

Archaeology of Judaism in France and Europe

**International conference
14th and 15th January 2010**

Very little is known about the Jewish presence in Europe from Antiquity to the end of the Middle Ages. The boom in archaeology over the last twenty years means that a large number of sites has been investigated and this has provided new material for the history of European Judaism and contributed to improvements in the preservation of this heritage.

Major sites relating to ancient Judaism have been discovered in Italy and Albania.

In Germany research into the Jewish quarters of the Middle Ages has been extended through the presentation of archaeological remains which have since become protected sites. In France recent excavations of cemeteries and places of worship have shed light on medieval Jewish communities up to the expulsions in the 14th century. Extensive research carried out in Spain has enriched our knowledge of a flourishing Judaism in Al-Andalus and in the north of the peninsula prior to the expulsion of 1492. In the Czech Republic, Hungary and Ukraine the excavation and study of cemeteries and synagogues have provided us with extraordinary data.

A corpus is beginning to take shape, to make up for the archives which are incomplete or have been destroyed. It will bring to light numerous aspects of the lives of Jews in medieval Europe: everyday life, habitat, urban organization, demography, funeral practices... However this field of research is not treated the same way in all countries.

For example in France the study of archaeological remains relating to medieval Judaism, attested by rabbinical sources and still noticeable in toponymy, is in its infancy when compared to the work done in Spain and Germany.

By bringing together specialists from across the world to compare their archaeological and historical research, the conference will be appraising archaeology's most recent contributions to our knowledge of Judaism in Europe. Not only will it provide us with a better understanding of Jewish archaeological remains but it will also improve our knowledge of the history of the European continent.

Thursday 14th January

10.00 Introduction

by **Laurence Sigal**, Museum of Jewish Art and History, and **Jean-Paul Jacob**, Inrap

10.15 General perspectives

by **Max Polonovski**, chief curator in charge of Jewish heritage, Ministry of Culture and Communication

Some examples of ancient Judaism

Debate chaired by **Michel Gras**, French Historical Institute in Rome

Evidence shows that Jews have been present in Western Europe since Antiquity however few archaeological documents or monuments testify to this today. Recent discoveries such as the Saranda synagogue in Albania, with its remarkably well-preserved mosaics, or the vast ritual bath of Syracuse, today preserved and open to the public in the basement of the hotel Alla Giudecca, are particularly important.

10.45 Jews in Europe during antiquity

by **Mireille Hadas-Lebel**, University of Paris IV

11.15 The catacombs of Rome

by **Cinzia Vismara**, University of Cassino

11.45 The ancient synagogue of Anchiasmos in Saranda (Albania)

by **Etleva Nallbani**, French Historical Institute in Rome

12.15 The synagogue and the ritual bath of Syracuse

by **Angela Scandaliato**, Italian Association for Jewish Studies

12.45 Debate

Development of the archaeology of Jewish quarters in the Middle Ages

Debate chaired by **François Blary**, University of Picardie

In France the names of streets and towns have preserved the memory of a Jewish presence on numerous sites in the Middle Ages, such as Baigneux-les-Juifs and street names ending in 'de la Juiverie', 'aux Juifs', 'de la Synagogue', and so on. And yet this manner of preserving memory through toponymy does not mean the Jewish communities shared a similar fate ; this can be illustrated by the successive expulsions of 1182, 1306, and 1394, , a steady century of Jewish presence in the county of Provence until 150, the enduring community in the county of Venaissin, the revival of the 'Portuguese' communities of Bayonne and Bordeaux in theXVIth century... The most important monuments are certainly protected however the Jewish quarters rarely are and the study of their archaeological remains is still in its infancy. In Germany and Spain research into Jewish quarters and its subsequent presentation has been remarkable and worthy of imitation.

14.00 Medieval Jewish heritage in France: a mixture of history, archaeology and oral tradition

by **Danièle Iancu-Agou**, CNRS, Nouvelle Gallia Judaica Research Team

14.30 Recent excavations in Cologne's Jewish district

by **Sven Schütte**, department of historic antiquities, Cologne

15.00 The reconstruction of Toledo's Jewish quarter

by **Jean Passini**, CNRS

15.30 Archaeology of the pope's Jews in the county of Venaissin: knowledge and perspectives by **François Guyonnet**, department of archaeology, Vaucluse

16.00 A recent archaeological study of the buildings of the Jewish *carriera* and the 'synagogue' of Trets

by **Robert Thernot**, Inrap, CNRS and **Muriel Vecchione**, Inrap

16.30 The Jewish quarter of Ratisbonne: History and archaeological research

by **Silvia Codreanu-Windauer**, Bavaria Heritage Office

17.00 Recent excavations in the Medieval Jewish quarter of Alghero, Sardinia

by **Marco Milanese**, University of Sassari

17.30 Preservation and restoration of the Jewry of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux

by **Mylène Lert**, Tricastin Museum of Archaeology

18.00 Debate

Friday 15th January

Synagogues, Talmudic schools, ritual baths: some rediscovered buildings

Debate chaired by **Danièle Iancu-Agou**

The development of urban archaeology, especially in the context of prevention, has been responsible for the (sometimes accidental) discovery and excavation of numerous religious buildings situated at the heart of medieval towns. Of all these buildings the ritual baths are the most numerous, buried deep in the ground to collect ground water and therefore relatively well-preserved by subsequent constructions.

10.00 The synagogal ensemble of Montpellier

by **Michaël Iancu**, University of Cluj and Montpellier's Maimonides Institute

10.30 Medieval ritual bath in Metz

by **Claire Decomps**, Inter-regional heritage department of Lorraine, and **Lonny Bourada**, Inrap

11.00 A medieval synagogue in Lagny?

by **Claude de Mecquenem**, Inrap

11.30 A Talmudic school in rue de Bourgogne, Orleans?

by **Thierry Massat**, Inrap

12.00 The synagogues of Buda (XIVth and XVIth centuries): recent excavations

by **András Vég**, Budapest History Museum

12.30 Debate

Scientific issues relating to the study of cemeteries and necropolises

Debate chaired by **Max Polonovski**

In many European countries vast preventive operations during the development of urban ring-roads have uncovered Jewish necropolises which are distinct from the Christian cemeteries adjoining churches. The excavation of these sites sometimes creates debate and objections may be raised for religious reasons. And yet their scientific study is of the utmost importance for the history of Jewish communities in medieval society, not the least because they shed light on the tragic events recorded in historical sources.

14.00 Who cares about the dead? Archaeological interventions in necropolises: a mixture of religious rights and civil responsibility

by **Neil Asher Silberman**, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

14.30 'Champ des juifs' in Ennezat

by **Daniel Parent**, Inrap

15.00 The communal grave of Roquetes in Tàrrega

by **Anna Colet Marcé**, archaeologist, and **Oriol Saula**, Urgell County Museum

15.30 Jewish archaeology in Sefarad: the medieval necropolis of Lucena

by **Daniel Botella**, Museum of Lucena, province of Cordoba

16.00 Excavations on the Karaite cemetery of Chufut Qaleh in Crimea

by **Artème Fédortchouk**, International centre for Jewish education and studies

16.30 The discovery of a medieval cemetery in the street of Vladislavova, Prague

by **Michaela Selmi Wallisová**, Czech Archaeological Society

17.00 The necropolis of Cerro de la Horca in Toledo

by **Arturo Ruiz Taboada**, University of Castille-La Manche, Toledo

17.30 The medieval Jewish cemetery of Châteauroux

by **Philippe Blanchard**, Inrap

18.00 Round table

Chaired by **Neil Asher Silberman**

18.30 Conclusion

by **Paul Salmona**, Inrap