

THE  
SYNAGOGUES  
OF GREECE





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OF  
GREECE

*A Study of Synagogues  
in Macedonia and Thrace*

**Elias V. Messinas**

**Edited by Sam Gruber**

Published for American Sephardi Federation (ASF)/Sephardic House  
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# PREFACE

This is the fourth volume\* to be published in The Sephardi and Greek Holocaust Library, whose purpose is to fill a serious lacuna in the sad tale of the Holocaust. There is a dearth of publications on the Sephardi and Greek experiences both in terms of memoirs and scholarly studies of the period. True, there is an increasing number of publications in Greek, Hebrew, Spanish, and French; however, this material has not been submitted to the searching analysis that characterizes similar materials dealing with the variety of Ashkenazi experiences during the tragic decades of the 1930s and 1940s. The studies to be offered in this series will present to both scholars and the general public a range of materials heretofore not available in English so that the story of other communities devastated by the Nazis, marginalized for a variety of reasons by scholarly research, may find their place in the broader narrative as well as provide for their descendants an answer to the question: What happened to our relatives and ancestors in the war years?

This series initially will comprise two categories of materials

I. Documents, Reports, Memoirs which are contemporary to the

events of the period.

The first volume of the series includes seminal materials in this category. Later volumes will contain more recently written memoirs that add new dimensions to the experience of the Jews of Greece.

II. Scholarly studies on the Sephardi and Greek Holocaust.

For the committee, we wish to express our gratitude to Sephardic House under whose auspices this series is being published. Support for this series has been graciously given by The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, The Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture; the Lucius M. Littauer Foundation, The Recanati Foundation in memory of Raphael Recanati, and private donors: Dianne Cadesky in memory of Esther Tivoli and Molly Edell, and Victor Besso. Special thanks are due to The Cahnman Foundation for a timely grant to complete this book.

*Steven Bowman*  
*Series editor*  
*Cincinnati, 2011*

\*Previously published volumes in The Sephardi and Greek Holocaust Library:

1. *The Holocaust in Salonika, Eyewitness Accounts*, edited by Steven Bowman and translated by Isaac Benmayor.
2. Heinz Salvator Kounio, *A Liter of Soup and Sixty Grams of Bread. The Diary of Prisoner Number 109565*. Adapted and translated by Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos.
3. *Chimera. A Period of Madness*, by Isaac Bourla
4. *A Cry for Tomorrow 76859 ...*, by Berry Nahmia; translated from the Modern Greek by David R. Weinberg.





I wish to express  
my deepest gratitude  
to Fortunè and Albert Sarfatty (z"l)  
for their concern and commitment  
in preserving the rich history  
and traditions of  
the Jews of Greece.

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**To Yvette, Maya, Noa, and Eden**



# FOREWORD

This book brings to completion a long process of study, research, survey and discovery. It was a process that began in 1993, when as a young architect living in New York I decided to return to Greece to survey and document the synagogues of Greece, as a natural progress of re-discovering my Jewish roots. This process came to completion in 2002, when as a mature architect living and building in Jerusalem, Israel, I was celebrating the gift of parenthood with the birth of my first daughter Maya-Zoe in March 2002. The publication of the manuscript finds me again in Jerusalem, after a long sojourn on the island of Aegina, Greece, and the Negev desert, Israel, pursuing ecological issues and "green" architecture in my practice and the work of the international NGO ECOWEEK I co-founded in 2005, and as a proud father of three: Maya-Zoe, Noa-Or, and Eden-Sari-Simha.

This long process was full of excitement and emotionally charged, as the search for the Jewish architecture of Greece, meant a search deep in my own Jewish roots in Greece, connecting me to my parents, grandparents and great-grandparents from Ioannina, Chalkis, Salonika, Athens, Turkey, Italy, and Spain. During the time I have been feverishly pursuing this project, I felt very much like the protagonist in the film by Theo Angelopoulos "Ulysses' Gaze," who in his search of a film role traveled from Salonika through the Balkans reaching the war-stricken Sarajevo. To me too, like in Ulysses' journey, as Greek poet Kavafis writes, the process itself was the reward, rather than the destination. The book comes only to conclude this rich and rewarding process and journey through history; the history of my own family and Jewish community.

The search for information on the buildings and their history, connected me to the people that used these buildings, their children and grandchildren, now living in the United States, Israel and elsewhere in the world. For example, I will never forget the day when I met a descendant from Veroia, Yossi Mor(dohai) who lives in Jerusalem. He was born during the German occupation and was saved thanks to the efforts of his parents who hid in the mountains around Veroia and the help of the locals. His family house in Veroia, identified by the Hebrew inscription "If I forget thee O Jerusalem," still stands.

The search for synagogues brought me to remote areas in Greece, meeting local people who remembered and were eager to share their memories of Jewish neighbors and friends, lost during the Second World War; I will never forget the enthusiasm and hospitality of Tasos Kehagioglou in

Didimoticho, Nikos Karabelas and Stavros Mamaloukos in Preveza, Panagiotis Papadimitriou in Ioannina, and Giota Zafiriadou in Komotini. But I will also never forget the local Jewish people who shared their memories with me, opened their homes to me, opened the synagogues and waited patiently while I was surveying and documenting the buildings: Louis Cohen from Xanthi, David Cohen in Veroia, Elias Cohen and Rafael Frezis in Volos, Iakovos Cohen in Drama, David Jivre from Didimoticho, Leon Levis in Salonika, Anna Matsa, Nina Negrin and Samouel Cohen in Ioannina, Sabethai Tsiminos (z"l) in Kavala, Haim Kapetas in Karditsa, Ezdras Moisis in Larissa, Reveka and Izis Sakis and Iakovos Venouziou in Rhodes, Mr. Sabas in Trikala, Marios Maisis and Minas (z"l) and Becky Kosti in Chalkis; I thank them all.

The search for the origins of the Greek synagogues brought me not only to Spain, but also to Izmir, Turkey, where I reconnected with the Sigura family, relatives from the side of my father whom I met for the first time in 1997.

One of the most charged moments of my research was at the Central Archives of the History of the Jewish People at the Givat Ram campus of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. During one of my routine searches in the Salonika files, Dov Ha-Cohen, a fellow researcher, was going through the register of the Jewish community of Izmir from the end of the nineteenth century. Suddenly, Dov, who was sitting opposite me at the reading desk, looked up towards me and started reading the names of my great-grandfather Mushon Ben Yossef Messinas (born 1865), his wife Joya Bat Meir (born 1863), and his children Rivka (born 1891), Yossef (born 1893) and my grandfather Merkado (born in 1895) who passed away January 31, 1995.

The manuscript for this book is based on my doctoral thesis at the Architecture and Urban Planning department of the National Technical University of Athens, under the guidance of professors Yiorgos Sariyannis, Doron Chen and Aleka Karadimou Gerolympou. The thesis was completed in 1999, defended in July 1999, and accepted by the examining committee made up of my professors and professors N. Holevas, D. Karidis, M. Efthimiou, and G. Prokopiou.

Spelling of the names of synagogues is very dependent on source and date. The spelling of these names has been unified in this book, based upon the Hebrew pronunciation. For example, *Scialom* Synagogue is spelled in the book *Shalom Synagogue*, *Keila Portugal*, *Kehila Portugal*, and *Beth Shaul*, *Beit Shaul*.

The names of cities are based on their Greek names. For cities outside Greece, I use the popular name of the city as related to the Jewish history; for example, for *Edirne*, *Andrianoupolis*, and *Monastir* for *Bitjol*. When a city was given a different name during the Ottoman period, this name is added in parenthesis next to the Greek name; for example, *Komotini (Giumuldjina)*. I have chosen to use the name *Salonika* rather than the Greek name *Thessaloniki* as this is the name commonly used in the English and Hebrew sources, dealing with the Jewish aspect of the city. Concerning references to archival documents other than bibliographic sources, my research has been mostly based on the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People at the Givat Ram campus of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. These documents are referred to by the name of the city, number of the file, and date. For example, (Salonika 336/11.6.1930), Salonika (AIU) (the files of Alliance Israélite Universelle), and Salonika HM (microfische).

I owe the reader an explanation about the choice of the specific geographic area of Greece and also the choice of the specific cities: Before the Second World War, northern Greece was the area with the largest concentration of Jewish communities. In this area, the communities maintained their character until the early 20th century, when Macedonia and Thrace became part of Greece. The architectural typology that developed is unique and rich in examples, thereby allowing us to study and understand it. This book may also be seen as a monograph covering a specific geographic area; other areas of Greece may be covered in the future in additional publications, by this author or by others.

Concerning the cities included in this book, northern Greece was the site of many Jewish communities and synagogues before the Second World War. The cities included in this book are the only ones where a synagogue

has survived. I focused only on cities with surviving synagogues in order to base my study on accurate documentation and architectural plans. Only this way, I felt, could a comprehensive study of the synagogues as works of architecture be possible. In the Appendix, the reader will find architectural plans (based on detailed surveys by the author) of all the synagogues surviving in Greece, and of some synagogues that were destroyed but there was enough architectural evidence that enabled an accurate reconstruction. They are included in order to allow the reader to compare and understand the synagogues of northern Greece within the wider context of Greece, and also to compare the synagogues of Greece to synagogues of other countries.

I hope that the younger generations of architects and historians will find in this book a stimulus for them to take up their own research, and that this material will become the basis for more study and further investigation in an area that has hardly been tackled.

I dedicate this book to my wife Yvette and our daughters Maya, Noa and Eden. Yvette has been an inspiring and supporting partner throughout. During our honeymoon we spent hours visiting and surveying synagogues in Corfu, Rhodes, and Kos, thus reconnecting our marriage to the celebration of Jewish life of the past, and at the same time commemorating the Greek Jewish communities that were lost during the Holocaust. Maya, Noa and Eden are the new generation that continues the Greek presence in Jerusalem, the city that stands as a symbol of history, coexistence, tolerance, and peace inspiring our present and our future.

Elias V. Messinas  
Jerusalem, September 2010

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This book culminates a long process of study and research during which many people, each one in their own field, each one in their own country, offered invaluable input and ideas. I am thankful to all of them who helped and supported this process of learning and preserving a piece of the history of the Jews of Greece.

For the production of this book, I wish to thank the people and institutions that supported and inspired the preparation and printing of this book. Without them it would not be realized.

First and most, I am grateful to Fortunnè and Albert Sarfatty (z"l) for their concern and commitment in preserving the rich history and traditions of the Jews of Greece by generously supporting this book, and Mrs. Vicky Safra for taking this book under her wing and making it a reality.

I am indebted to Sam Gruber, director of the Jewish Heritage Research Center, not only for the meticulous editing work on the manuscript, but mostly for being an inspiration in my study of synagogues, through his own published work and field documentations, which served as a model for my own work. As President of the International Survey of Jewish Monuments, Sam was the first person to respond to my intention to undertake the survey and study of the synagogues of Greece in 1993, securing not only the first "seed" grant from the World Monuments Fund, but also by securing and administering numerous grants that made the completion and publication of the study possible.

I thank my professors Yiorgos Sariyannis, Doron Chen, and Aleka Karadimou Gerolympou for guidance and inspiration throughout the Ph.D. process, and the dissertation defense jury professors D. Karydi, M. Efthimiou, G. Prokopiou and N. Holevas.

I thank Carol Krinsky, professor of Art History at NYU and author of *The Synagogues of Europe*, for initiating me into the magical world of synagogue history and architecture and for her insights and guidance in my work.

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I thank the institutions that supported the survey and study of Greek synagogues since 1993: Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, the World Monuments Fund, the Kehila Kedosha Jannina in New York, and the Ian Karten

Charitable Trust in England. The project got started with the study and survey of the synagogue in Chalkis, the hometown of my grandmother Eftihia Forni Negrin (1908–1985), thanks to Minos Mordochai and the Jewish Museum of Greece who provided a much-needed "seed" contribution in 1993.

I thank individuals and institutions who were extremely generous in allowing me access to their archives and collections, some of which are published in this book: the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece (KIS), the Institution for the Rehabilitation of Greek Jews (OPAIE), the Jewish Museum of Greece, the Jewish community archive of Salonika, the General Archive of Greece, the Ministry of Environment, Urban Planning and Public Works (YPEHODE) maps archive, the General Administration of the Greek Army (GES) aerial photographs archive, the archive of the Building Permit office of the City of Salonika, Albertos Koen, and Vassilis Mavromatis collections in Greece, the Alliance Israélite Universelle and Roger-Viollet photographic archive in Paris, Beth Hatefutsoth Photo Archive in Tel Aviv, the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, the Center for Jewish Art of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Yad Vashem library and photographic archive, Joint Distribution Committee archive, Yad Ben Zvi library and archive, David Cassuto and the U. Nahon Museum of Italian Jewish Art in Jerusalem.

I am grateful to Mark Mazower for referring me to his research notes in general and the Rosenberg report in particular, located at the Wiener Library in London. Above all, I am grateful to David Recanati, editor of the remarkable work *Zikhron Saloniki*, for permission to publish unpublished photographs from the Avraham and David Recanati collection.

The Getty Grant Program supported the identification and preparation phases of the Veroia Synagogue conservation project, which I implemented with the team of architects Petros and Marina Koufopoulos, engineer Panagiotis Panagiotopoulos, photographer Socratis Mavromatis, conservators Yianna Dogani and Amerimni Galanou, Geoerevna, Fasma Consultants—Kostantinos Kotsogiannis, and Antonis Yourousis. I thank them for enlightening my research with their professional participation.

Two people have been instrumental in the publication of this book: Prof. Steven Bowman and Blanche Cody; for publishing this manuscript I am grateful to both.

I am also grateful to the Sephardic House in New York for taking this publication under their auspices and including it in their publication series.

Finally, I thank translator Reveka Kamhi (Greece), editor Roberta

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Most of all, I owe an unpayably large debt to my wife, Yvette. She has been an indefatigable support, an exceptionally able critic, and an

incomparable partner in this long journey.

The book could not have been successfully completed without them all; any shortcomings herein are, of course, entirely my own responsibility.

Elias V. Messinas  
Jerusalem, September 2010



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# INTRODUCTION

This book is about the history and architecture of synagogues in the Jewish quarters in Greek cities. Most of these centers and buildings date from the Ottoman period (15th-19th centuries) and the period of the creation of modern Greece. They survived until the Second World War, the German occupation, and the Holocaust, which marked the beginning of the end of Greek Jewish history.

The book especially focuses on the synagogues of the geographic area of northern Greece (Macedonia and Thrace), most of which developed under similar circumstance of Jewish migration, settlement and acculturation, and most of which have met a similar fate — destruction by force or by neglect. Synagogues of other areas of Greece — such as Central Greece, Epirus, the Ionian islands (Corfu), the Aegean islands (Aegina, Delos, Rhodes, and Kos), and Crete, are mentioned in the text as examples, and their plans are included in the appendix, but in many cases their history is the result of other distinctive influences and developments.

This book is mostly about architecture and urban form, so the sites considered in detail are those where a synagogue still stands and has been surveyed in detail, or where there existed enough information — archival or physical — for the author to attempt a reasonable interpretation and graphic reconstruction. In some cases buildings surveyed and documented by the author in the 1990s have since been demolished. In other cases, buildings had already collapsed by the time the author visited them, and though he was able to document the ruins, those ruins too, have now been removed. For many former synagogues of northern Greece then, this book presents the only extensive documentation and memorial.<sup>1</sup>

While focusing on the architecture of synagogues and their immediate urban setting, the author has also endeavored to present something of the historical framework in which these synagogues developed and were used, and in some cases, information about the synagogues' destruction when this could be learned. Because there is very limited material available on the synagogues of Greece, a complete study of the building type through history is not possible. The available material utilized in this work, however, allows the investigation of the development of the synagogue during the Ottoman period, and the period of transition to modern Greek rule. Substantial information is also provided about the last phase of the synagogues' history. This information has been gleaned from contemporary sources, particularly the papers of the various Jewish

communities, as well as accounts in the public media.<sup>2</sup>

The book especially investigates the following three aspects in each Greek city:

- The Jewish quarter
- The relationship of the synagogue to the Jewish quarter, and
- The synagogue building

These three aspects are investigated before and after the Tanzimat Reforms (1839 and 1856), the political and social movement that redefined the role of ethnic and religious minorities in the Ottoman Empire, and for Jews functioned somewhat like the French Emancipation of the Jews during the Napoleonic period (1791). It is at the time of the reformations and in the decades following that significant change in the morphology of the Jewish quarter and of the synagogue took place, and the Jews of northern Greece redefined their role in modern society. In many cases they used the construction of new synagogues to demonstrate their new status.

## The Jewish Quarter

### Before 1839

The most important characteristics of the Jewish quarter prior to the Tanzimat Reforms was the quarter's organization within a limited area around the synagogue. The synagogue formed the religious and administrative center of the community. Within the quarter, there was an intricate social and physical structure that embraced members of all the socio-economic strata, who lived side by side, within the often limited space. Jewish quarters in Ottoman Greek cities were organized around courtyards, which formed the only primary, and sometimes the only open space of the quarter. In many cases streets were narrow and filthy, at least according to the descriptions of visitors. The unorganized construction on the street and the building projections (*sahnisi*) above further reduced the already meager open space.

Within this seemingly chaotic environment, however, there flourished a rich and often dynamic Jewish culture. Central to this culture was the synagogue. It integrated within the dense urban fabric, hidden from view from the street, and it followed the same general morphology and construction as the adjacent houses. This protective organization of the Jewish quarter was

also found in the Christian quarters of northern Greek cities, which were organized in a not too dissimilar manner around the church. This organization ceased after the 19th century and the implementation of the Tanzimat Reforms.

#### **After 1856**

Following the implementation of the Tanzimat Reforms, and because of a series of destructive fires that devastated the historic centers of a large number of Greek cities within the Ottoman Empire, the density and organization of the historic urban center changed — sometimes gradually, but often suddenly and dramatically. Together with the city centers, Jewish quarters changed, too, since it is in most cases they were located in the heart of the historic centers.

These changes were characterized by the settlement of the Jews according to new socio-economic criteria: the poor remained in the old central Jewish quarter, while the more affluent chose to live in the new urban areas that sprang up outside the densely populated walled city centers, featuring wide streets and spacious gardens. The very rich were able to construct elegant houses and villas in the suburban peripheries that developed, especially in the 19th century, around the newly burgeoning commercial centers. The new quarters for the affluent were inhabited by a mixed population of Jews, Christians, and Turks, based purely on socio-economic criteria. The traditional cohesion of urban Jewish communities (in the face of non-Jews), the result of a shared Jewish history and religion, began to dissolve with the wider dispersion of its members, and their pursuit of more particular economic and social goals.

Following the Tanzimat Reforms and the commercial benefits that many northern Greek cities enjoyed, Jewish quarters were less closely related to the historic city centers, and their location and form followed more general urban development patterns of the city. The new Jewish quarters were integrated in the urban fabric, with large urban blocks, wide streets, and gardens, in the European style. In the later development of the Jewish quarter, it is often difficult to trace with precision the boundaries of the Jewish quarter, since houses belonging to Jews were spread out within the urban fabric, rather than organized within a certain area. The best example of this type of expansive Jewish quarter — which might better be called a Jewish neighborhood, is the case of Komotini.

The synagogues built in these new quarters, were free standing buildings, often of imposing architectural presence. Except for their adjacent courtyard, they stood both exposed and integrated into the wider urban

context. While the site and size of synagogues rarely elevated them to a role of civic architecture, as was increasingly the case elsewhere in Europe and America, the new building still took on a public character which previously had been unknown.

### **The Relationship Between the Jewish Quarter and the Synagogue**

#### **Before 1839**

During the Ottoman period, each religious minority (*millet*) within the Ottoman Empire was governed by a religious leader (for the Jews after 1839 by the *Haham Basi*); thus the synagogue served as both the religious and administrative center of the Jewish community. The community and the quarter are organized around the synagogue. The synagogue formed an integral part of the fabric of the Jewish quarter, and it was built with the same materials and in the same scale as the houses, so that it could hardly be distinguished from the adjacent structures.

The location of the synagogue within the quarter, near the central open courtyard, allowed access to it for all community members of the community, while still providing protection from the street and the city outside the Jewish quarter.

#### **After 1856**

After 1856 the relationship between the Jewish quarter and the synagogue changed. This change was gradual, as the Tanzimat Reforms and the free settlement of Jews outside the Jewish quarters, was gradual. The new Jewish settlements were integrated into the city grid, and the synagogue, located close to the new Jewish settlement, was also integrated to the city fabric: it was built prominently facing the street, with a small courtyard surrounding it either in the front or the side.

### **The Synagogue**

#### **Before 1839**

Greek synagogues before the Tanzimat Reforms were mostly modest rectangular buildings that served relatively small communities. The appearance of the synagogue was also the result of restrictions placed by the Ottoman authorities, which sometimes limited synagogue size, height and

street elevation. As a result, most synagogues were relatively low buildings, hidden among densely built houses.

Another important characteristic of Greek synagogues was their construction method and style, which generally followed the local vernacular style of northern Greece, the Balkans, and western Turkey. These synagogues were built by the builders' guilds (*snaf*). The characteristics of this construction method was the structural use of masonry and wood, the plastered walls, the interior and exterior decoration (colors, wall paintings, and wood carving), and the volumetric organization of the house (or public building). Characteristic elements of this style were also the "*sahnisi*" (the projection of the building beyond the exterior facade), deep roof overhangs, the shallow foundations, and the thin wooden columns that organize both the structure of the building and its interior layout.

In general, the synagogues within the geographic area of northern Greece had many common characteristics with synagogues of neighboring countries especially those which once formed part of Ottoman Empire, in particular modern Turkey and Bulgaria. Similarities included size, scale, interior lay-out, the relationship to a courtyard and the street, and construction methods and style. Detailed studies of the synagogues in these countries, however, are still needed.

As far as the floor plan of the synagogue is concerned, two plan types were found in Greek synagogues of the earlier Ottoman period: the "Ottoman" or "Tetrapyle" and the "bi-polar" type.

The "Ottoman" plan is rectangular, with four columns set in the center of the prayer hall, in the center of which, in most cases, stands the *bimah*. This arrangement is known from elsewhere throughout the Ottoman Empire. It also bears superficial resemblances to synagogues from places as distant as Portugal and Poland. Architectural historians are not in agreement about the origins or the relationship of these similar but disparate plans. The arrangement may derive from the Ottoman mosque (which derives from the Byzantine church plan). In the case of the synagogue, the four columns do not, however, support a dome in the center, but only decorative elements on the ceiling.

In the bi-polar plan the *bimah* is located against the western wall of the prayer hall, facing the *heikhal* (Ark) opposite. In Greece, the *heikhal* was always placed against the most southeasterly facing wall, so that the worshipper facing the *heikhal* would also be facing Jerusalem. Synagogues of western Greece, where this plan type is common, generally have more in common with synagogues of Italy than with those of Ottoman lands. There are similarities in interior layout and in the relationship between the

*heikhal* (Ark) and the *bimah* between Italian and western Greek synagogues, where we find the layout now called in Greece, "Romaniote," a variant of the bi-polar arrangement found in Padova, Venice and elsewhere.

The women's section of the synagogue (*ezrat nashim*), is another important element of the Greek synagogue prior to 1839. It was either raised above or adjacent to the main prayer hall, and was hidden from view behind wooden lattice.

#### After 1856

Following the Tanzimat Reforms the forms of Greek synagogues changed considerably, albeit gradually. By the end of the 19th century the Greek synagogue moved beyond Ottoman-period traditions to more closely follow progressive European models, resulting in a common synagogue type where the *bimah* is placed more immediately in front of the *heikhal*, near the eastern wall of the prayer hall. The women's section changed from its earlier model, too, and took the form of an elevated open balcony wrapped around the main prayer floor, without the visual division as in the past.

To better understand the texts in this book, the reader is urged to also consult the architectural plans in the appendix. There one will find not only detailed plans of the synagogues of northern Greece, discussed in this book but also the floor plans of all standing synagogues in Greece, based on extensive on-site surveys by the author. This invaluable material, published as a corpus for the first time, will assist in further understanding the development of the synagogue within modern-day Greece, and throughout the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean regions.

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1 Synagogues of northern Greece are also treated (though with less detail) in N. Stavroulakis and T. De Vinney, *Jewish Sites and Synagogues in Greece* (Athens, 1992), and in E. Messinas, *The Synagogues of Salonika and Veroia* (Athens, 1997).

2 Specific source references from the various archives are not included in this English edition, since all the sources are in Greek. Complete references can be found in the author's Greek language dissertation upon which this edition is based. The Greek text can be found on line at: <http://thesis.ekt.gr/content/index.jsp?id=11795&lang=el>



# HISTORY & SYNAGOGUE ARCHITECTURE IN GREECE: AN OVERVIEW

Jews lived throughout Greece in considerable number since the Hellenistic period. The Roman writer Strabo (born 63 or 64 BCE, died ca. CE 24) wrote that Jews had a substantial presence throughout the Empire.<sup>1</sup> In Greece, in addition to documentary evidence there are archaeological remains. Traces of several synagogues, described below, have been excavated, and there is mention of Jewish communities, presumably all with synagogues, in Paul's account of his visits to Greece in the 1st century CE. Philo (c. 30 B.C.E.–c. 45 C.E.), wrote in the *Embassy to Gaius* how Jews came into "Europe, into Thessaly, and Boeotia, and Macedonia, and Aetolia, and Attica, and Argos, and Corinth and all the most fertile and wealthiest districts of Peloponnesus."<sup>2</sup> It is possible that Jewish presence was continuous in a least a few locations, such as Salonika, but at this time there is no positive proof. Jewish communities in Greece are referred to throughout the Byzantine period, but the historical and archaeological findings are extremely limited and information about the architecture of synagogues during this period is non-existent.<sup>3</sup> Synagogues excavated elsewhere in the Balkans and in Greek Asia Minor may be a useful reference.<sup>4</sup>



An architectural member (half column capital) depicting the menorahs with lulav and ethrog. Discovered in Corinth by the American School of Classical Studies, it dates from the 4th-6th centuries CE and most probably belonged to the synagogue of the city. (*The Jewish Museum of Greece*)

Byzantine name for the Roman Empire that they continued. The Romanioties predate the Sephardim who came to Greece from Spain, Portugal and Italy, many centuries later. The Romanioties spoke Greek enriched with Hebrew. In 1170, Benjamin of Tudela (Spain) wrote a descriptive report on the Jewish communities of Greece during the Byzantine period.<sup>5</sup> He visited a number of Greek Romaniotie communities including Corfu, Arta, Patras, Corinth, Thebes, Chalkis (Egripo), Salonika and Drama on his way from

Spain to Baghdad. For each community he gives a brief reference to the number of members, leaders and to their primary professions. The largest Jewish community he found was at Thebes with 2,000 Jews, engaged mainly in textile industry. Many of these workers perhaps resided in the neighboring communities from Corinth to Chalkis in Euboea.

The Romaniotie community of the Byzantine period was hardly monolithic. The Jews of Greece were regularly augmented by refugees — first



Ruins of the synagogue of Delos dating from the first century BCE. The "Seat of Moses" is believed to have been removed from a nearby gymnasium. (*The Jewish Museum of Greece*)

from parts of the Empire lost to Islam, and especially by Jewish refugees from the persecutions that followed the Crusades (1096-1270) in England, France, Germany and other European states, especially the Black Plague (1348), and again after the persecutions in Hungary in 1375. These refugees were integrated into the already existing communities around specific synagogues, but sometimes, when their numbers warranted it, they also built new synagogues according to the tradition of the city or country from whence they came. We know of examples of this practice in Salonika, Istanbul, and Edirne, and it was common elsewhere in the Ottoman

Empire.<sup>6</sup> These Romaniote communities, with their augmented populations, existed throughout Greece until the Fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453. At that time, many communities were uprooted and forcibly moved to repopulated and revitalize the capital city, renamed Istanbul.<sup>7</sup>

The first Sephardim, exiles from Spain, came to Greece (mainly to the Macedonia region) after June 1391, following anti-Jewish and forced conversions to Christianity inspired by the fiery preaching of the archdeacon of Ecija Ferrant Martinez in Seville in 1378.<sup>8</sup> It is estimated that about 100,000 Jews fled throughout Europe, while about 100,000 were forced to convert. Many refugees reached Salonika and the cities around it. Sometime after 1394, Jews from France arrived in Macedonia after they were persecuted by King Charles VI. Presumably some settled in Salonika, but information is lacking on exact dates and numbers. In several cases, Ashkenazim and Sephardim who found refuge on Greek territory found already existing Jewish Romaniote communities when they arrived.<sup>9</sup> The Sephardim and Ashkenazim brought their own dialects, Judeo-Spanish (Judaeo-español) and Judeo-German (Yiddish), correspondingly.

#### Ottoman Period (15th century-1912)



Mosaic floor of the synagogue in Aegina, located at the Archaeological Museum of Aegina.  
(Elias V. Messinas Archive)

During the Ottoman period, beginning in the mid-15th century, more Sephardi refugees from Spain settled in Greece after the establishment of the Holy Inquisition in Seville (Spain) in 1478. In 1482 the first Spanish royal decree calling for limited persecution of Jews of Seville, Cordoba and Cadiz was issued. The final decree of expulsion of Jews from Spain was signed by the King Ferdinand and Queen

Isabella of Castille and Aragon on March 31, 1492 in the palace of Alhambra of the conquered Kingdom of Granada. All Jews of the kingdom had to leave by August 1492.<sup>10</sup> While most Christian European states refused to take many Jewish refugees, the Ottoman Empire of Bayiazit II allowed tens of thousands of refugees to enter. Many settled in Greece and the Balkans.

In 1506, Spanish Jews who had found temporary safety in Portugal after they were forcibly baptized in 1498, were also forced to emigrate, and they, too, arrived in the Ottoman Empire. Subsequently, Jews expelled from parts of Italy and Provence in Southern France,<sup>11</sup> also made their way east, settling in Salonika, Veroia, Monastir (Bitjol), Skopje, Edirne (Andrianoupolis), Sofia and Istanbul. These Sephardi Jews transformed the cities in which they settled. Deserted areas were given life. Still, despite the mass settlement of organized Jewish communities during this period, very few buildings of the time have survived. Frequent fires often destroyed the historic centers of Greek cities such as Salonika, Veroia and Serres; and later, the destruction of the Holocaust erased forever significant remnants and buildings in Greece, some of which had survived for centuries. Today, the synagogue of Rhodes, built in 1575, is the oldest extant synagogue from the Ottoman period.

The rebuilding of a synagogue on pre-existing foundations, however, is known in several instances in Greece, where limited space in the Jewish quarter and state restrictions on building synagogues meant that synagogues destroyed by fire or earthquake were frequently rebuilt on their previous site. The synagogue of Chalkis, for example, has probably been in the same position since the founding of the citadel until today. It has been destroyed and reconstructed at least six times on the same foundations.<sup>12</sup> So, at least in its location, it may be considered the oldest synagogue in "continuous" use.

The list of Jewish communities in the Ottoman Empire between 1520 and 1535, includes the following<sup>13</sup>:

	<i>City Population</i>	<i>Jewish population</i>
1. Andrianoupolis	20,305	1,005
2. Salonika	24,315	13,225
3. Serres	5,465	325
4. Trikala	4,125	905

In 1655, the appearance and teachings of the pseudo-Messiah, Shabbetai Zvi, caused tremendous fragmentation among Jewish communities in Greece. The communities split into two groups — those who believed that Shabbetai was the Messiah and those who did not. This Messianic enthusiasm ended in 1666, when Shabbetai converted to Islam to save his life. Many of his followers throughout Greece followed his example, thereby creating a new religious group, the "Dönme, who had strong Jewish roots and traditions, but were practicing Muslims."<sup>14</sup>

### Modern Period (1912-1944)

The mid-19th century is well known for the political instability in the Ottoman Empire and the region of Thrace suffered immensely. During the Balkan crisis (1875-6) and the Russo-Turkish war that followed (1877), the occupation of Thrace by Russian troops inflicted great damages and losses of population in the urban centers of Thrace by Russian forces and Bulgarian attempts to annex Thrace to Bulgaria.

The first quarter of the 20th century is characterized by continuous territorial realignments, permanent unrest, military conflicts and successive foreign occupations. The first Balkan war (1913) was destructive for the cities of Thrace (both East and West). After the end of the second Balkan war and the Treaty of Bucharest (August 1913), Western Thrace was surrendered to the Bulgarians, and Eastern Thrace, including the regions of Didimoticho and Orestiada, were surrendered to Turkey. These geographic changes significantly affected the composition of populations in these areas. The signing of the treaty stimulated considerable migration to Macedonia and Istanbul.

At the Treaty of Neilly (1919), the region of Western Thrace came under inter-allied administration, and in the same month Greek and French forces occupied the region, which was divided into three prefectures. The period of conflict between the French, the Bulgarians, the Turks and the Greeks, concerning the future of Western Thrace, ended with the occupation of the region by the Greek army in May 1920. Thrace was surrendered to Greece, while the valley of Evros, including Didimoticho and Edirne (Andrianoupolis), remained in limbo for several years. Didimoticho was finally surrendered to Greece in 1921 and this resulted in massive exchanges of populations (Greek and Turkish) in this region. Jews suffered like others during these troubled times. But unlike Muslims and Christians who were subject to an increasingly escalating practice and then policy of population exchange, Jews, for the most part, stayed put in their home cities. Their allegiance of necessity adjusted to the new government. During the 1930s, in many cities, including Salonika, the economic security of Jews as well their physical safety was increasingly under pressure. The worst incident occurred in Salonika on the night of June 29, 1931, when two thousand armed men burned down the Jewish Kambel quarter. During the same week the Jewish quarters "6," "151" and Rezi-Vardar, also in Salonika, were also attacked.

In the 1930s there were 31 Jewish communities in Greece, including Romaniotes, Sephardim and Ashkenazim. These communities prayed in



Fragment of an inscription (door stone lintel) reading "Synagogue of the Hebrews" found in Corinth at the beginning of the 20th century, dating from the 4th-6th centuries CE. It was most probably placed above the entrance to the synagogue of the city. (*The Jewish Museum of Greece*)

more than 100 synagogues or prayer rooms. Salonika alone had about 60 synagogues and *midrashim* (small prayer halls).<sup>16</sup> After the Jewish communities were destroyed during the Holocaust, most synagogues suffered a similar fate and disappeared as we shall note later on.

During the Second World War, Italian and German forces occupied Greece. After the surrender of Italy to the Allies, German forces took complete control and enforced repressive policies against Jews, culminating in deportation to Auschwitz, Treblinka and other death camps in Poland. In all, 86% of the Greek Jews, including Jews in Thrace and parts of Macedonia occupied by Bulgaria, were murdered.

The greatest number of victims came from Salonika, whose Jews were rounded up beginning in March, 1943. Within a few months a four and a half century-old community of tens of thousands of people, rich in learning and lore, was almost entirely destroyed. Before the war there were approximately 60 functioning synagogues and prayer houses in Salonika. Today, there are three.

Much of the (still sparse) information we have today about the destruction that Greek Jewish communities suffered during the German Occupation (1941-44) belongs mainly to the period immediately after the war.<sup>17</sup> Survivors and aid workers reported that most of the synagogues had been destroyed, and in some towns, entire Jewish quarters were leveled. Post-war communities that tried to reorganize lacked financial and material resources to restore even those synagogues that remained, nor had these small bands of survivors use for large synagogues such as those of Komotini or Xanthi. In most cases in cities where two or more synagogues were used before the war, only one could function after the war.<sup>18</sup> In some cases, such as Kavala, redundant synagogues were used for community purposes. Sometimes they were rented or sold. Many were eventually demolished, or collapsed through neglect.

### Contemporary Period (1944-Today)

Until the Second World War and the mass destruction of Jewish communities in Europe and Greece, there were synagogues in most Greek cities. These buildings, which dated mainly from the 19th century or later, are mostly gone. After the Second World War, 38 synagogues in 25 cities survived in Greece.<sup>19</sup> Most of these buildings were either ruined and abandoned, or had been converted to homes,<sup>20</sup> warehouses,<sup>21</sup> and stables.<sup>22</sup> Due to the lack of an organized Jewish community, many of these buildings were sold and then torn down during the reconstruction of the cities.

Today 12 synagogues function in 9 cities of Greece:<sup>23</sup>

- Athens: Beit Shalom (1941)<sup>24</sup> and the synagogue of Yanniotis (1905)<sup>25</sup>
- Salonika: the Monastirli (or Monastiriotes) (1927),<sup>26</sup> Yad LeZikaron (1984),<sup>27</sup> and Yehoshua Avraham Salem in the S. Modiano Old Age Home (1981/2)<sup>28</sup>
- Larissa: Etz HaHayim (1861)
- Trikala: Yavanim (19th century)<sup>29</sup>
- Ioannina: Kahal Kadosh Yashan (1826)<sup>30</sup>
- Volos: one synagogue (1960)<sup>31</sup>
- Chalkis: one synagogue (beginning of 19th century)<sup>32</sup>
- Rhodes: Kahal Kadosh Shalom (1575)
- Corfu: Scuola Greca (17th century)

Some synagogue buildings also survive in other Greek cities, but no longer serve their original function.

- Kos: It is owned by the municipality and functions as a multi-purpose hall (1934)<sup>33</sup>
- Drama: It is used as a private residence (19th century)<sup>34</sup>
- Veroia: Restored and re-opened as a museum and synagogue (before 1850)
- Chania: the Etz Hayim Synagogue has been restored and functions as a cultural center and synagogue (end of 17th century)<sup>35</sup>
- Kavala: Until recently a hall for services functioned in the former Jewish Community Center of the city (beginning of twentieth century). It was recently demolished.<sup>36</sup>

## The Synagogues of Greece

### Introduction

Within Judaism, the synagogue is second only to the Temple in Jerusalem in its importance as an institution, and functions as the religious, cultural, and social center of the Jewish communities. While the ori-

gins of the synagogue are unknown and contested, some trace the synagogue to the period of the Babylonian Exile (586-530 BCE), when the institution is believed to have been created in an effort to preserve the Jewish religion while it was exiled from its spiritual heart, Jerusalem. In the scriptures, the earliest mention of a sanctuary (*Mikdash me'at* in Hebrew) is in Ezekiel and it has been suggested that this actually refers to some form of house of assembly and worship (*Beit Knesset* or synagogue) and a house of learning (*Beit Midrash*).<sup>37</sup>

The earliest physical evidence of synagogue in Israel dates from the 1st century CE, and there is general agreement that these buildings were in use before the final destruction of the Jerusalem Temple by the Romans in 70 CE. Remains of likely synagogue buildings have been found at Gamla and Masada. In the Diaspora, the earliest epigraphic evidence of synagogues (referred to as *proseuche* or prayer halls) dates from the 3rd century BCE from Egypt. This has led some scholars to suggest that the synagogue is an institution essentially created in the Diaspora to serve as a religious locus for those Jews who lived far from Jerusalem and the Temple cult.

### Synagogues in Ancient Greece

Many ancient synagogues have been discovered in the lands of the Diaspora, including a significant number within the borders of modern Greece, as well as further north throughout the Balkans.

The Jewish presence in Greece probably dates to at least the beginning of the Hellenistic Age, roughly 2,300 years ago, at the time when Alexander the Great unified the East to the West. There was contact between Greece and Israel earlier, and it is possible that Jews were resident in Greece even before the 4th century BCE.<sup>38</sup> According to the historian Strabo organized Jewish communities existed in most large Greek cities as early as the first century BCE. We may assume that each of these communities had at least one synagogue, though what the form and organization of those institutions was remains the subject of conjecture. Between 49 and 52 CE, during his second visit to Greece, St. Paul visited Greek Jewish communities, where he preached (presumably) at the synagogues of Phillipi, Salonika, Veroia, Athens and Corinth.<sup>39</sup>

While there is no known specific link between the synagogue of antiquity and those of the Ottoman and modern periods which are described in subsequent chapters, Greek Jews of all periods were certainly well-aware of their millennia-old presence in Greece. The ancient synagogues which have been discovered by archaeologists were not in use after the early Byzantine period. We do not know if portable remnants of





Interior of the 19th-century Pulieza Synagogue in Arta on May 22, 1946.  
*(Published in Chronika 134, 1994, p. 15)*



Interior of the synagogue in Serres dating from the 19th century.  
*(Published in Chronika 167, 2000, p. 12)*



The *heikhal* of Kahal Kadosh Hadash Synagogue in Ioannina after its desecration and damage in the Second World War. The synagogue was demolished after the war.  
*(The Jewish Museum of Greece)*



Interior of Kahal Kadosh Hadash Synagogue in Ioannina after its desecration and damage in the Second World War.  
*(The Jewish Museum of Greece)*



Beit Shalom Synagogue in Athens built in the late 1930s. In the front elevation, facing Melidoni street, the architect E. Lazaridis combined a Greek temple front with elements derived from the Temple of Jerusalem.  
*(Elias V. Messinas Archive)*



Interior of Ianniotiki Synagogue in Athens in the late 1990s. The *heikhal* and the *bimah* are arranged in a bi-polar layout. (*The Jewish Museum of Greece*)



Interior of the Synagogue Yavanim in Trikala built in the 19th century. The center of the synagogue is marked by four columns. The *heikhal* is located on the eastern wall. (*Elias V. Messinas Archive*)



The synagogue in Chalkis, re-built in the beginning of the 20th century, shortly after the earthquake of 1894 in the same location, on Kotsou street. (*Elias V. Messinas Archive*)



The *heikhal* of the synagogue in Chalkis. (*Elias V. Messinas Archive*)



One of the numerous inscriptions on the facades of the synagogue in Chalkis. These inscriptions belonged to tombs in the Jewish cemetery, but were used by the Venetians as construction material for the city walls after the 16th century. The inscriptions were revealed in the beginning of the 20th century, when the walls of Chalkis were demolished, and were returned to the Jewish Community. The community attached them to the walls of the synagogue, most probably during its reconstruction following the earthquake of 1894. (*Elias V. Messinas Archive*)

these or other ancient synagogues were preserved and used in synagogues of later periods, in the way that religious items from Spain were carried to new homes in the Sephardic Diaspora. But just as the Jews of Rome during the Middle Ages could look to the Arch of Titus in the Roman Forum, and perhaps, too, to the Roman catacombs, it may be that Jews in Greece in the Middle Ages also had some literal touchstones which connected them to their ancient past. While the forms and decorations of the ancient synagogues did not directly influence later Greek synagogues, it is worth considering the most important archaeological finds since they demonstrate the continuity of the Jewish presence in Greece, and they also illustrate how little the overall form and function of synagogues changed over the centuries as it developed and was maintained as the preeminent communal and religious space.

### Delos

The earliest remains of a synagogue in Greece, from the 2nd or 1st century BCE, are those discovered on the island of Delos in 1912-13 by the French Archaeological School, near the northeastern shore of the island.<sup>40</sup> Excavations revealed the remains of what was then thought to be a house subsequently converted into a synagogue. According to André Plassart's report, it is a rectangular building that measures 14.25 meters (length) x 28.15 meters (width) and is divided into three equally-sized rooms. In one of the rooms there are remnants of marble seats at the northern and western walls, while the marble throne is at the center of the western wall. It is believed that this throne and seats belong to the stadium neighboring the synagogue, which had been destroyed earlier on. In the room above the seats, there are small marble bases or pillars on which four Greek inscriptions carry the expressions "Theos Hysistos" and "Hysistos" (the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew "Shadai," the Highest). The building was recognized as a synagogue based on this reference.

The discovery in 1980 of two Samaritan synagogue inscriptions 90 meters north of the building both clarified and confused the building identification. On the one hand, the presence of the Samaritan inscription helped rule out various non-Jewish pagan uses for the building. On the other hand, the inscriptions suggest that the structure belonged to Samaritans (who called themselves the "Israelites on Delos"), rather than Jews. The building is still considered the oldest synagogue or *proseuche* in the Diaspora, but whether it was the Samaritan *proseuche* from which the inscriptions came, or whether it was a Jewish *proseuche*

in proximity to the Samaritans (as was the case in Ptolomaic Egypt) is unknown. Still, it is likely that Greeks made little distinction between Samaritans and Jews, just as in the first and second centuries CE there was not yet a clear distinction between Jews and Christians.

### Aegina

A more positively identified ancient synagogue has been excavated on the island of Aegina, closer to Athens.<sup>41</sup> The remains, located not far from the local harbor, were first noted in 1829 and the site was fully excavated in 1932, and again in subsequent years.<sup>42</sup> The plan of the synagogue is simple; the main hall appears to have been rectangular in shape, entered from the west, and with a wide protruding semi-circular apse at the east end. This type of basilica plan was common in the 4th century C.E. and later used by pagans, Christians and Jews. The hall measured 13.5 by 7.6 meters, and the apse is 5.5 meters in diameter. Presumably the apse would have housed a wooden or stone Ark to hold Torah scrolls. There are no traces of seating in the apse as was the case in some Early Christian churches and at the 3rd-century CE synagogue of Sardis (Turkey). There was probably a portico in front of the hall. This synagogue appears to have been built over an earlier structure of unknown identity, but nearly identical plan. This too, may have been a synagogue.

According to the excavations, other rooms, mainly on the north surrounded the synagogue hall. They were smaller in size, and were probably used for other needs of the community, such as teaching, meetings, meals, and treasury. Similar complexes of rooms are known from the synagogue at Ostia Antica (Italy) and elsewhere.

The floor of the sanctuary was completely covered with a "carpet" style mosaic in blue, grey, red and black, mostly filled with geometric designs. The mosaic includes two inscriptions, within *tabulae ansatae*, both referring to donors.

In English, they read:<sup>43</sup>

*I, Theodoros, the archisynagogos who served for four years, built the synagogue from its foundations. Revenues [contributed] amounted to 85 gold pieces and offerings to God [i.e., from the synagogue treasury] [amounted] to 105 gold pieces.*

*Theodoros the younger being in charge, the mosaic work has been done out of synagogue revenues. Blessings upon all who enter.*

The destruction of this synagogue may have been due to a decree that

permitted the destruction of synagogues or other religious temples in the vicinity of churches. This synagogue was discovered next to a church and a (Christian) cemetery. Today, only part of the synagogue's mosaic floor is extant, and it has been moved from its original location to the courtyard of the island's Archaeological Museum to protect it from certain destruction due to contemporary construction in the area of its original position.<sup>44</sup>

### Corinth

We know there was a sizable Jewish population in Corinth from documentary evidence, including Saint Paul's Letters. There is archaeological evidence for a synagogue from at least the 3rd century. Several architectural elements, including a stone block with three carved menorahs that was probably a capital, have been found, although their provenance is not clear.<sup>45</sup>

### Athens: Metroon

There is epigraphic and literary evidence for Jews in Athens from the fourth century BCE on. The location of a synagogue in the ancient city is, however, uncertain. It is possible that a synagogue existed in late Roman times near the Agora, where a fragment of inscribed architectural revetment (wall covering) was discovered in the 1930s during an excavation led by Homer Thompson.<sup>46</sup> This was reexamined by Thompson and A.T. Kraabel in the 1970s, and since it represents part of an inscribed menorah, it is very likely that it comes from an architectural setting. The archaeologists presented the hypothesis that in the late fourth or early fifth century C.E, a synagogue was built into the reworked Metroon, repaired after the sacking of Athens by the Heruli in 267 C.E.

### Northern Greece and the Balkans

Despite the reports of Paul's visits to synagogues in northern Greece, no ancient remains have yet been found. Not far to the north, however, other synagogues have been discovered in the Balkans, notably at Stobi (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia),<sup>47</sup> Plovdiv (Bulgaria)<sup>48</sup> and Saranda (Albania).<sup>49</sup> All these attest to the long Jewish presence in the area.

## The Architecture of the Synagogue

There is no established form for a synagogue. Over the centuries synagogues in different countries and at different times have been built in almost every conceivable shape and size. Synagogues in Greece have drawn, at different times, inspiration from many places, depending on what

cultural forces were at play at the time. Greek Jews have been at the crossroads of Europe, the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East, and their buildings have responded to religious and architectural trends from Palestine, Rome, Byzantium, and later the centers of Muslim culture. Synagogue architecture of Spain and Italy and in the 19th century from France and Western Europe all influenced Greek synagogue design.<sup>50</sup> Still, regardless of material, size, location, or favored architectural style, there are a few required features for every synagogue that allow it to perform its function, and in turn identify its use to the community.

The most important typological elements of the synagogue are the Ark and the Bimah. The Ark, known in Hebrew as the *heikhal* or *Aron HaKodesh*,<sup>51</sup> is the cabinet where the scrolls of the Torah are stored. It is usually the visual focal point of the synagogue interior, and is usually set against the interior wall closest to Jerusalem. In Greece, as in most of Europe, this means east, and this is the direction that Jews face when they pray. The term *heikhal*, or sometimes in Greece, *ehal*, is used by Sephardim.

The *bimah*, also known in Hebrew as the *teivah*, is the reader's platform. It usually consists of a raised platform upon which is set a stand or table on which the Torah is placed when it is read. The term "*teivah*" is used by the Sephardim, and "*bimah*" is used by the Ashkenazim.

### The Heikhal

The *heikhal* can take the form of a free standing or projecting cabinet, a niche in the wall, or of a small room.<sup>52</sup> In each case there is within a shelf or shelves where the Torah Scrolls (*Sefarim*) are placed. In most types of *heikhal* there are ornamented doors. These are covered with a curtain (*parokhet*),<sup>53</sup> often embroidered with gold thread. According to Sephardic tradition there is a similar curtain in the inside of the *heikhal*.

According to religious law (*halakhah*), prayer is in the direction of Jerusalem, that is, facing the eastern (or southeastern) wall where as a rule in Greek synagogues, the *heikhal* is placed. In ancient synagogues the Torah Scrolls were carried into the hall of worship in a decorated ark that was called *teivah*. The *teivah* corresponds to the religious law (*halakhah*) that requires it be placed in front of the *heikhal* (possibly between the *heikhal* and the *bimah*).<sup>54</sup>

In some cases in Greece we find the *heikhal* projecting from the exterior wall of the synagogue (either the eastern or the southeastern) in a semi-circular shape (for example in Kos), or a half octagon projection (for example in Ioannina). This characteristic has no particular explanation, because it a) does not refer to religious laws, b) does not depend on the origin of the



Interior of Kahal Kadosh Yashan Synagogue in Ioannina. The *heikhal*, in the center, is located against the eastern wall of the synagogue, and is decorated in an Italian Baroque style. (Elias V. Messinas Archive)



The courtyard of the Synagogue Kahal Shalom in Rhodes built in 1575. (Elias V. Messinas Archive)



Interior of Kahal Shalom Synagogue in Rhodes built in 1575. The double *heikhal* recalls the arrangement of the ancient synagogue in Sardis. The original *heikhal* was destroyed during the Second World War. (Elias V. Messinas Archive)



Scuola Greca Synagogue in Corfu built in the 17th century. (Elias V. Messinas Archive)



Interior of Scuola Greca Synagogue in Corfu. View towards the *heikhal*. The interior of the synagogue was partially damaged when two assailants broke into the synagogue and burned Jewish books and documents in an attempted arson on Passover eve in November 2010. (Elias V. Messinas Archive)



The *bimah* of the Scuola Greca Synagogue in Corfu built in the 17th century. (Elias V. Messinas Archive)



The *heikhal* of the Scuola Greca Synagogue in Corfu built in the 17th century. (Elias V. Messinas Archive)



The synagogue in Kos built in the 1930s, after the earthquake of 1933. The building is currently used as a multi-purpose hall by the Municipality of Kos. *(Elias V. Messinas Archive)*



Exterior of the 19th-century building that served as a synagogue in Drama prior to the Second World War. According to the last remaining Jews in Drama, the building was a converted home. Below the synagogue, on the ground floor, was the home of the rabbi. *(Elias V. Messinas Archive)*



The gate leading to the courtyard of the restored Etz Hayim Synagogue in Chania. *(Elias V. Messinas Archive)*



Floor detail of Etz Hayim Synagogue in Chania. The synagogue was damaged in two anti-Semitic arsons in January 2010, that also destroyed rare books, archives and valuable objects. *(Elias V. Messinas Archive)*



Interior of the restored Etz Hayim Synagogue in Chania. The *heikhal* is oriented East in a bi-polar arrangement. *(Elias V. Messinas Archive)*

synagogue (Sephardi or Romaniote), and c) does not depend on the chronology or geographic location of the synagogue. For example, a projection is found in the synagogues of Ioannina (Romaniote, 1826) and Kos (Sephardic, 1934), but cannot be found in the synagogues of Trikala (Romaniote, 19th century), and Larissa (Sephardic, 1861).

### **The *Bimah* (or *Teivah*)**

The Torah Scrolls are read from the *bimah*, which in some Sephardic communities is known as the *teivah*. This combination platform and table or stand for treading the Torah is always placed opposite the *heikhal*. In the Greek synagogues the *bimah* may be found in three different positions:

#### **1) At the Center of the Room**

According to the *Talmud*, the *bimah* is at the center of the synagogue. This designation is based on the wooden *bimah* of the synagogue of Alexandria, described in the *Talmud*.<sup>55</sup> This Talmudic tradition of a central *bimah* continued in the commentaries of Spanish Talmudists of the 12th, 13th and 14th century. For example, the *Mishneh Torah*<sup>56</sup> by Moshe Ben Avraam Ibn Gaon (end of 13th, beginning of 14th century), the *Magid Mishnei* by Vidal Yom Tov of Tolossa (second half of the 14th century) and the *Arba'a Turim*<sup>57</sup> by Rabbi Yaakov Ben Asher (Ba'al Ha-Turim, 14th century).

Although the synagogues of Spain were destroyed or converted to churches after the expulsion of the Jews in 1492, surviving medieval manuscript illuminations<sup>58</sup> illustrate the central *bimah*, apparently in accordance with the examples of the *Talmud* and the medieval Spanish Talmudists. Based on two illuminations we see at least a schematic representation of the internal structure of synagogues in Spain where an elevated wooden *bimah* was at the center of the prayer hall. In Greece the central *bimah* is traditionally called Sephardic, and is found in Rhodes, Kos, Komotini, Salonika (Italian Synagogue) and possibly in Didimoticho.

#### **2) Adjacent to the Western Wall (Bi-polar Organization)<sup>59</sup>**

In Greece, when the *bimah* is attached or adjacent to the western wall of the prayer hall, the arrangement is traditionally called Romaniote. This type of plan is encountered in Corfu, Ioannina, and Trikala.

The bi-polar plan in Greece has many common characteristics with the bi-polar plans in neighboring Italy, and especially Venice, after the 16th century.<sup>60</sup> The close commercial, religious and social ties between Jewish communities of Greece with those of Italy may have affected the mor-

phology of Greek synagogues, mainly in western Greek cities such as Ioannina, Corfu and Arta, where many Italian Jews settled.

An even earlier example of the bi-polar type also appeared in Spain, and survived in the small private synagogue of Cordova, erected in 1315. The existence of the Cordova Synagogue suggests that the bi-polar arrangement may have originated in Spain. Joseph Ben Ephraim Caro (1488-1575), who came from Spain, wrote in his authoritative summary of Jewish law, the *Shulhan Aroukh*, that the position of the *bimah* depends on time and place. That is, that in the past, when synagogues used to be larger, the *bimah* was in the center of the room. Since in his days synagogues were smaller, many chose to place the *bimah* at the western side of the synagogue.<sup>61</sup> Based on this explanation, and the fact that the majority of early synagogues known to be built by Sephardim in Greece and elsewhere placed the *bimah* near the western wall, it is possible that the bi-polar synagogue became more widespread *after* the Jews' expulsion from Spain, when, because of limited resources or their small number, Jews chose to build small synagogues, where it was more practical to place the *bimah* at the western end of the room.

#### **3. Adjacent to the *Heikhal***

The placing of the *bimah* adjacent to the *heikhal* developed from the 19th-century European Reform synagogues. The new architectural arrangements for Reform synagogues were inspired by the progressive ideas of the time and influenced by the form of the service and buildings of (mostly German) Protestant churches. The Reform movement began in the city of Seesen, Germany, and gradually spread — with variations — to most Jewish communities of Europe and America.

Even so, by late 19th century many Orthodox synagogues also adopted the combined *bimah* and *aron* (*heikhal*) arrangement, as well as many of the other architectural arrangements — such as fixed, seating facing the *heikhal*. The removal of the *bimah* to the east end allowed more room for seating in the center of the synagogue, but it also signaled an increased separation of clergy and congregation, greater decorum (conformity) in the exercise of prayer and, in general, a more formal and less participatory service. In Greece, this type is encountered towards the end of the 19th century and mainly in the first decades of the 20th century. It was not so much ideology or social theory that brought about this type. Rather, it was an effort to imitate the contemporary Jewish trends of Europe — although these trends which emphasized conformity did have a social purpose. We have such examples in mainly contemporary synagogues such as that of

Beit Shaul (1898) in Salonika, Xanthi, (1926), Monastirli in Salonika (1927), and Beit Shalom in Athens (1941).

### ***The Projecting Bimah***

In Greece there are two instances of a *bimah* projecting from the western wall: in Ioannina and in Trikala. This projection is part of the bi-polar arrangement, and results when the *bimah* is adjacent to the western wall. But there are also examples in bi-polar plan synagogues where the *bimah* does not project. Traditionally,<sup>62</sup> before the Second World War, the *bimah* of the synagogue of Chalkis was adjacent to the western wall, but had no projection. Likewise, the Catalan Yashan Synagogue (destroyed in the fire of 1890), and the Talmud Torah Hagadol<sup>63</sup> Synagogue (1904-1917) in Salonika, both of which had a bi-polar interior arrangement, had no *bimah* attached to their western wall. Further, the synagogue of Aragon in Kastoria (1830, demolished after the Second World War)<sup>64</sup> has an elevated *bimah* over the main entrance, 18 steps above the floor of the main prayer hall, but the reconstruction drawings show no projection for the *bimah*.

On the other hand, if we examine the neighboring synagogues of Italy<sup>65</sup> and mainly those of Venice and Padova, we can observe many similarities, especially insofar as the bi-polar position of the *bimah* and the projection to the western wall are concerned. This morphologic relationship of the two can lead us to the conclusion that the projection probably came from Italy to Greece.

### ***The Relation of the Synagogue to the Street and Courtyard***

The courtyard is an inseparable part of the Greek synagogue. The courtyard separates and protects the synagogue from the street. It also serves as an open space for the congregation, where members meet before and after services in a quasi-private space. The courtyard, entered through a gate from the street, is often surrounded by a high wall, hiding it from public view. Today, there are still examples of this type of courtyard in the central market of Izmir,<sup>66</sup> where most synagogues of the city are concentrated, in Syria,<sup>67</sup> in Morocco<sup>68</sup> and elsewhere throughout the Muslim world. Similar courtyards existed in Western Europe, too, especially before the age of Emancipation. Many examples, such as that in Veitschoheim in Germany, were known in small towns throughout Germany before the Holocaust. In Italy, due to the limited space of the ghetto, a different tradition developed for the protection of the synagogue, namely on an upper floor of domiciles. Such examples are encountered in the Jewish ghetto of Venice, whereas in Greece we have two known examples: In Corfu and in Patras

(demolished in the 1980s).

The use of the courtyard and the protection of the synagogue away from the street prevailed in Greece and Turkey until the mid-19th century, when the Tanzimat Reforms<sup>69</sup> were implemented. From this time on, there is a new relationship of synagogue to street, reflecting the public recognition of the legitimacy of the Jewish community, and promise of greater security.

As developed in Western Europe after Emancipation, new synagogues were designed to directly face the public street. The courtyard still fulfills its function as a community space, but it is placed to the side of the synagogue, behind the now-splendid façade. Thus, in the second half of the 19th century, synagogue architecture becomes part of the urban streetscape. For example, we can see this change by comparing the synagogue in Alexandroupolis (19th century) to the Monastirli Synagogue in Salonika (1927).

### ***The Women's Section (Ezrat Nashim)***

The separation of men and women in the synagogue is the norm for all pre-modern synagogues; and in all Orthodox synagogues, and thus, in all synagogues in Greece.<sup>70</sup> Only men enter the main prayer hall. Women enter a special section, called the *ezrat nashim*, which is often elevated in a balcony or gallery area. In Greece, the women's section is usually entered from a separate entrance, usually from the courtyard of the synagogue to a side door. In some synagogues, such as was the case in Xanthi, men and women entered the main door to the synagogue together into a vestibule area, but women then ascended a staircase to the *ezrat nashim*, while men proceeded straight ahead into the main prayer hall.

Until the 19th century, a wooden latticed window covered the openings of the women's section to the main hall of prayer to visually separate men and women.<sup>71</sup> Examples of this survive today in the synagogues of Ioannina (1826) and Veroia (before 1850). At the synagogue of Komotini (19th century) the corridor and the elevated section for women was also separated from the rest of the synagogue by a wooden latticed window, similar to that of Veroia and Ioannina. The women's section in the synagogue of Larissa (1861) was apparently similar; its earlier arched openings still have their original form but have been blocked with stonework.

Finally, an example similar to Komotini is the synagogue of Trikala (19th century), where, before the recent extensive alterations (including a new women's section in the southern part of the building), there was a women's section on the northern side.<sup>72</sup> Women used to enter through a separate entrance (today it is turned into a cupboard) from the courtyard, and would





Interior of the prayer room in the Jewish Community Center in Kavala in 1994.  
(Elias V. Messinas Archive)



The *bimah* of the synagogue in Chalkis. In the background is the women's section (*ezrat nashim*). (Elias V. Messinas Archive)



The *heikhal* of the Scuola Greca Synagogue in Corfu built in the 17th century.  
(Elias V. Messinas Archive)



The *heikhal* of the Scuola Greca Synagogue in Corfu with the Sifrei Torah in wooden tikim. (Elias V. Messinas Archive)



The *heikhal* of the Synagogue Kahal Shalom in Rhodes with Sifrei Torah. (Elias V. Messinas Archive)



The 19th-century *bimah* of the Synagogue Yavanim in Trikala. The bipolar *bimah* is located on the western wall, and an additional — later — *bimah* in the center of the hall. (Elias V. Messinas Archive)



The 17th-century *bimah* of the Scuola Greca Synagogue in Corfu. (Elias V. Messinas Archive)



Interior of Kahal Shalom Synagogue in Rhodes built in 1575. The wooden *bimah* in the center of the hall is a reproduction of the original *bimah* destroyed during the Second World War. (Elias V. Messinas Archive)



Interior of Etz Hayim Synagogue in Larissa renovated in 1991. The hall is organized by ten columns and the *bimah* in the center. Before the Second World War the *bimah* was built of wood, above the entrance on the west wall opposite the *heikhal* (bi-polar). (Elias V. Messinas Archive)



Interior of Beit Shalom Synagogue in Athens built in the late 1930s. The interior of the synagogue was renovated in the 1970s in a modern style. The *heikhal* and the *bimah* are built adjacent to each other, in a Reform manner. (Elias V. Messinas Archive)

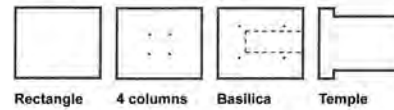


The *ezrat nashim* (women's section) balcony of the Synagogue Kahal Shalom in Rhodes, probably a later addition to the original building. (Elias V. Messinas Archive)

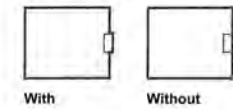


Interior of the synagogue in Chalkis. Over the *bimah* is the balcony of the *ezrat nashim* (women's section). (Elias V. Messinas Archive)

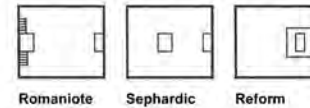
**Floor plan of the synagogue**



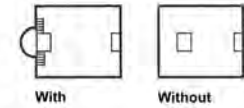
**Projection of Heikhal**



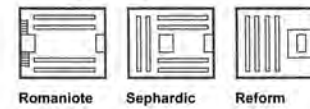
**Relationship Heikhal - Bimah**



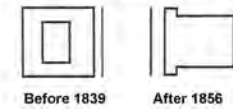
**Projection of Bimah**



**Seating arrangement**



**Relationship with the street**



Morphological characteristics of Greek synagogues. (Elias V. Messinas Architect)



The synagogue in Edirne (Turkey) dating from the 19th century. (Courtesy Albertos Koen)



Mole Antonelliana, the Great Synagogue in Torino (Italy), dating from the late 19th century. An imposing public building in the eclectic style. A typical post-emancipation example of a grand and monumental synagogue in the heart of Torino. (Elias V. Messinas Archive)



Interior of the Conegliano Veneto Synagogue (1701) reconstructed in the 1950s in Jerusalem, located at the U. Nahon Museum of Italian Art. The original building was published in J. Pinkerfeld, *The synagogues of Italy* (Jerusalem, 1954), p. 39-40. (Courtesy of the U. Nahon Museum of Italian Jewish Art, Jerusalem)



Sinjora Synagogue in Izmir (Turkey) built in the 19th century. Similar to the Greek synagogues, it is a rectangle plan with four columns in the center. (Elias V. Messinas Archive)



The ceiling of Sinjora Synagogue in Izmir (Turkey) built in the 19th century. Prior to its modification, the *bimah* stood under this ceiling, in the center of the hall.  
(Elias V. Messinas Archive)

climb a wooden staircase along the northern wall from the ground floor to their balcony on the first floor. The entire area of women's access to the synagogue as well as the women's section was, as at Komotini, closed by a wooden latticed screen separating it from the main wall of the synagogue.

In most synagogues, this form of extreme separation ended, beginning in the mid-19th century under the influence of European models in synagogue design. Instead, *ezrat nashim* takes the form of an open balcony, that is separate and elevated, but more open to and integrated into the main prayer hall. Examples in Greece include: in Salonika, Talmud Torah Hagadol Synagogue (1907-1917), the Italian Synagogue (1896-1917) and the Monastirlis Synagogue (1927), Xanthi (1926-1995) and Volos (restored in the 1940s and demolished in 1960s). Restorations were made in the women's section in historic synagogues such as that of Rhodes (probably in the 1930s), Corfu (probably in the 1930s), Larissa (probably in the 1930s) and Chalkis (in the 1940s and 1950s).

## Architectural Morphology

### *Synagogue Plan Types*

Most synagogues in Greece are arranged symmetrically along a longitudinal axis, where four or more columns separate the interior into aisles. In

rare cases the main axis is across the width of the synagogue. The main entrance is used by men, who pray in the main hall of the synagogue on the ground floor. Women pray in the women's section (*ezrat nashim*), which is separated from men, either on a higher floor or by a wooden latticed window.

Some synagogues, such as the synagogue of Corfu (17th century), have a unified interior space, not separated by columns. The Corfu Synagogue is narrow in width, and does not require additional interior supports to carry the load of the roof. The open plan without columns, sometimes referred to simply as a "hall plan" is also found in contemporary synagogues, mainly in those small enough to permit a unified space. Examples exist in Kos (1934), Volos (1960) and in the modern synagogues in Salonika, Yad LeZikaron (1984) and Y.A. Salem (1981/2). According to verbal descriptions of one version, the synagogue of Alexandroupolis (19th century), which its new (non-Jewish) owner renovated after the Second World War, had no columns in the interior. Finally, the modern synagogue Beit Shalom (1941) in Athens, is an example of this type, for it is built with reinforced concrete, permitting a large span without interior columns.

A plan type common in synagogues of the Ottoman Empire, is of a rectangular space with four central columns that organize the interior space. In most cases the *bimah* is set between the columns in the center of the room. This type of synagogue is found in Izmir (Turkey) — Algazi Synagogue and Bikur Holim Synagogue, in Plovdiv (Bulgaria), and in Greece in Veroia (before 1850), Komotini (19th century), Larissa (1861) - with 10 columns at the center, Didimoticho (end of 19th century/1924) and Chalkis (beginning of 20th century). The origin of the four-column interior is unknown. Variations can be found from Portugal to Poland.<sup>73</sup>

The basilica plan is also common in Greek synagogue design. The interior is divided into three aisles, usually by two rows of columns which help carry the roof. Examples of this type, influenced by Western European models, date mostly from the beginning of the 20th century. Today we can find examples of this type in Xanthi (1926), the Yanniotes Synagogue of Athens (1905), and the Monastirlis Synagogue of Salonika (1927). An earlier version of the basilica type is the synagogue of Ioannina (1826), where the interior is divided by five rows of columns, into six aisles.

A variant of the basilica plan consists of a façade — often flanked by two projecting tower blocks — that is wider than the prayer hall behind. The façade may contain an entrance vestibule, and one or more stairwells leading to the women's gallery. This plan has its roots in Western Europe where large two-towered synagogues were erected beginning in the 1850s. This type soon spread east and examples can be found throughout Greater

Poland. The use of a wider façade structure may derive from Ottonian and Romanesque cathedral architecture. The plan might also have appealed to some Jewish congregations for its similarities to some reconstruction of Solomon's Temple, especially after the 1890s when the reconstruction of the Temple by French architect Charles Chipiez was widely circulated.<sup>74</sup> This type of floor plan is found in Kos (1934), Athens (Beit Shalom Synagogue, 1941), and Xanthi (1926).

### **Seating**

The position of the *bimah* affects the arrangement of seats in a synagogue. In the past, the seats in Greek synagogues were permanent, built-in wooden benches, and these still survive today in the synagogues of Ioannina and Veroia where benches are placed along the perimeter of the room, and at the center, arranged in parallel rows. Typically, when there was a central *bimah*, benches were built around it, most facing the central *bimah* and some facing the *heikhal*. In the case of the bi-polar plan, benches were arranged in rows parallel to the main axis of *bimah* and *heikhal*. Benches were aligned on each side of the main axis, with congregants divided facing a central space. In this way one half of the congregation faced the other, as in the synagogue of Corfu. In the third case where the adjacent *bimah* is joined to the *heikhal*, the seats are organized in parallel rows that all face the wall of the *heikhal*, as in the Beit Shalom Synagogue of Athens.

In Greek synagogues, in the main prayer hall the worshippers take their seats next to the *heikhal*, at the perimeter and at the center of the hall.<sup>75</sup> In Jewish tradition the seats next to the *heikhal* are most desirable and connote the greatest honor. After these, other seats along the east wall are preferred.<sup>76</sup> Today, for a number of reasons, in most Greek synagogues the seats are wooden movable chairs or portable benches that are set up for each individual service. They can be arranged in regard to the type of service, and the size of the congregation.

### **The Synagogue Before and After the Tanzimat Reforms (1839-1856)**

Until the beginning of the 19th century, and particularly before 1839 and the Tanzimat Reforms, Greek synagogues had almost no distinctive exterior characteristics. They could not be differentiated from neighboring houses.<sup>77</sup> After the Reformations the situation changed. The Ottoman restrictions on buildings no longer applied and synagogues began to assume a more imposing and prominent look. The buildings established their presence on the street next to houses and even

churches.<sup>78</sup> In this phase, there was a clear influence coming from abroad, mainly from Europe: new progressive ideas of the emancipation of Jews, through education in the schools of Alliance Israélite Universelle throughout the Ottoman Empire, and through international commercial activity of members of the communities who established these synagogues.

The Reforms also changed the form of the Jewish quarters. Before Tanzimat, the Jewish quarter followed the defensive model: houses were built around a common open courtyard. Members of a particular community or an entire Jewish community lived around this courtyard reached from narrow, dead-end streets. The synagogue was in the courtyard, and blended with the houses. It often did not differ from them: the synagogue was not an imposing building facing the street and the city, but rather a part of the fabric and the block of buildings in the neighborhood, to the point it was not distinguishable from the neighboring homes. In many cases of fire, for example in Salonika, fewer synagogues than those actually existing were recorded. The authorities had no way of distinguishing and recognizing the synagogues in densely populated neighborhoods. The defensive model protected religious groups, while synagogues within these neighborhoods were hidden from the notice of the authorities, which, until the middle of the 19th century, posed limitations in the construction and renovation of synagogues.

An example survives in Veroia, where the synagogue is built among the houses of the Jewish quarter called Barbouta. The synagogue is an integral part of the fabric of buildings of the neighborhood, while its main façade faces the open courtyard of the quarter, away from the street and the city. Two gates, connecting the neighborhood to the city, would be locked at night, keeping the street and the city outside the courtyard of the Jewish quarter and away from the synagogue. Today we have similar examples in Kahal Kadosh Shalom Synagogue in Rhodes (1575), and in Kahal Kadosh Yashan Synagogue (1826) in Ioannina. In both synagogues, high walls hide the entrance and the main façade, while the synagogue complex is an inseparable part of the courtyards and houses of the Jewish quarter. The synagogue of Komotini, demolished in 1994, may have been a similar case. It was part of the block of houses that enclosed the courtyard of the Jewish quarter, but it was also distinguished from the surrounding houses due to its notable octagonal dome (which may have been a later addition).

After the Tanzimat Reforms, we find synagogues built on the street, with prominent façades lining the densely constructed modern streets.



Interior of Kahal Kadosh Yashan Synagogue in Ioannina, built in 1826. The interior of the synagogue is divided into eight aisles by columns and permanent wooden benches. *(Elias V. Messinas Archive)*



The synagogue in Xanthi at an unknown date, most probably shortly before the Second World War. *(The Jewish Museum of Greece)*



The exterior of the eastern wall of Kahal Kadosh Yashan Synagogue in Ioannina with the projection of the heikhal. *(Elias V. Messinas Archive)*



The interior and *heikhal* of the synagogue of Kavala built in the second half of the 19th century. The base of the central *bimah* is visible in the forefront of the picture. The building, which stood adjacent to the Jewish Community center, was severely damaged during the Second World War. It was demolished after the war.

*(Published in Chronika 164, 1999, p. 22)*



The synagogue of Patras built in 1926. The photograph was taken in 1978, two years before the building was demolished.

*(The Jewish Museum of Greece)*



A house in the *ex muros* Jewish quarter of Ioannina decorated with a Star of David.

*(Elias V. Messinas Archive)*



Interior of the synagogue of Patras built in 1926 prior to its demolition. The furnishings of the synagogue were preserved and are on display at the Jewish Museum of Greece. *(The Jewish Museum of Greece)*



The synagogue built by the Jews from Monastir in the center of Salonika in 1927 has already been mentioned in this regard. This synagogue, the work of Jewish architect E. Levy, still survives. It has an impressive façade, behind which are courtyards which surround the building on three sides, hidden from the street. Their use is exclusively for the congregation. This synagogue reflects the obliteration of older restrictions and the implementation of the new city plan that determined the position of the building on the street.

A similar example is the contemporary synagogue of Xanthi, built on Hadzistavrou Street, a main street leading to the central covered market of the city. The synagogue is prominent on the street, but its entrance is at the back away from the street, through a courtyard. This way the building combines a prominent elevation on the street with a direct axis between the entrance and the *heikhal*, oriented east towards Jerusalem. The reason for this orientation is most probably the decision of the architect to have the main axis leading directly from the entrance to the *heikhal*.

#### ***The Builders' Guilds (snaf)***

The majority of the synagogues built in Greece during Ottoman times were simple buildings, often constructed with basic local materials, *tsatma* and *bagdati* coated with plaster. On the exterior they were no different from the traditional homes of the Jewish quarters. Builders followed the traditional building practice.

In northern Greece and Epirus, during Ottoman times, the organized guilds (already existing in the Byzantine period) were preserved. The builders' guilds were among those that flourished. A great deal has been published on the traditional architecture of northern Greece and particularly on the works of the builders' guilds (*snaf* or *isnaf*)<sup>24</sup> in the region of northern Greece.

The craftsmen's hierarchy, their regulations and operations, were strictly defined. The head workman was at the top of the pyramid: he was elected by the 12 eldest *masters*, and managed the guild for one year or more. The head workman took the title of the architect (*kalfa*) and was in charge of the supervision of the work: he was responsible to find work for his fellow workers and maintained the smooth function of the guild. The chief craftsmen were called *isnafers* and *masters* and their assistants were called *kalfades* (apprentices) and *arhikalfades* (head apprentices). Finally the young assistants were called *tsirakia*. The *isnaf* had specialists such as stone workers, who carried rocks from the stone quarry to the site, carpenters, woodcutters, stone carvers, painters and decorators.

The *snaf* would build according to the tradition of each city and

region: initially the Byzantine tradition in construction, but during the Ottoman period new features and aesthetics were adopted that gradually influenced the appearance of their work, regardless of the client's preference. They were commissioned by Christians, Jews and Muslims to build houses, churches, monasteries, mosques and synagogues, to which they gave a common character adapted to the identity and tradition of each patron. They built according to the environmental character of the region and the decorative style they had adopted from their experience in Ottoman public works. As a result, the Ottoman tradition is a mixture of the art that the *koudaraioi* brought with them and the local customs. So, we find synagogues in the regions of Epirus, Macedonia and Thrace, as well as in Asia Minor (Izmir) where we can recognize the common characteristics of the *snaf* tradition integrated and enriched with the local tradition. We can recognize their work in the synagogues built throughout northern Greece and Epirus, for example, Ioannina (1826), Kastoria (1830), Veroia (before 1850), Drama (19th century), and Komotini (19th century). The common characteristics of these synagogues are their materials and size; and the construction details and techniques which are also found in private and public buildings erected by the *koudaraioi* in these cities.

#### **Preservation and Conservation of the Synagogues in Greece**

Many of the synagogues of Greece were destroyed in the Holocaust, others were heavily damaged and demolished in the post-war period. Still others were left standing but neglected until they, too, were torn down. Only recently, after a half-century of denial and neglect has there been interest in the fate of the buildings and the need to protect and preserve them. Disregard was not only for synagogues. The rapid development of post-war Greece led to the deterioration and destruction of many historic and traditional buildings and urban spaces. The intense construction resulted in the tearing down of historic buildings, and the intensive exploitation of urban land. Moreover, as in many countries, a large part of the population joined the political and business leadership in tolerating the destruction as a sign of progress.

Today, however, it is recognized that it is necessary not only to preserve monuments, but also to protect and preserve the traditional urban fabric. The preservation and conservation of monuments, including Greek synagogues, has begun to preoccupy architects and urban planners. According to D. Karidis, "the request for the protection of a particular traditional building or a traditional part of the city seems like an obvious

obligation to preserve a cultural possession." The 1990s saw successful efforts to preserve two remaining synagogues that were abandoned and in danger of being demolished: the synagogue of Chania (Crete) and the synagogue of Veroia. Local authorities, international donors and the Central Board of Jewish Communities of Greece have contributed to these efforts. But in many cases interest has come too late.

Recently, detailed articles<sup>80</sup> were published on the occasion of the dem-

olition of certain significant synagogues in the cities of Didimoticho, Komotini and Xanthi<sup>81</sup> in northern Greece. The articles attempted to rouse more widespread interest in this issue, and to avoidance of similar occurrences in the future. The demolition of the synagogues of Komotini and Xanthi will be dealt with in detail in the relevant chapters.<sup>82</sup> Research has also revealed information on the demolition of another synagogue, that of Patras, which was declared inactive in 1970 and demolished in 1980.<sup>83</sup>

1 Strabo, *Geography*, 16.2.28.

2 Philo, *Embassy to Gaius* (Legatio ad Gaium), 281.

3 The most complete introduction to Greek Jewish sites is Nicholas P. Stavroulakis and Timothy J. DeVinney, *Jewish Sites and Synagogues of Greece* (Athens, 1992). In many cases, this study builds on observations made by Dr. Stavroulakis and has benefited by use of the photographs of Mr. DeVinney. On Jews in the later Byzantine period see Steven Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium (1204-1453)*, (University, Ala. 1985). For the earlier Byzantine period see the classic study of Joshua Starr, *Jews in the Byzantine Empire 641-1204* (Athens, 1939) and extensive commentary by Zvi Ankori, *Karaites in Byzantium* (New York and Jerusalem, 1959).

4 See Lee Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000)

5 On Benjamin in Greece see: Singer, Michael, A., *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela: Travels in the Middle Ages* (Joseph Simon Publisher, 1983), 67-69; and *The World of Benjamin of Tudela: a Medieval Mediterranean Travelogue* (London and Cranbury, NJ, 1995) and scholarly commentary in Ankori, *Karaites, passim*.

6 For example in Damascus, Syria, where there were synagogues named for the Sicilian and Iraqi communities. See Samuel Gruber, *Silenced Sacred Spaces: Selected Photographs of Syrian Synagogues* by Robert Lyons (Syracuse, NY, 1995).

7 Views on the situation of the Jewish communities throughout the 15th century vary. Most Jewish communities in northern and central Greece were forced to move to Constantinople after its fall. By the 17th century, almost two centuries later, they were still referred to as *sürgünlü* in the Turkish archives. They were forcibly resettled in Constantinople in order to revive its commerce and comprised communities from 21 different cities (seven from Anatolia and the rest from Turkey, Europe and the Balkans). We also have data related to the order of Mehmet II for the compulsory settlement of (Romaniote) Jews from Serres to Constantinople after the fall, in 1453-5. As recorded in the register of the Jewish community of Istanbul of 1689, the following Romaniote communities who were forced to move to Istanbul immediately after the city was conquered by the Ottomans are still referred to by the term *sürgünlü*, which means "forced to move." The number presumably refers to the number of heads of household in each community.

1. Egriboz (Chalkis)	Sürgünlü	31
2. Demotica (Didimoticho)	Sürgünlü	62
3. Saloniki (Large)	Sürgünlü	81
4. Saloniki (Small)	Sürgünlü	44

5. Caraferia (Veroia)	Sürgünlü	45
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6. Siroz (Serres)	Sürgünlü	32
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7. Edirne (Andrianoupolis)	Sürgünlü	38
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Other Jews are listed as *kendi gelen*, meaning "those who came on their own."

8 With his teachings in Seville, F. Martinez requested the solution to the "Jewish issue" in his city. Twenty-three synagogues of the city were destroyed, the Jews were confined in ghettos, all relations between Christians and Jews ended, and every Jew was removed from key positions in the local government and society of the city. Martinez' teachings brought about a strong anti-Semitic climate which broke out on June 4, 1391, after the death of the King of Castille, in 1390. See Jane Gerber, *The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience* (New York, 1992), 113.

9 By the end of the 15th century, during the mass settlement of Sephardim, many Greek cities had already lost their organized Jewish communities. As a result, the Sephardim either found no Jews at all in the cities they arrived, or they only found a few individual families.

10 The literature about Sephardi Jews is enormous. A good introduction is Jane Gerber, *The Jews of Spain, op. cit.*

11 In August 1550 an invitation was sent from Salonika to the Jewish community of Provence, in which local Jews were invited to leave their city and to come to settle in the city of Salonika. Molho, M. *Les Juifs de Salonique à la fin du XVI — Synagogues et patronymes* (Clermont-Ferrand, 1991), p. 13.

12 The last two destructions that we know of were in the fire of Easter 1847, and in the earthquake of 1894. In these two cases, as it had been done in the past, the building was reconstructed on the same foundations. If we compare the urban plan of the "Citadel" of 1840 to the topographic plan of 1961 (1:500), we see clearly that the synagogue is built on exactly the same position, on top of the same foundations as the older ones. In fact, when the new urban plan was applied and Kotsou Street was widened, the synagogue was not moved; instead the southern courtyard was reduced to the minimum (see ground plan). Regarding the 1840 map of the citadel of Chalkis, S. Kokkinis, & G. Gikas, *The first urban diagram of the "Citadel" of Chalkis, and a list of buildings, Record of Evoian Studies XIX*, (Athens: 1974). Regarding the 1894 earthquake and destruction of the synagogue of Chalkis, see document Halkis 6551/1894. We have similar examples in other cities of the Ottoman Empire, where a *firman* of 1825, permitted the reconstruction of a synagogue destroyed by a fire in Istanbul; however, it does not permit any changes of the building in terms of size, appearance, etc. This *firman* dictates

- the exact size of the synagogue and its courtyard. Such *firmans* strictly followed Islamic law that was based on earlier Christian Roman legislation.
- 13 Gerber, H. *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire in the 16-17th century — economy and society*, Jerusalem 1983, pp. 117-9.
  - 14 (Heb. Ma'aminim). "The faithful." See Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah 1626-1676* (Princeton, 1973) and "The Crypto-Jewish Sect of the Dönmeh (Sabbatians) in Turkey," in *The Messianic idea in Judaism and other essays on Jewish spirituality* (New York, 1971). pp. 142-166..
  - 15 *Chronika* 142 (1996), p. 62.
  - 16 E. Messinas, *The Synagogues of Salonika and Veroia* (Athens, 1997), p. 55.
  - 17 The essays by Kanaris Konstandines, special envoy of the newly-founded Central Board of Jewish Communities in 1946, "The Post-war situation of the Jewish Communities of Greece," are a significant contribution to our understanding of the situation of the Jewish communities in Greece after the Occupation. *Chronika* 142 (1996), pp. 14-33.
  - 18 Examples include Trikala (before the war it had two functioning synagogues, whereas only one after the war); Ioannina (before the Second World War it had two functioning synagogues and two smaller oratories, whereas only one synagogue re-opened after the war); Arta (before the war it had two functioning synagogues, whereas only one synagogue functioned after the war, for a brief period before it was torn down).
  - 19 *Chronika*, 142 (1996), p. 62.
  - 20 In Salonika, apart from the Ashkenazi synagogue that was requisitioned and used by the Greek Army, the Jewish Community was paid rent in the post war period for the following synagogues: Harilaou, Midrash BeitYaakov, Vardar and Larission. See below, relevant chapters.
  - 21 On May 29 and 30, 1995, O. Saba, former chairman of the Jewish Community of Trikala and T. Kapeta gave the author an oral interview. According to the data they provided the (Sephardic) synagogue of Trikala on Kondyli Street had been converted into a bank warehouse, while the Monastirliis Synagogue (still standing today) served as a warehouse for the Red Cross during the Occupation.
  - 22 According to survivors' testimonies and records of the Central Board of Jewish Communities (KIS), the synagogues of Komotini and Xanthi had been converted into stables during the Bulgarian occupation. After the war, however, the synagogue of Komotini was turned into a warehouse, and the synagogue of Xanthi into a (Christian) Sunday School. A fire in the synagogue of Komotini while it was used as a warehouse severely damaged the building, which, before it was torn down, had almost completely collapsed.
  - 23 These synagogues are described in word and pictures in Stavroulakis and DeVinney, *Jewish Sites*, *op. cit.*
  - 24 The synagogue, designed by the architect E. Lazarides (according to the architect's signature on the façade of the building) was founded in 1935. See *Chronika* 78 (1985), p. 49. The recent renovation of the building was completed between 1972 and 1975 by the architect Iossif Cohen from the architecture office G. Liapis.
  - 25 The construction of this synagogue began in 1904 and was completed on June 18, 1905. *Chronika* 78 (1985), p. 29.
  - 26 The synagogue was inaugurated in 1927.
  - 27 According to the Jewish Community of Salonika, the synagogue was inaugurated in 1984, and the architect of the synagogue was Christos Kouloukouris.
  - 28 According to the Jewish Community of Salonika, the home for the aged of the Jewish community was inaugurated in 1981/2, and the architect for the building and the synagogue was Christos Kouloukouris.
  - 29 The synagogue, built in the 19th century, was renovated after the war.
  - 30 According to the sign on the western wall, the synagogue was built in 1826, barely four years after Ali Pasha destroyed the city. Some published sources give the date 1829, after the older building was destroyed in the fire of the same year, along with others dating from the Byzantine period; restorations were made in 1881 and 1987.
  - 31 The construction of the first synagogue of Volos began in 1865 and was completed in 1870. During the Occupation the synagogue was greatly damaged. It was restored and reopened, but destroyed again in the earthquake of 1955, after which a new building, completed in 1960, was constructed using reinforced concrete (for protection from future seismic damage). The new synagogue was constructed based on the plans of the engineer Victor Bensousan. R. Frezis, *The Jewish Community of Volos*, (Volos 1994), pp. 23 and 30.
  - 32 The synagogue of Chalkis dates from 1854, when the older building was burned. According to subsequent research of the author, it was again destroyed in the earthquake in 1894 (Halkis 6551/1894), and was most probably reconstructed shortly after.
  - 33 The synagogue of Kos dates from after the earthquake of 1933, when the earlier building was destroyed. For photos see See Stavroulakis and de Vinney, *Jewish Sites*, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-133.
  - 34 According to an oral interview with I. Cohen from Drama, the wooden synagogue was apparently a residence that was converted into a synagogue.
  - 35 This synagogue was built as a Catholic church called St. Catherine. When the Turks occupied the island the Venetians left and Jews settled in their quarter. The church was then converted into a synagogue. The synagogue was reconstructed and reopened in 1999 thanks to the efforts of Nicholas Stavroulakis, former director of the Jewish Museum of Greece, and the support of the World Monuments Fund and private donors. The synagogue was a victim of arson in January 2010 and suffered considerable damage including loss of its extensive library.
  - 36 The dating of the building is based on its architectural style and on the fact that the first settlers outside the city walls after 1866 were Greek Orthodox families. It is unknown when the Jewish community settled outside the walls of the old city of Kavala. Considering the wealth that tobacco brought to the city after the end of the 19th century, it is possible that the city's commercial activity attracted Jews who built its splendid club. According to the late S. Tsimino, the last Jew living in Kavala, the Jewish community lived scattered (outside the walls) and had no specific Jewish quarter with boundaries.
  - 37 For a detailed history of the early synagogue in literature and archaeology see Lee Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue – The First Thousand Years* (New Haven, 2000).
  - 38 According to B. Mazur, *Studies on Jewry in Greece* (Athens, 1935), p. 8, by 139 BCE there were Jewish communities in Sparta, Sikyon, Samos, Knidos, Kos, Crete (Gortyn), Rhodes and Delos.
  - 39 *Acts* (16, 13) "And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made (at Philippi); *Acts* (17, 1-2) "... they came to Thessa-

lonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: and Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures..."; *Acts* (17, 10) "... Paul and Silas by night (went) unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews..."; *Acts* (17, 15) "... And they then conducted Paul brought him unto Athens..."; *Acts* (18, 1) "... Paul ... came to Corinth; and found a certain Jew named Aquilla..."

40 See Levine, *op. cit.*, p. 100-105.

41 According to Mazur, a synagogue functioned in Palaiohora in Aegina during the Byzantine period after the inhabitants of the island evacuated the city on the shore and moved to fortified Palaiohora. The Hebrew inscription found there probably belonged to that synagogue. Mazur, *op. cit.*, 35.

42 Discovered by the German historian Ludwig Ross. The floor was covered for protection and was studied again by Thiersch in 1901, Furtwängler in 1904, E. Sukenik in 1928, and finally by the German archaeologist Dr. G. Welter, in 1932. The studies were completed by the National Archaeological Service.

43 Translations from, L. Levine, *op. cit.*, p. 250, after Frey, *Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum* (cat 722-723).

44 Comparing the location of the synagogue and the map of the modern city of Aegina, the synagogue site was behind Hotel "Avra."

45 See Stavroulakis and de Vinney, *Jewish Sites, op. cit.*, 228-229 and Levine, *Ancient Synagogue, op. cit.*, *passim*.

46 A. Frantz, *The Athenian Agora XXIV* (Princeton, 1988), p. 59 and the author's discussion on this subject with John Camp, director of the museum of the American School of Classical Studies, Athens.

47 On the excavated synagogue of Stobi see: Gideon Foerster, "A Survey of Ancient Diaspora Synagogues," in Levine, Lee I, ed., 1982, *Ancient Synagogues Revealed*. (Detroit, 1982), pp 167-170; Lee Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue, ibid*; especially pp. 252-255: and J. Wiseman and D. Mano Zissi, "Excavations at Stobi 1970-72," *American Journal of Archaeology*, 75 (1971-1972), 408-410; 77:410 and "Excavations at Stobi 1973-74," *Journal of Field Archaeology* 1 (1974), 391-401.

48 In Plovdiv the synagogue remains were discovered near an ancient bath complex, a basilica and in an *insula* with a large residential building. Only the substructure and a few parts of the superstructure, with traces of later reconstruction visible, are still preserved. Initially, the building was a basilica, consisting of a central nave (13.5/9.0m) and two-side aisles (13.5/2.6.0m) facing south to Jerusalem. See C. Danov and E. Kesjakova. "A Unique Find - the Old Synagogue in Plovdiv," *Annual of Social Cultural and Educational Association of Jews in Bulgaria V* (1970), 210-227 and Lee Levine. *The Ancient Synagogue, ibid*.

49 Synagogue remains were excavated in 2003. The building dates from the 5th or 6th century. According to archaeologists Gideon Foerster and Ehud Netzer of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, "five stages were identified in the history of the site. In the two early stages fine mosaic pavements (2nd to 4th century), probably part of a private home, preceded the later synagogue and church. In the third stage several rooms were added, the largest of these containing a mosaic pavement representing in its centre a *menorah* flanked by a *shofar* (ram's horn) and an *etrog* (citron), all symbols associated with Jewish festivals. Mosaic pavements also decorated the other rooms. A large basilical hall added in the last two stages of the history of the site (5th to 6th century) represents the heyday of the Jewish

community of Anchasmon (Onchesmos), the ancient name of Saranda'. The structure measures 20 by 24 metres and was probably last used in the 6th century as a church, as evidenced by two dedicatory inscriptions in the mosaic pavement." See: <http://www.jewish-heritage-europe.eu/country/albania/albania.htm> (accessed Nov 20, 2008).

50 The literature on synagogue architecture is large and continues to grow. Remarkable, however, Greek synagogues are rarely, if ever, mentioned in any of the standard works. For this reason alone, the current study is significant. The best overviews of European Synagogue architecture remain Rachel Wischnitzer, *The Architecture of the European Synagogue* (Philadelphia, 1964), and Carol Herselle Krinsky, *The Synagogues of Europe: Architecture, History, Meaning* (New York and Cambridge, Mass, 1985). See also Samuel Gruber, *Synagogues* (New York, 1999), which also contains material about synagogues in the Muslim world.

51 The German, French and Italian Jews (Ashkenazim) call the Ark, "*Aron HaKodesh*," whereas the Sephardim call it "*Heikhal*."

52 This type of *heikhal* is also encountered in the synagogues of Provence and is considered to originate from Spain. See B. Narkiss, "The Heikhal, Bimah, and Teivah in Sephardi Synagogues," *Jewish Art*, 18, 30-47.

53 The meaning of *parokhet* originates from the curtain that used to separate the sanctuary from the rest of the Temple of Jerusalem.

54 Tur, *Orakh Hayim*, ch. 150 "... they all look towards the elderly and towards the teivah..."

55 In the Talmud (*Sukka*, 51 b'), Rabbi Judah describes the famous synagogue of Alexandria, a basilica that was destroyed in the 2nd century CE: "Anyone who has not seen the double-arched basilica of Alexandria, has not seen the triumph of Israel. It is said that it was like one big basilica, one arcade after the other, and that there was room for twice as many Jews who once left Egypt. It had seventy one golden thrones... and a wooden *bimah* at the center of the synagogue."

56 *Halakhat Tefillah*, 91, 11c: "and they place a *bimah* at the center of the room, so that the man who will read from the Torah, or he who will tell them important things will step on it, so that they will all hear him.

57 Tur, *Orakh Hayim*, 150 d': "... and they place a *bimah* at the center of the room, so that the man who will stand on it and read from the Torah, they will all hear him..."

58 In the 14th century Sarajevo Haggadah (Bosnia National Museum) and the Sister to the Golden Haggadah (British Library).

59 According to Rachel Wischnitzer, the bi-polar structure relates to the Sephardic synagogues of Southern Europe, Italy and Provence. In Greece, the bipolar synagogue appears in the Romaniote synagogues. See Wischnitzer, *European Synagogues*, p. 57.

60 J. Pinkerfeld, *Synagogues of Italy*, 7. Bi-polar synagogues are found in other parts of Europe, such as London, Amsterdam, and Southern France.

61 The *Shulhan Aroukh* does not sanction the central position of the *bimah* as part of "synagogue laws." (*Orakh Hayim*, 150 e'). On the contrary, in his interpretation *Kesef Mishnah*, he wrote that "... and they built a *bimah* at the end of the synagogue and not at the center... and there are no rules for this issue... it depends on the place... in the past synagogues had the *bimah* at the center, so that everyone could hear... in our days synagogues are small and everyone can hear ... it is bet-

- ter that the *bimah* is at the end and not at the center." (*Tefillah*, 11c'). My thanks to Professor Meir Shweiger of the Pardes Theological Institute of Jerusalem for his assistance.
- 62 According to a testimony of the president of the Jewish community of Chalkis, M. Maissis, who, as a child, remembers the position of the *bimah* on the western wall (unpublished interview with the author, 1993).
- 63 Images of the interior and the exterior of the building in the archive of A. and D. Recanati, in D. Recanati, *Zikhron Saloniki*, volumes A' and B', (Tel Aviv, 1972), in E. A. Hekimoglou, *Thessaloniki, Turkish domination and Post War* (Salonika, 1996), pp. 71-72, and in G. Megas, *Memory* (Athens, 1993), pp. 128, 130-131. Also see the aerial photograph of the city before the fire of 1917 in the Roger-Viollet archive.
- 64 P. Tsolakis, *The Jewish Quarter of Kastoria* (Salonika, 1994), p. 17. See also his reconstruction plans and photos of the synagogue, figures 7-10.
- 65 The Scuola Canton (1531), Scuola Levantina (1538 ff), Scuola Italiana (1575 ff.) in Venice; the Scuola Spangola (about 1550) in Padova; and the Scuola Levantina in Ancona (16th century) among other Italian synagogues have bi-polar plans. Some Venetian synagogues have a projection at their western wall. On the Italian synagogues see Krinsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 341 ff.
- 66 The synagogues of Turkey were studied by the author during his visit to Turkey in April 1997. Floor plans of these synagogues were found in the archive of the Center for Jewish Art (CJA) at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The plans were made by the architect Boris Lecker, member of the scientific team of the CJA in 1994. I take this opportunity to thank the CJA for giving me access to these drawings.
- 67 As can be seen in the photographs of Robert Lyons taken as part of survey of Syrian Synagogues for the World Monuments Fund in 1995. See Samuel D. Gruber, *Silenced Sacred Spaces*, *op.cit.*
- 68 See Joel Zack, *The Synagogues of Morocco: An Architectural and Preservation Survey* (New York, 1993).
- 69 *Tanzimat-i Haytiye*, or simply *Tanzimat*, signified the reformations that determined equality of all religions in the Ottoman Empire, including Jews. The firman called Hatt-i Cherif or Hatt-i Houmayoun was issued on November 3rd. 1839, and renewed on February 18th. 1856.
- 70 In the 19th century Reform synagogues allowed mixed seating. On seating in the synagogue see Krinsky, *op. cit.*, 23 ff and *passim*.
- 71 This separation probably comes from the curtain that used to separate men's and women's areas in synagogues of the beginning of the 13th century. It was common mainly in synagogues of Northern Greece and Epirus, until the end of the 19th century. Examples can be found in Ioannina (1826), the Yanniotis synagogue in Athens (1905), Komotini (19th century) and others.
- 72 According to information given to the author by elder members of the community.
- 73 See Krinsky, *Synagogues of Europe*, *op. cit.*, *passim*, and Sergey R. Kravtsov, "Juan Bautista Villalpando and Sacred Architecture in the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 64:3 (2005), 312-339.
- 74 See, Sergey R. Kravtsov, "Reconstruction of the Temple by Charles Chipiez and Its Application in Architecture," *Ars Judaica*, 4 (2008), pp. 25-42.
- 75 Although there is no firm evidence to support this assumption, it is probable that the tradition in the Iberian Peninsula in the 14th century of inheriting, buying and selling synagogue seats was carried to the first synagogues of Salonika and in Sephardic communities in other cities of Greece. On the seating in Spanish synagogues see Yom-Tov Assis, "Synagogues in Medieval Spain," *Jewish Art*, 1992, 18-21.
- 76 Tur, *Orakh Hayim*, ch. 150 "... and the elderly face the congregation, their back to the heikhal... the first row (of the congregation) faces the elderly..." In many congregations the seats on the east wall are reserved for rabbis, sages or other community leaders. Elsewhere, when seats are sold for the High Holidays when attendance at the synagogue is greatest, prices of the seats next to the *heikhal* are most expensive.
- 77 We have similar examples in Venice and Ferrara, Italy, as well as Izmir, Turkey. A. Nar, *Lying on the seashore* (Salonika 1997), pp., 24-25, 42. In fact, in Salonika, there are several cases in which synagogues have not been reported in the fires, as they had not been recognized by those in charge to register the damages of the fire through the neighboring houses.
- 78 In Preveza, we encounter the only example where the synagogue (now demolished) was imposingly facing the street, had a decorative entrance, just a few steps away from a central church that stood opposite. Based on the archive of S. Mamaloukos, (10.3.95), and V. Audikos, *Preveza 1945-1990* (Preveza, 1991), p. 192.
- 79 *Isnaf* or *snaf* (*roufet* in Arabic) was the name for artisan groups, descendants of the same groups that were organized during the Byzantine period. Eventually, the *isnaf* became self-ruled, and had their own regulations and codes of function, including taxation, police and judicial power. The *isnaf* would assist the inhabitants of the settlements not only financially, but also socially, for there was an organized care of their members and their families. The builders, artisans and craftsmen who belonged to builders' guilds were called *Koudaraioi* in Epirus and Western Macedonia, and *Doulgerides* in Thrace. The *Koudaraioi* of the period we are studying came from regions of Northern Epirus, such as the villages of Koritsa, Vonitsa, the outskirts of Arta and Paramithia, villages of Western Macedonia, especially from Florina and Kozani districts. Finally, *Koudaraioi* from Serbia, Bosnia, Herzegovina and regions of Skopje and Bulgaria worked in the construction of many mansions in Veroia. The *Koudaraioi* of Veroia also traveled to Kastoria, Naousa, Edessa, and Florence. The *Koudaraioi* used to speak their own dialect amongst themselves, just as Jewish merchants spoke Hebrew and Judeo-Spanish amongst themselves, when speaking in front of competitors.
- 80 Articles were published extensively in the newspaper *Kathimerini* due to these demolitions. N. Vatopoulos, "The last traces of Jewish presence are lost," *Kathimerini* (7.5.95), p. 44, Messinas, E., "The building of the synagogue of Xanthi, *Vima* (7.5.95), p. A18, E. Messinas, "An important building is in danger, *Economico Tahydromos*" (23.3.95), p. 71 and E. Messinas, "The Synagogue of Xanthi, *Kathimerini*, (10.3.95), 14. See also Y. Sarayiannis's review (in Greek) of "The Synagogues of Salonika and Veroia," *Synhrona Themata* 64 (1997), p. 142, where he writes of the demolished synagogues: "Is it a coincidence that they are all in Thrace, or has modern Greek nationalism intruded fiercely?"
- 81 E. Messinas, *Synagogues of Salonika and Veroia*, *op. cit.* p. 23.
- 82 Regarding Xanthi, "According to a Ministerial resolution (number/3497/3497/52480/5-11-91), that was published in the Governmental Paper (978/B/27-11-91) the building was declassified as a work of art. In 1992 it was sold to be

demolished, after a demolition permit was approved. Law 151 of the *Shulhan Aroukh*, the essence of the interpretation of the teachings of Mosaic Law, includes a chapter on "Laws" concerning the synagogue. It states as follows: "Even after the destruction of a synagogue the area remains in a state of holiness and we have to respect it and honor it as before, with all possible care...." The area where the synagogue used to stand in Xanthi was so densely built with modern apartment buildings, that it has been downgraded both from the point of view of aesthetics and urban planning.

83 The Jewish community of Patras was declared "inactive" and on October 25, 1970, the property of the community was placed in the care of a special Administrative Committee, headed by Joseph Moissis. Apart from the synagogue and the Jewish cemetery, the property included five *Sifrei Torah* (Torah scrolls), prayer books, two

pairs of *rimonim* (torah finials), one silver pointer, seven *shadayiot*, one bookcase, desks, a clock, two Greek flags and one Israeli flag, *talithot* (prayer shawls), and oil lamps (document of 25.10.70).

In 1977 the synagogue was donated to the Jewish community of Athens under the condition that if "a new building was built, then part of it should take the form of a Museum and a synagogue." The synagogue was demolished in 1980, and an apartment building constructed on the site. No synagogue or museum has been built in Patras. Fortunately, thanks to the actions of Nicholas Stavroulakis, former director of the then-newly founded Jewish Museum in Athens, the furniture of the synagogue of Patras was saved in 1978 before the demolition. These include the wooden ornamented *bimah* and the *heikhal*, which are now on display at the Jewish Museum of Greece.