

JEWISH COSTUMES IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Opening Reception Wednesday March 31, 2004



Silvyo Ovadya had the dream of bringing images of Jewish dress from Turkey's Ottoman period to a wide audience for many years. He began collecting books and old postcards on Ottoman Jewish clothing in the early 1980s, but it was not until 1999 that he had the luck of finding several miniatures of Ottoman Jews at a handicrafts bazaar in the Eyüp district of Istanbul. The three artisans whose work he saw that day went on to help him create the miniatures and tezhup (gilded) sketches featured in this exhibition and its accompanying book *The Jewish Costumes in the Ottoman Empire*.

Aron Rodrigue is the Eva Chernov Lokey Professor in Jewish Studies and Professor of History at Stanford University, and Co-Director of its Taube Center for Jewish Studies. He is the co-editor of the journal *Jewish Social Studies*. His publications include *Sephardi Jewry: A History of the Judeo-Spanish Community, 14th-20th Centuries* (with Esther Benbassa) (2000) and *Jews and Muslim: Images of Sephardi and Eastern Jewries in Modern Times* (2003). His books have appeared in numerous translations abroad. He is a fellow of the American Academy of Jewish Research and is the Ina Levine Senior Fellow in Residence at the Center for Advanced Studies at the US Memorial Holocaust Museum in Washington DC during 2003-2004.

Vivian Mann is Morris and Eva Feld Chair of Judaica at The Jewish Museum and Adviser to the Master's Program in Jewish Art and Material Culture at the Graduate School of the Jewish Theological Seminary. She has created numerous exhibitions and their catalogues, among them *Convivencia: Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Medieval Spain; From Court Jews to the Rothschilds: Art, Patronage and Power (1600-1800)*, and most recently *Morocco: Jews & Art in a Muslim Land*. In 2000, her *Jewish Texts on the Visual Arts* was published by Cambridge University Press, and her newest book, *Art & Ceremony in Jewish Life* will be published by Pindar Press in 2004. Mann's many articles and lectures cover a broad range of topics in medieval art and in the history of Jewish Art.

WELCOME

DAVID E. R. DANGOOR

President, American Sephardi Federation with Sephardic House

ESMÉ E. BERG

Director, American Sephardi Federation with Sephardic House

ÖMER ÖNHON

Consul General of Turkey in New York

GUEST SPEAKERS

SILVYO OVADYA

Curator of the Exhibition

ARON RODRIGUE

Eva Chernov Lokey Professor in Jewish Studies at Stanford University

The History and Culture of the Sephardi Jews of the Ottoman Empire

VIVIAN B. MANN

Morris & Eva Field Chair in Judaica at the Jewish Museum in New York

Clothing Worn on Ceremonial Occasions and its Afterlife

Introduction By Marcy Brink

Archaeological evidence of a synagogue in Byzantium dates the presence of Jews in Asia Minor to as early as 318 CE. When the Ottomans conquered Constantinople (renamed Istanbul) they encountered various Jewish groups, including Romaniotes, Jews from Genoa and Venice as well as Ashkenazi Jews. In the years following 1492, the Ottoman lands witnessed the arrival of large numbers of Jews expelled from the Iberian Peninsula. Sephardic traditions and rites would soon become dominant among Jews in the Ottoman Empire.

Ottoman Jews enjoyed a large degree of autonomy, controlling their own educational, religious and social affairs. However, like other non-Muslims, they were subject to legal and social restrictions. For example, periodically laws were passed in the early centuries of the Ottoman Empire regulating Jewish costume, including color, quality of fabric, cut and length of garments, headgear and shoes. Green, considered a holy Islamic color, was forbidden to

the Jews, white turbans adorned only Muslim heads, and Jewish feet could only walk in black shoes.

During the 19th century, Ottoman laws became increasingly liberal. The westernized tone of new legislation ruled that clothing should begin to adopt a more European look. As the fez replaced the turban, Jews, Christians and Muslims of similar classes increasingly shared a common wardrobe.

These illustrations of Jewish modes of dress during the Ottoman Empire are based on the engravings and pictures by travelers and artists who recorded their impressions of the Jews in this time period. They are not necessarily accurate or reflecting of historical truths, but were often influenced by the traveler's imagination or perception of the exotic Orient.



This event is the first in a year-long program dedicated to highlighting the history, culture and traditions of two peoples living together in friendship through the ages.

The American Sephardi Federation with Sephardic House is a national Jewish organization dedicated to dedicated to strengthening and unifying the American Sephardic community and promoting its history, heritage and social traditions.

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Exhibition runs through May 10

Gallery Hours: Monday - Thursday 9-5, Friday 9-1, Sunday 11-5

Admission Free

Jewish Costumes

in the Ottoman Empire



Wednesday March 31
7PM

Presented by the

American Sephardi Federation
with Sephardic House and the

Consul General of Turkey in New York

Center for Jewish History

