ilan University) presented “Ester Morguez Algranti de Esmirna: El Punto de vista literario de una mujer sefardi,” from the Portuguese synagogue of Smyrna. Michael Studemund Halévy (Institute für die Geschichte der deutschen Juden, Hamburg) presented “La mujer en el lenguaje erotico sefardi: fuentes bulgarias.” Lucia Liba Mucznik (University of Lisbon) presented “‘Da Mulher-anjo à balzaquiana:’ A representação of 'judía' na literatura portuguesa do séc. XIX” and

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highlighted—from the perspective of women in the New Christian milieu—change: from the grotesque to the romantic.

The session “The Converso Home,” (Nitai Shinan, Chair) included three presentations. Isabel M. R. Mendes Drumond Braga (University of Lisbon) presented an economic and social survey entitled “On the property and Occupations of seventeenth and eighteenth century New Christians in Portugal and Brazil.” Her discussion focused on 300 inventories of goods confiscated from New Christians by the courts of the Holy Office in Lisbon, Evora, and Coimbra, which involved 128 women, aged thirteen to eighty. Many of the women were single or widowed and earned their own living. Some worked as petty traders or as manufacturers of artificial flowers; others were in charge of sugar cane plantations in Paraiba; still others possessed slaves whom they used to sell candy in the streets of Rio. Schulamith Halévy (University of Illinois) presented “Mujeres Fuertes: Women of Valor among the *anusim*,” commenting on Portuguese prayers of the *anusim* or descendants of *conversos* in Mexico. She emphasized the creative, liturgical, and literary capacity of these *converso* women. Lina Gorenstein (University of São Paulo) examined “The New Christian Women in Colonial Brazil in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.” Her research was based on inquisitorial trials, and she showed how women made their way into economic activities and created their own often dramatic destinies.

The second day began with the session “The Image of Women in Medieval Texts” (José Ramon Magdalena Nom de Deus, Chair). Meritxell Blasco Orellana (University of Barcelona) presented the first paper, “La mujer en fuentes médicas séfardies hebraico” and examined previously unreleased material for medical recipes. Hanna Davidson (Lander Institute) presented “Rabbi Avraham of Girona and the Night Women Witches in fourteenth century Catalonia,” and revealed some strange and unknown practices of daily life in medieval Catalonia. Rachel Peled Cuartas (University of Illinois) presented “Between lo Terrenal y lo Divino: Una imagen femenina in Don Vidal Benbenist y el arcipreste de Hita,” and compared the visions of female otherness in Jewish sources and reflections on human destiny in Christian sources.

The session “Sefardi Women in Modern Time” (Avraham David, Chair) opened with Jelena Filipovic and Ivana Vucina Simovic

(University of Belgrade and Kragujevac, Serbia). Their presentation “Asociacion de las mujeres judias de Belgrado como vehiculo/agente la modernización y emancipacion femenina” showed how women's societies, such as the Umanidad in Sarajevo or Sociedad de Beneficencia de las Judias, *Kupat Shalom* de Skopje contributed, along with the Alliance Israélite Universelle, schools which encouraged the emancipation of Jewish women. The session continued with Moshe Ovadia's (Bar Ilan University) “Socio-economic world of Maghrebi Sephardic women in four holy cities at the time of the British Mandate (1918-1948)” in Jerusalem, Hebron, Safed and Tiberias. The session ended with Yitzhak Kerem (Aristotele University, Thessaloniki), “Sephardic Female Dress in Salonika: Issues of halakha and modesty in the 19th and 20th centuries.” He discussed feminine clothing as prescribed by notions of religious modesty.

In the session “Women and Early Modern Society,” (Aldina Quintana, Chair) Maria Filomena Lopes de Barros and José Alberto Rodrigues da Silva Tavim (Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical) presented “Cristãos (ãs), Mouriscos (as), Judeus e Mouros” and “Dialogos em transito no Portugal,” which discussed the still poorly understood relationships between Jews, *conversos*, moors and *morisques* in sixteenth century Spain and Morocco. Raquel Sperber (HUJI) presented “Fermosa/Raquel “judía” Toledo: transformaciones de la leyenda,” and followed the legend of the love affair between the Jews of Toledo with King Alphonse as depicted through the novel *La desgraciada Raquel* by Antonio Mira de Amescua, ca 1625.

The last session “Women in Early Modern Literature” (Tamar Alexander, Chair) heard from Ruth Fine (HUJI) on “Mulieres malae sunt? La representacion de la mujer judia en obras del Siglo de Oro español” and Florbela Veiga Frade (Nova Universidade de Lisboa) on “The Rainbow Colors that Portray the Feminine *Historia de Rut* in João (Moshe) Delgado.” A prolific New Christian author, João Pinto Delgado lived for a time in Rouen where he published in 1627 *Poema de la Reyna Ester, Lamentaciones del Profeta Jeremias, Historia de Ruts y otras poesias*. His character of Ruth focuses on her past as a *converso* and her return to the Holy Land to her own religious and messianic callings. The conference was capped by a visit to the Israel Museum. Conference participants admired, among other wonders,

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the Portuguese synagogue of *Tzedek ve-Shalom* of Paramaribo (Suriname, 1736), which was disassembled and rebuilt with its original furnishings in Jerusalem.

Gérard NAHON was a professor at the École Pratique des Hautes Études Section des sciences religieuses, Sorbonne. He is a founding member of Sefarad. www.sefarad-studies.org

Are you interested in San Diego's Jewish Past??

If you want to brush-up on your knowledge of San Diego's Jewish history, Stanley Schwartz, President of the Jewish Historical Society of San Diego, has suggested that SCJS members read an article written by Stan and Laurel Schwartz on the topic:

www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0018_0_17476.html

SCJS Midyear Board Meeting Summary

Dolores Sloan

February 12-13, 2011 the SCJS Board of Directors met in Los Angeles and Santa Monica for the midyear meeting. The following items were covered:

1. Approved candidates to be considered for a slate of officers and members at large for the Board of Directors to be voted on by the general membership at the Annual Meeting, August 9, 2011, following the annual conference at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, San Diego. Following is the slate that has since been finalized:

President: Dolores Sloan
Immediate Past President: Kathleen Alcalá
First Vice President: Roger L. Martínez

Vice Presidents:
Program: Seth Ward
Membership: Arthur Benveniste
Communication: Lillooet Nördlinger
Conferences & Meetings: Gloria Trujillo
Secretary: Rachel Amado Bortnick
Treasurer: Diana Zertuche

Members at Large:
César Ayala Casas
Harry Ezratti
Debbie Wohl Isard
Seth Kunin
Abe Lavender
Lois Rose Rose
Arnold Trujillo
Matthew Warshawsky

2. Appointed Stanley Hordes Senior Advisor to the Board

3. Accepted, with regret, the resignation of President Kathleen Alcalá, and expressed appreciation her wise leadership and vision for the Society; appointed Dolores Sloan as President to complete the balance of the term

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4. Approved recommended changes to Bylaws to be presented to Annual Meeting
5. Agreed on need for Society to affiliate with a four-year academic institution
6. Received Treasurer Diana Zertuche's report showing a positive financial situation (copies available to members on request)
7. Supported efforts to secure additional financial support for programs and speakers, scholarships and fellowships and to assist officers and board with necessary expenses
8. Received a grant of \$2,000 from the Martin Sosin-Petit-Stratton Foundation, to continue supporting arts programs at the annual conference; presented in person by its President, Marty Sosin
9. Participated in Strategic Planning, initiated by presentation by President Alcalá, of potential future models for SCJS to consider and considered in context of SCJS moving into its third decade of service
10. Approved survey of membership on visions and expectations for Society
11. Discussed potential online communication and its use
12. Considered choice of the conference hotel for San Diego
13. Analyzed conference expenses and fees and considered impact on members and attendance

Sephardic Memory and Movement Conference

March 10-11, 2011
University of Colorado at Colorado Springs

Roger L. Martínez

On March 10-11, 2011, Sephardic and crypto Jews, scholars, artists, and community members gathered for the *Sephardic Memory and Movement Conference*, a cultural and scholarly event that highlighted the history of the Sephardim and their contributions to the American Southwest. Focused on the notions of “memory” and “movement,” the conference explored both the history of the Spanish Jewry as well as its continued resilience in the Americas and Israel.



The University of Colorado at Colorado Springs (UCCS) hosted and generously funded the program that attracted approximately seventy persons from Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Morocco, and the United Kingdom. Over the course of one evening and an additional day, the participants attended lectures on historical and contemporary issues surrounding the Sephardim, a musical performance of medieval and modern Sephardic music, and an art exhibit of crypto-Jewish glassware.

The keynote address given by Seth Kunin (Durham University and past SCJS Board Member) intricately explored the issues of memory and the construction of crypto-Jewish identity in contemporary New Mexico. Kunin’s lecture identified memory as the focal point of a crypto-Jewish identity and he buttressed his argument by noting that memory forms the basis of origin and identity narratives and crypto-Jewish cultural practices. Fundamentally, Kunin posited that the underlying structure of crypto-Jewish identity is derived from folklore, oral history, and ultimately, memory.

Prior to Kunin’s keynote address, Roger L. Martínez (UCCS and SCJS Board Member), relayed the historical trajectory of

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Sephardic Jews from the time of their prominent settlement in the Iberian Peninsula during the Roman Era (200 BCE to 200 CE) until the anti-Jewish pogroms of the 1390s and their final expulsion from Spain in 1492 by the Catholic Monarchs. Stanley Hordes (University of New Mexico and SCJS Board Member) offered a corollary lecture on Jewish families' survival as they migrated secretly to colonial Spanish America and, especially, present-day New Mexico. He offered that many of Spanish families who were associated with the conquest and settlement of New Mexico, such as the Oñate clan, hailed from *converso* backgrounds.

Two splendid vocal and lute music performances by Vanessa Paloma and accompanied by the accomplished pianist, Abe Minzer (UCCS), showcased medieval and contemporary cultural issues pertaining to the Sephardim. Relating to the history of Sephardic music, Paloma stated:

Women have been the main transmitters of this repertoire throughout the Sephardic Diaspora. This feminine Oral Torah stresses themes of women's purity, a wife's faithfulness to her husband and the soul's longing for the Divine. Stories from medieval Europe's nobility or the relationships between Christians and Muslims during the Reconquista wars reappear even when melodies may have gone through numerous transformations. They stand as examples that may elucidate delicate issues faced by Jewish women throughout the Sephardic Diaspora.

In her solo appearance, Paloma performed *Al Pasar por Casablanca*, *Una Hija Tiene el Rey*, *Bendigamos*, *Paxarico sos mi*, *Ein Keloheinu/Non como nuestro Dio*, *Primo Rabi*, *Los Bilbilicos*, and *Mosé salió de Misrayim*. Paloma and Minzer also performed contemporary Sephardic music composed by Ofer Ben-Amots (Colorado College), including selections from *Kantigas Ulvidadas* and *Songs from the Pomegranate Garden*.

A key aspect of the event, especially as demonstrated by the performance of Ben-Amot's works, related to contemporary interpretations and revival of Sephardic Jewish and crypto-Jewish culture. Ben-Amots noted that Ladino, the language of the exiled Sephardim, remains a vibrant language in Jerusalem as well as in contemporary Israeli music. In a separate panel on current Jewish

and Latino affairs, Dr. Seth Ward (University of Wyoming) guided Corinne Brown and Michael Atlas-Acuña in a discussion of the state of community relations and awareness of Sephardic Jewish history.

At the conclusion of the conference Sonya Loya, a Sephardic returnee to Judaism, lectured on and presented her *Holy Water, Holy Saturday* series of clay and glass artwork. One of her inspiring pieces, *Hamsa Light*, was showcased on the commemorative conference poster. The palm-sized *Hamsa Light*, made of roku clay and diachronic glass, serves both as a mezuzah and a receptacle for holy water.

Overall, the conference and the number of attendees demonstrate that southern Colorado is a receptive audience to the study and exploration of the Sephardim and crypto Judaism.

Roger L. Martínez , PhD, is an Assistant Professor of History at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs.

Calling all storytellers!

The “Less is More” Short-Story Contest*

Ernest Hemingway is reported to have said that his greatest short-story was only 6 words long.

"For sale: baby shoes, never worn."

HaLapid invites readers to submit their 6 word short-story (no it can't be longer) with a crypto-Jewish theme. Deadline, July, 31, 2011. Prize for top story! The winner will be announced at the SCJS Conference in San Diego. A selection of the stories will be published in the next issue of *HaLapid*. Email stories to: halapid.editor@gmail.com or herrera.miriam@gmail.com. *Minimum of 10 contestants required.

MEMBER CLOSE UPS



Member Profile: Seth Ward

Stan Hordes

Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies Vice-President for Programing, Professor Seth Ward, brings a wealth of education and experience to his position. Serving as Program Chair for the 21st Annual Conference, to take place in San Diego this August 7-9, Professor Ward has been on the faculty of the University of Wyoming (UW) since January 2003, where he teaches Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies. Prior to this, he directed the University of Denver's Institute for Islamic-Judaic Studies for ten years. Today he continues to be a Research Associate of the Institute for the Study of Israel in the Middle East at the Graduate School of International Studies at the University of Denver (UD).

Professor Ward received his academic degrees from Yale University, with additional studies at Hebrew University and at the Jewish Theological Seminary. His teaching has included courses on Islam, Middle East, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, Encounters

between Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and Women in Judaism, The Splendor of Spain, Jewish Mysticism, and other topics. Ward initiated and taught the Arabic program at UD, and has taught both Arabic and Hebrew at UW.

Professor Ward has not confined his professional activities to the classroom. As a Wyoming Council for the Humanities Forum presenter, Ward has lectured on Islam, Middle East, and other issues in towns and community colleges throughout Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico. He is widely published in a number of scholarly journals. From 1996 to 2001 he served as Director of the Hispano Crypto-Jewish Resource Center in Denver, maintaining a reference library on the University of Denver campus, preparing resource folders, acquiring funding, and supervising oral history projects, consulting and advising researchers, journalists and crypto-Jewish descendants.

TOURS OF THE PAST THROUGH THE PRESENT

Returning to Sefarad:

The Ladinokomunita Group visit Spain
October 6-18, 2010

Rachel Amado Bortnick

For each of the last four years, Ladinokomunita (LK) members have gotten together to tour a country with historic or current Sephardic significance.¹ After Israel, Turkey, and Argentina, in the autumn of 2010 we visited Spain, the land of our deepest roots. For many it was their first return to Sefarad since 1492.

The first four days of our tour in Madrid, Toledo, and Segovia included members from France and their local organization called *Aki Estamos* (We are here). (What a beautifully defiant and proud name for these Sephardic remnants of the Holocaust!) Thereafter, in Sevilla, Jaen, Cordoba, Granada, and Barcelona, our tour group numbered only twenty four. We traveled by bus, high-speed train, and airplane. Our tour was arranged by one of our Spanish members, Jose Galves, a descendant of *anusim*, who is now returning to Judaism and who co-owns "Pissarro Sefarad Tours." Among the extraordinary arrangements Jose made for us included a very official reception in Sevilla, which I will describe below.

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Also, we had the cooperation of “Tarbut Sefarad,”² whose representatives greeted us wherever we went, and whose president, Dr. Mario Saban, gave us an unforgettable tour of Jewish Barcelona, and a lecture during a wonderful Shabbat lunch. But in this short space, let me give a few short notes on impressions of some of the towns.

Madrid holds no visible traces of its Jewish past. We toured the city one rainy Saturday and the guide recited her usual spiel, mentioning perhaps that this church was built on the site of a synagogue, or that convent on the site of a Jewish cemetery. In Plaza Mayor, there was no mention of the spectacular *auto-da-fé* that took place here, where countless “Judaizers” were burned alive to the delight of thousands.

The main synagogue, where we attended Friday night services, is a nondescript building on a remote side street, as if trying to hide from the public eye, even though Madrid has about 12,000 Jews. Since 1994, national Spanish radio has hosted a weekly Sephardic program presented by our friend Matilda Barnatan who resides there.³

Toledo has not a single Jew, but the spirit of our ancestors is everywhere. With its two medieval synagogues (although one is a Jewish museum, both structures bear Christian names), and a well delineated *Juderia* (Jewish quarter), Toledo flaunts its Jewish past for touristic purposes, largely ignoring the sordid side of that past. The *Santo niño de La Guardia* (Holy Child of La Guardia) is greatly revered, and the ignoble Inquisition-invented legend, which resulted in the burning of 11 Jews in 1491, is depicted in a painting at the entrance to the Cathedral of Toledo.⁴

Segovia, a beautiful town with the largest Roman aqueducts anywhere and the city of Abraham Senior, also has a well-kept *Juderia*. In a convent, we heard about the accusation of “desecrating the host,” which caused the confiscation of the Mayor Synagogue. As we came out, a group of us broke into song: *Am Israel Hai* (the people of Israel lives).

In **Sevilla**, on October 11, 2010, at the appointed time at the Alcazar, in the *Salon de Embajadores*, we were welcomed “home,” by an official, Rosa Mar Prieto-Castro Garcia-Alix (*Teniente de*



Ladino komunita group in Toledo.

Alcalde Delegada Fiestas Mayores.) Coming to the microphone, she added:

Estamos encantados de acogerles en Sevilla y esperamos que se encuentren como en casa, porque esta es su casa. Para muchos, quizás, nunca ha dejado de ser su casa.

She spoke at length, of the multicultural history of the city, and of Jewish history in particular—mentioning for the first time



Sra. García-Alix welcoming LK, Seville.

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anywhere—the murderous anti-Jewish riots of 1391 which had begun here. She also spoke of our language:

*Es un verdadero placer ver cómo mantienen vivo el idioma de los habitantes de nuestra antigua Sevilla. Los pueblos que comparten un idioma, comparte por ello mismo, unas raíces culturales que facilitan la amistad y el entendimiento. Por ello, espero que se sientan como en casa entre nosotros.*⁵

We had tears in our eyes.

In **Cordoba** who can forget the welcome and attention we received at Casa Sefarad, a gem of a Jewish museum and center, especially from its founder, Sebastian de la Aza? Or, standing in front of the statue of Maimonides, as we read a poem in Ladino describing the outpouring of emotions?⁶



Sra. Garcia-Alix & Rachel Bortnick

In **Jaen**, center of Spain's olive oil industry, home to largest preserved Arab bath-house and host to a city-square and street bearing the name of Rabbi Sabetay Djaen, we received the most congenial and longest welcome and personal attention, especially from Rafael Camara, town historian and representative of Tarbut Sefarad. We also attended the Andalusian *feria* (fair). There we were wine and dined and welcomed by the *alcaldessa* (lady mayor) and her entourage. Our friend Al DeJaen, from Seattle, got special attention for carrying the name of his Spanish ancestral home.

Granada, like Madrid, has erased all traces of its Jewish past. Nevertheless, in the Alhambra Palace, our guide (who claimed to be of Jewish ancestry) did mention that the edict expelling the Jews was signed there. The next morning, Jose R. Ayoso, Professor of Jewish Studies at the University of Granada, lectured briefly on the Jewish history of the town, and led us through the area that was once Jewish.

Any Jew who goes to **Barcelona** must contact Tarbut Sefarad first! Mario Saban knows the history and the sites, even where the

famous disputation involving Nahmanides took place, and he has permission to enter places where no one else can. And to be inside the Mayor Synagogue, the only medieval synagogue which has been rededicated as a living synagogue, gives one a sense of triumph.

Girona and Besalu are two towns close to Barcelona with a lot of Jewish reminders, but not a single Jew. Girona's Jewish museum is a jewel, and the Judaica bookstore below belongs to J. Vicente Zalaya, a member of LK.

This trip was a "once-in-a-lifetime" emotional experience for all of us. In 1492, Spain "cleansed" itself of Jews and much of that hostility remains to this day. We saw an example of this at the Jewish monument in the form of a sculptured menorah in Jaen, which was covered in antisemitic graffiti. Almost everywhere we went we saw or heard some expressions of anti-Jewishness. But we also saw incredible congeniality and pro-Jewishness. Were the official welcomes we received genuine, or were they, as cynics would say, a ploy to promote tourism? I believe they were both. Still, none of us wish to move to Spain anytime soon.

Sources

1. LK was founded in December of 1999, is the online group for speakers of Judeo-Spanish (Ladino). At present it has over 1300 members from 35 countries, and can be found at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Ladinokomunita/>
2. www.tarbutsefarad.com
3. www.rtve.es/radio/20100127/emision-sefardi/314526.shtml
4. Read more at: www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=473&letter=G#ixzz1FEARCDtC
5. Anyone who wishes to have the entire text of the speech can write to me at: bortnickra@sbcglobal.net
6. Anyone who wishes to have a copy of that poem by Jenny Tarabulus can request it from me.

How I discovered the synagogue of Coria

Originally published in Spanish "[Cómo descubrí la sinagoga de Coria](#)," in *Tarbut Sefarad, asociación cultural*. March 2011 www.tarbutsefarad.com/index.php/es/

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Jacques Cory

I am a businessman, with a doctorate in business ethics. I teach courses in various universities and I have published academic as well as literary works. However, I am not an archeologist, an historian, or a medium. The following story can be read on a realistic or a surrealistic level. Some people will say "if it is not true, it is a good fairy tale," others will read it with skepticism, wonder or incredulity. Everyone according to his own inclination...

On August 10th 1998, I wrote a letter to Jose Maria Alvarez Pereira, the mayor of Coria in Spain, notifying him that I intended to visit his town, as it is thought that my family name originates from there. I told him that my mother-tongue was Ladino, but that I had also studied Spanish. I added that I live in Israel, was born in Egypt, from parents and grandparents originating from Greece and Turkey, and that I had visited Spain many times on business.



The entrance to Coria's synagogue

Ten days later, the mayor of Coria wrote back. "Greetings to Don Jacobo Cory, Being aware of the interest that you have in our town I am pleased to invite and welcome you...Jose Maria Alvarez Pereira takes this opportunity to express personal respect to you."

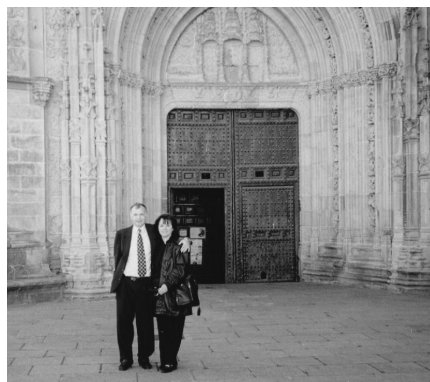
That same day, I received an email from Juan Pedro Moreno, the archeologist responsible for the Service of Historic and Cultural

Consultancy for Coria's town council. Moreno wrote, "The motive of your visit seems to me very interesting and exciting. Mr. Mayor has transmitted to me your intention to visit us. Coria keeps in its historic memory the name of the synagogue street, and there are two possible locations. We hope to see you soon in our town, you will be well received." On the 24th of August 1998, I responded to Moreno saying that I would like very much to visit with him in his town and to see the possible locations of the synagogue and the Jewish quarter. Who knows, it might be that with my DNA I would be able to assist him in finding the exact location where my ancestors lived.

On the 8th of October, I visited the old synagogue of Castelo de Vide on the Portuguese side of border. I noticed how that synagogue was built, and the next day my wife, Ruthy, and I traveled to Coria where we were received by Moreno. He showed us three possible sites where the synagogue could have been, but I discarded the first two options. (DNA, intuition or luck?) When we arrived at the third site, which was a private home, Moreno told me that the old lady, Mrs. Castaniera, who lived there was unwilling to open her home for anybody. Suddenly, Mrs. Castaniera, who as it turned-out looked exactly like my mother, opened the door and came to greet us. I introduced myself, told her that I came from Israel, and that my family name is Cory. I said that we were trying to find out the location of the old synagogue and that we would like to visit her house. She smiled and invited us in.

Moreno was astonished. When we entered the house, I saw that it was built exactly like the synagogue of Castelo de Vide. The main difference was that the porch was square and not in an arch as it had been with the synagogue of Vide. When I asked why, she told me that she heard from her family, who had lived in the same house for centuries, that the original porch was in arch but it was destroyed during the earthquake of 1755. We went down to the basement and she showed us ancient books, but the oldest one was from 1500, after the Jews were expelled from Spain. Mrs. Castaniera told Moreno that she would allow archeological excavations of her house to discover if it was indeed Coria's synagogue.

In 1999, Mrs. Castaniera's house was sold to a private owner and as of 2011 no excavations have been made. Moreno informed me



The Corys in front of Coria's Cathedral

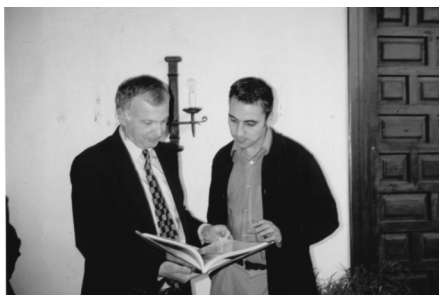
that Coria's archives show that Mrs. Castaniera's house was effectively the site of the synagogue. I read on the internet that Coria's Jewish community dates back to the twelfth century. Approximately forty-six families lived in the Jewish quarter, including goldsmiths and tax collectors. When the Jews were expelled from Spain, some of them settled in Portugal where

they were later converted to Christianity. Truly, those are the facts.

Due to Coria's proximity to Portugal, I presume that after fleeing to Portugal in 1492 Coria's Jews (my ancestors among them) may have thought that they would one day return to Coria and they left the synagogue in the care of one of the families who remained behind. It is possible that Mrs. Castaniera was the descendent of this family. It was common for Marranos to change their names to the names of trees—*castaniera*, the chestnut tree, for example.

When they fled, Coria's Jews must have taken all the books written in Hebrew, because there were no books in the house dated before 1500. The Jews of Portugal were forced to convert to Christianity, but many of them later fled with the assistance of Doña Gracia Mendes and others to Turkey, Greece and Italy, where my family lived until they emigrated to Egypt, Israel, France and Brazil.

Mrs. Castaniera, who, being a Marrana, probably knew that her house was the synagogue, decided in her old age to enable excavations and transform the house to its initial function of a synagogue. Her likeness to my mother was not an optical illusion. Indeed, even today many Sephardic Jewish women resemble Spanish women, as they have intermarried with Sephardic men for 500 years. The



Cory and Moreno

sympathy that Mrs. Castaniera showed us, opening her house to a Jewish Israeli while she did not want to open it to her fellow town's people, proved probably that she knew something of her Jewish ancestry. But who knows how things happen. Why did I decide to visit Coria? Why did the archeologist ask me to assist him in finding the synagogue? Why did Mrs. Castaniera decide to open her house to us? How did a descendant of Coria, coming from Israel, discover the synagogue after 500 years—is it witchcraft, a negligible incident, a logical story? Who can really know?

*Como me siguen
En fila interminable
Todos los yos que he sido!
Como se abre el ante mi
En infinita fila*

Para todos los yos que voy a ser!

Y que poco, que nada soy yo

Este yo, de hoy

Que casi es de ayer,

Que va a ser todo de mañana!

—Juan Ramon Jimenez, “El presente,” *La realidad invisible*



Patio of Coria's synagogue

Jacques Cory, PhD, lives and works in Israel. www.businessethicscory.com
Questions concerning his visit to Coria may be sent to coryj@zahav.net.il

An historical tour through the Jewish Caribbean

Harry A. Ezratty

Since 1995 I have led Jewish heritage cruises throughout the Caribbean. Participants most often come with the traditions of Eastern and Central European Jewry. We sail past some of the thirty plus inhabited islands of the Caribbean forming a graceful and lush archipelago (together with others sparsely inhabited) beginning with Cuba ninety miles south of Florida and extending to Curaçao, off the coast of Venezuela.

Many islands were once home to Sephardic Jews, refugees from or descendants of those who suffered under Spanish and Portuguese inquisitions. This region, known as the West Indies, is home to the

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oldest continuous Jewish presence in the Western Hemisphere. One could argue that until the middle of the nineteenth century it was the most significant Jewish community in the New World. A few islands, like Jamaica, Barbados, Curaçao and the US Virgin Islands are still home to original settler families.

When I first address a tour group as we push through the Caribbean Sea, I always say:

“Welcome to the oldest continuous Jewish neighborhood in the Western Hemisphere.”

This statement often sets the group abuzz. American Jews tend to focus on the New World’s Jewish presence beginning with the great migrations of 1880-1920. Some are aware of the German migration of the 1840s. Few, if any, have clear knowledge of the first Jews to settle in the Americas other than the famous group of twenty-three who came ashore in New York (at the time Dutch *Nieuw Amsterdam*) in 1654.

As we sail through the Caribbean I explain the history of these West Indian Jews with Hispanic names who spoke no Yiddish but rather the languages of Iberia as well as Ladino, the special Spanish dialect used among themselves. I tell them: “These settlers were expelled from Recife, Brazil, where they lived peacefully as Jews under Dutch rule for a quarter of a century. When the Portuguese took the colony away from the Dutch in 1654, the Jews were in peril. They were *anusim* or forced converts subject to the inquisition. As such, they faced torture and possible death because they had abandoned Catholicism.”

It is difficult for many on the tour to comprehend this. “How did they get to Brazil?” they ask. I treat them to an overview of the history of the horrors of the Inquisition, the *anusim*, those who willingly converted and the flight to Amsterdam, ‘the New Jerusalem,’ where they shed their forced and unwanted religion and began rebuilding a strong Sephardic culture under the auspices of a friendly Dutch government which allowed them to openly settle in their colonies as Jews.”

Most tourists are impressed by what they see at Curaçao, Barbados and St. Thomas, where there are old synagogues, cemeteries and

vibrant Jewish communities. It is a graphic reminder of the tenacity of the Jewish people. When they walk through the ancient graveyards filled with stones going back to the middle of the 1600s, they linger to read the inscriptions, marveling at the gorgeous carvings, some depicting a deceased's profession or station in life. "How interesting." "Who were these people; what were they doing here?" they ask. Their interest is genuine and many marvel at learning about these men and women, who not only returned to the faith of their ancestors, but were important contributors to the world economy with their milling and export of one of the world's most important commodities—sugar.

I make my participants work. I purposely bring them to the tiny islands of Nevis and St. Eustatius. They are difficult to get to; their airports can accommodate only small propeller planes. We have to proceed by sea from the harbor at St. Kitts to these islands. Twenty or twenty-five of us jam into a small ferry or a work boat and proceed across the open sea. As we pass St. Kitts and bounce over a choppy sea, I remind my group that they are now following the same routes refugee *anusim* followed centuries ago, accompanied by their families and possessions. There are no longer any Jews on St. Eustatius or Nevis.

On British-oriented Nevis, the local historical society highlights the island's Jewish past and takes excellent care of the old Jewish graveyard. We walk through the old cemetery, reading gravestones written in Spanish, Portuguese, Hebrew and English. Then we proceed to Jew's Walk, a lush, leafy country lane flanked by a sturdy stone wall connecting the cemetery to the synagogue which disappeared so long ago. I tell them that Alexander Hamilton was born on this island and that as a young boy he attended the Jewish day school. It is a revelation. Some of the comments I regularly hear are: "I never knew. Or "How come I never learned about these people in Hebrew school?"

At St. Eustatius, a dependency of the Netherlands, my tours are always greeted by the island's governor as we alight from our boat at dockside. Less than 3000 people live there, but they have a fierce pride in *Honen Dolim*, the old eighteenth century synagogue which was torched in 1781 (along with rest of the island) by the British navy during the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War. The *Honen Dolim* synagogue has recently undergone restoration, all done with the

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efforts of the “Statians” (as the islanders are known). They maintain the old synagogue, the cemetery and the *mikveh* in prime condition. Long ago I prayed within its ruined walls with a group of fellow Caribbean Jews. The chairs, lecterns and food were provided by the accommodating Statians.

It is a living lesson in the history of how the *anusim* lifted themselves from the depths of religious intolerance into freedom, long before the Jews of Eastern and Central Europe came to America. My group walks among the old gravestones marveling at the Hispanic names, inscriptions and carvings unique to West Indian Jewish cemeteries and at the way they have been lovingly preserved by non-Jews.

No cruise ships dock at these out-of-the-way-islands so the uniqueness of Nevis and St. Eustatius is almost a secret. Islanders always greet my tours warmly. Relatively few tourists come here and the islanders make sure my groups leave with a new understanding of the pioneering role of seventeenth century Sephardic Jews in the Caribbean.

I field many questions on the return to St. Kitts. I can tell that the members of the tour have understood the many things I have pointed out. Some say they will read to learn more about these Jews when they get home. I have made some impact. After our cruise is over I return home to find requests for my books and some Jewish groups inviting me to lecture after learning about me from a member of the Jewish Heritage Tour.

Harry A. Ezratty is an attorney, published author and noted lecturer who lives in Baltimore, Maryland with his wife Barbara. www.ezrattylectures.com

The Tale of Belmonte's Crypto Jews

Inacio Steinhardt

Long after their Spanish neighbors, Portuguese municipalities have finally recognized the potential of Jewish tourism.

This probably has to do with a surge of interest among the Portuguese to unveil their crypto-Jewish roots, concomitantly with a new momentum among young and not-so-young historians who

engage in the research of Portugal's Jewish past.

Revisiting villages, where I perambulated several decades ago, I find a change in the atmosphere. In the past, these so-called "Jewish villages" were easily identified by the local population, but back then it was extremely difficult to get the old women to recognize that they were *anusim*, let alone talk about their secret practices. Today it is different. After a few decades of increased numbers of educated people in the villages, the secret praying meetings and ritual ceremonies became almost extinct. Now, a new generation has emerged, which is anxious to learn from their grandmothers, mothers and aunts about their secret ancestral traditions. When I go there today, even the old people, who were so secretive in the past, step forwards when asked, and proudly declare: "We are Jews, we are all Jews."

Here and there, we are invited by the local councils to conferences, which attract researchers and simple tourists, if for no other reason than our contribution to the local economy.

Jewish museums have been inaugurated or are in the process of creation. They will be included in the new "Jewish Roadmap of Portugal," which is in-the-making in several districts.

Obviously, Belmonte, the unique village where crypto Judaism has been kept for over four centuries, is the first place and a must for the Jewish tourist. Belmonte now has a synagogue, a Jewish cemetery and a Jewish Museum, which receives thousands of visitors every year.

Several years ago, the scene in Belmonte was quite different. I met, for the first time, a family of crypto Jews from Belmonte on the evening of Kol Nidre, at the Lisbon synagogue, Shaare Tikva. Elias Diogo Henriques, the butcher, his wife, daughter and son-in-law undertook what was then considered a long journey, in order to fulfill a promise. Their enterprise was a breakthrough in the relations between Belmonte's crypto Jews and mainstream Judaism. On their return to the village, they were received with mixed feelings.

Until the arrival of Samuel Schwarz, in 1915, Portugal's crypto Jews did not know of the existence of other Jews in the world. The