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THE JEWS OF THE BAY OF KOTOR AND THE MONTENEGRIN LITTORAL FROM THE MIDDLE AGES UNTIL 1918¹

The article provides a historical overview of the Jewish presence in the Bay of Kotor and the Montenegrin Littoral from the Middle Ages until 1918. The author first discusses the traces of Jewish presence in available sources from the medieval period and Venetian times. He also mentions the little researched history of the Jewish settlement under Ottoman dominance in the northwestern part of the Bay. Most attention is devoted to the better documented presence of the Jews during the Habsburg rule (1815–1918). Migrations from other parts of the Habsburg Empire led to the establishment of a continuous Jewish settlement and a permanent Jewish community, numbering over a hundred people before the First World War.

Keywords: Jews; Ashkenazic Jews; Sephardic Jews; Montenegro; Adriatic Sea; Bay of Kotor; Montenegrin Littoral; Republic of Venice; Ottoman Empire; Habsburg Empire; Judaism

The main aim of this article is to provide a historical overview of the Jewish presence in the Bay of Kotor and the Montenegrin Littoral (northern part of the Adriatic coast of present day Montenegro) from the first mentions in medieval and Venetian documents until the break-up of the Habsburg monarchy and the establishment of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918. In the observed period, this maritime region on the southeastern coast of the Adriatic Sea, a narrow stretch of subtropical land, protected and separated from the climatically less hospitable mainland by steep mountain chains, developed largely under different political, cultural and social influen-

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ces than the nearby continental areas in the interior, which were under independent Montenegrin rule or under Ottoman dominance. The Bay of Kotor is a large bay surrounded by steep karstic mountains on the continental side, reminiscent of a Mediterranean fjord. Its green shores are dotted with several historical towns: Kotor (Cattaro), Herceg Novi, Risan, Perast and Tivat. The Montenegrin Littoral is the name commonly used for the stretch of coast laying south of the Bay of Kotor proper all the way to the Bay of Spič in the south. Unlike the naturally protected ports of the Bay of Kotor, the local towns of Budva and Castellastva/Petrovac, together with the hilly region of the Paštrovići in the immediate hinterland, face the open sea. Both subregions, the Bay of Kotor and the Montenegrin Littoral, differed geographically and economically in certain aspects but shared the same political history. From the 14–15th century until 1797, the whole area was part of the Republic of Venice. In the northwestern corner of the Bay of Kotor, the region was since 1699 separated from the Republic of Dubrovnik and Dalmatia by Sutorina, a narrow stretch of territory which belonged to Ottoman Herzegovina. For centuries, the Bay of Kotor and the Montenegrin Littoral formed the southernmost, territorially separate, as well as culturally, linguistically and confessionally distinct enclave of Venetian and later Habsburg possessions on the eastern coast of the Adriatic.

Jews in Medieval and Venetian Kotor

The first credible and explicit mention of the Jewish presence in the Bay of Kotor dates back to 1522. However, according to historian Dušan Sindik, there are certain indications in several older sources that Jews might have lived in medieval Kotor even earlier. The manuscript known as *Evangeliarium seu lectionarium* (or *Kotorski zbornik*) from the collection of the Library of the Russian Academy of Sciences in St Petersburg includes much valuable information related to the history of the town in the period 1124–1255. After a new analysis of one passage of the manuscript written in Latin, Sindik offers a different interpretation of its meaning than his predecessors. Instead of the words „...seruus qui habet iubbatum“, known from previous transcriptions, Sindik reads the passage as „seruus qui habet sabbatum“, therefore, „slave who keeps Saturday“, which might, he believes, indicate „a slave who keeps Shabbat“. If this new reading is correct, concludes Sindik, „then we could regard this as the oldest mention of the Jews in the state of Stefan Nemanja and his successors“ (Sindik, 1997: 302).

In another passage from the same manuscript, Sindik discovered one more possible trace of the Jewish presence in the Bay of Kotor. It can be fo-

und in an agreement on the renting of a vineyard in the locality of Dumidrani near the present-day town of Tivat, written between 1202 and 1215 (the author included the entire agreement in the original Latin, along with a Serbian translation). The agreement mentions a woman called Judea, wife of a certain Simon Vukčev, as owner of the vineyard. As a witness, we find a priest named Tiscin, with a note that he is their spiritual father (godfather – *kum* in the South Slavic languages). Sindik finds the name Judea, which can be associated with the historical region of Palestine of the same name, quite unusual for the time and place. „Whether we should consider this name as a proof of some Jewish link (ethnic marker?) or a female name which had not been recorded before is a question which cannot be answered with certainty at this point. (...) It is necessary to say right away that even the name Symon reminds one of the Jewish onomastics“ (Sindik, 1997: 303). Sindik also highlights another detail. The priest Tiscin is mentioned as „their“ (meaning both husband's and wife's) spiritual father, or godfather at baptism. „This detail can be accidental but not necessarily. (...) It could point to the fact that this was originally a Jewish pair which for some reason decided to convert to Christianity. We can only speculate about a possible motive of such decision, but it is sufficient to imagine that the main impulse could be a wish for a peaceful life on one's own land. This was possible only after the acceptance of the Christian faith“ (Sindik, 1997: 303). Dušan Sindik makes clear that this is not a definitive proof but just a hypothesis, however, one that cannot be excluded, given the wider regional and historical context. At the turn of the 12th and 13th century, when Kotor and the neighboring regions of the earlier independent medieval state of Zeta (Duklja) fell under Serbian rule, the newly formed Christian Orthodox church in Serbia, independent from Constantinople, compiled the so-called *Nomokanon* (also known as *Krmčija Sv. Save* or *Zakonopravilo*). This document, regulating religious and legal affairs, „under the influence of Byzantine religious and legal documents also includes the regulations on the relations between the Christians and the Jews. We therefore should not exclude the possibility that a larger or smaller number of Jews lived in the medieval Serbian state, including Kotor, earlier than had been thought until now“ (Sindik, 1997: 303–4). In his study *Jews in Serbian Medieval Written Sources* from 2013, Dušan Sindik provides a detailed analysis of all the articles and regulations of the *Nomokanon* which concern the Jews (Sindik, 2013).

After a volatile period of city independence (1391–1420), Kotor found itself under the more secure Venetian rule and remained a part of the Republic of Saint Marc until the end of its existence in 1797. „It is difficult to say in what position the Jews found themselves and how many of them lived on the territory of the new Venetian province of the Bay of Kotor. However, given the fact

that Peter de Brutis, a Venetian, became Bishop of Kotor in 1471 and that he published a work against the Jews entitled *Victoria contra Judaeos* in Vicenza in 1489, we can imagine that he was also influential in spreading a campaign against the Jews among the local clerics“ (*Jevreji u Kotoru*, 2021: 10).

Documents from the medieval period and the early modern era from the Kotor Archive which mention the Jews were researched by historian Lenka Blechová-Čelebić. She is the author of the first scholarly study devoted specifically to the analysis and contextualization of the oldest sources on the Jewish presence in Venetian Kotor in the 15th and 16th century (Blechová-Čelebić, 2009). Lenka Blechová-Čelebić first underlines the fact that at the turn of the middle ages and early modern era, Kotor was predominantly a Catholic town. In the neighboring villages, the autochthonous inhabitants were also Catholic, but the number of Christian Orthodox believers in the rural areas was already on the rise. In the 16th century, the confessional picture of this part of the Bay of Kotor became even more complex: apart from the two Christian confession, Muslims also appeared as a result of the Ottoman expansion (Blechová-Čelebić, 2007: 59). The first mentions of the Jews in the records of the Kotor Archive appear in this dynamic period. Lenka Blechová-Čelebić reminds us that the closest center of Jewish diaspora at the time could be found in the towns of Bari (Apulia) on the Apenine penninsula in the West and Constantinople in the East, apart from the much closer Dubrovnik (where more sources from the period testify to the Jewish presence in the town already during this period). Historical sources from the Kotor Archive mention individuals, therefore, „we cannot speak of Jewish communities with a continuous existence. The economic situation of a small town did not provide favorable conditions for the settlement of a whole community“ (Blechová-Čelebić, 2007: 71).

The first reliable mention of the Jews in Kotor and its vicinity dates back to 1522. „Documents from that year discuss the sale of land at Luštica, sold because of a fine that Turks demanded from individual inhabitants of Luštica because of a murder of a Jew. The Jew was robbed and killed by robbers. He was very likely a Turkish subject and that is why the Ottomans forced the locals to accept responsibility. He found himself at Luštica as part of a caravan“ (Blechová-Čelebić, 2007: 72). Several local families were forced to sell land quickly in order to pay the fine for this crime. In another document related to the case, Francesco Rubino, chancellor of the *proveditore* (locally: *providur* – main Venetian representative in town) Vincenzo Troni, compiled „a list of things of the tradesmen who died in an attack of robbers at Luštica and were subsequently confiscated from the Luštica inhabitants. There were personal belongings such as rings, and of the goods, only some woven was found“ (Blechová-Čelebić, 2007: 72). We do not know the name of the sla-

ined Jewish merchant, nor where he came from or where he was heading. It is only certain that he came from the territory under Ottoman rule, as Lenka Blechová-Čelebić notes, otherwise there would be no reason for Ottoman authorities to get involved in a case which occurred on Venetian territory. Had the merchant lived permanently in Kotor or its surroundings, such information would inevitably appear in the sources related to this case. We can assume that his name and other details were not known to the people who robbed him and killed him either. The Montenegrins, along with some other populations of the wider Dinaric area of the Western Balkans that lived in similarly harsh social and economic conditions, at this time and also in later centuries, often engaged in economically motivated attacks on trade caravans and other forms of looting without regard for the faith, language and origin of their victims. There are no indications in the sources that could be in any way related to antisemitic or anti-Jewish prejudice, relatively deep and widespread in some parts of Europe at the time but far less common in this corner of the Balkans.

There are just several mentions testifying to the Jewish presence in the Bay of Kotor in other sources from the Kotor Archive discovered by Lenka Blechová-Čelebić. One of them concerns a Jewish convert to Catholicism. Bishop's vicar Natalis Drago in one document pleads for a certain Ivan Baptista „formerly a Jew“ (*nuper Ebreus*), baptized in the cathedral of Kotor on September 16, 1547. „This Jew, earlier Jochanan („God is merciful“), came from the Italian town of Osimo (Ioannes Baptiste de Auximo). The vicar in his letter called upon the citizens to treat the convert with respect and help him, as Jesus will reward them for this. The reasons for conversion were of course not mentioned. In Judaism, conversion is equaled with crime, unless it happened in a violent manner – forcible conversion is not valid and the convertite is further considered as a Jew. (...) It would certainly be interesting to find out under what circumstances Jochanan ended up in Kotor, but this question cannot be solved without further research“, concludes Lenka Blechová-Čelebić (Blechová-Čelebić, 2007: 72–3).

We do not know anything else about the further fate of Jochanan turned Ivan Baptista in Kotor as a Catholic. Much later, on January 12, 1768, another conversion of a Jew to Catholicism was recorded in Kotor, that of Dacilo Roza, originally from the ghetto of Venice (*Ebreo di Getto di Venezia*). Dacilo was baptized as a Catholic at the age of 28, and also received a characteristic „convertite“ name Ivan Baptista. All we know about him is that he was obviously in a difficult situation: at the time of his baptism, he found himself in the hospital for the condemned (*ospedale per li condannati*) (*Jevreji u Kotoru*, 2021: 13).

The authors of the study *Jevreji u Kotoru: tragovima arhivskih nalaza u XVI–XX vijeku* conclude that „the sporadic archival testimonies about the Jews in the Bay of Kotor are related exclusively to the activities of the Jewish doctors and merchants from Dubrovnik. During the period of independence of the town of Kotor (1391–1420), in 1414, physician Samuel Ebreus is mentioned who agreed to treat the small Marino Franjo Buća from Kotor and remove the cataract from both of his eyes. In the agreement, he promised that the patient will see again in 10 to 15 days. The agreement specifies that if he manages to heal both eyes he will get 20 ducats, if one then 10 ducats, and no reward in case he causes damage to an eye or the surgery does not produce the promised result. Unfortunately, Kotor records from the period 1401–1418 have not survived and all the information about this physician comes from Dubrovnik, and it is therefore impossible to find out whether there were also other Jewish doctors who were active in the town of Kotor in this period. All other Kotor physicians during the 15th century were from Italy (nine), apart from one from Alessio²“ (*Jevreji u Kotoru*, 2021: 13).

Authors of the study *Jevreji u Kotoru: tragovima arhivskih nalaza u XVI–XX vijeku* identified several other physicians of possible Jewish origin (often converts to Catholicism) who were periodically visiting or temporarily working in Kotor and other towns of the Bay of Kotor. „All known doctors who were coming to Kotor to treat patients were from Dubrovnik or found a temporary employment in this city. The Jewish doctor who was invited from Dubrovnik once to Kotor and twice to Herceg Novi to treat the sick (between 1556 and 1558) was Amatus Lusitanus (1511–1568), one of the most important names in the history of medicine of the 16th century. Amatus was born in Portugal in the town of Castelo Branco. At baptism, he received the name Joao Rodrigues, finished his studies of medicine at the university in Salamanca, lived and worked in Antwerp, Ferrara, Ancona, Pesara, Dubrovnik and Salonika, where he died. He was a doctor of numerous well-known personalities including his friend Didak Pir. In the field of medicinal science he distinguished himself with his discovery of the circulation of blood. Of the city physicians who worked in Kotor in the 17th century, there are mentions of the Jew David Ribero (1616) and doctor Michael Angelo Salamoni from Brač (dottor Michiel Angelo Salamoni, medico fisico), who was, judging by his last name, of Jewish origin.³ In the 17th century, we know of 26 town physicians, three of them from Dalmatia, one from Corfu and the rest from Italy. After the anno-

² Alessio (Alb. Lezhë, South Slavic version: Lješ) – town in northern Albania.

³ I would argue that the last name Salamoni does not constitute a sufficient proof of Jewish roots. Of Italian origin, Salamoni was a relatively widespread surname around the Mediterranean among Catholics.

unced absence of the Kotor town physician Ferdinando Cardozo from Venice in 1615, the physician David Ribero is mentioned in 1616“ (*Jevreji u Kotoru*, 2021: 13–14).

The interactions of Jewish merchants with the Bay of Kotor mirrored those of the Jewish physicians. Despite the fact that the mentions of Jews, related to their financial and commercial links with the Bay of Kotor, are relatively frequent, there is no evidence of Jewish merchants settling and living in the towns of the Bay of Kotor itself. „The commerce of the Bay of Kotor with the Adriatic towns was on constant rise during this period. In the records concerning the cargo of the ships from the Bay of Kotor, the significant part of it was insured by the Jews, especially those from Dubrovnik. (...) They were also active in providing insurance of the cargo of the ships from the Bay of Kotor, while the trade along much of the eastern shore of the Adriatic was largely in their hands“ (*Jevreji u Kotoru*, 2021: 11–12).

Despite the fact that the Jews were not living in the Bay of Kotor itself, some of its inhabitants were certainly in contact with them during their travels. We can assume that at least some segment of the local population also held certain ideas about the Jews and their place in the society of the Balkans and eastern Mediterranean. One rare testimony of this kind can be found in the song/poetry collection (*pjesmarica*) of Nikola Mazarović (1760–1851), a patrician from Perast. It is a manuscript written in Perast at the end of the 18th century, first published in 2018 in a critical edition prepared by Aleksandar Radoman and Adnan Čirgić (*Pjesmarica Nikole Mazarovića*, 2018: 5). The poem *Popijeka od Štukana* (Song of Štukan) is situated in the second half of the 17th century. One of the characters mentioned in the poem is the legendary hero of South Slavic epic oral poetry, hajduk Bajo Pivljanin, a historical figure, who died in 1685 in the battle at Vrtijeljka near Cetinje fighting the Ottomans as a Venetian mercenary. In the first part of the poem we encounter a character named Abram Žuđel (or simply Žudio), Jewish merchant from Dubrovnik. The main hero of the poem, Vuko Štukanović, is trying to sell him a cow. The Jew is defined by his name and his social role. In the beginning of the poem, Vuko is sleeping and dreaming a „strange dream“ that he is selling one of his cows. When he woke up in the morning, he did what he saw in the dream: chose one cow and walked with her to the town of Dubrovnik. Here he finds „the good merchant / named Abram Žuđel“ and offers him the cow for 100 ducats. „Žudio“ refuses to pay the high price, saying that he would not pay even if he had „all of Štukan’s gold / which is under Vuk’s white tower“. Vuko then quickly agrees to sell the cow for just 20 ducats and returns to his native village, where he digs out a great treasure under his own white tower (*kula*) (*Pjesmarica Nikole Mazharovića*, 2018: 272).

The plot is reminiscent of the old story, which is also included in the collection of stories *One Thousand and One Night*, and appears in many variations in a number of countries (often also in the Jewish milieu in the diaspora), about a man who travels far from home in search of a treasure, but when he gets there, he meets someone who tells him that the real treasure is hidden under his own threshold back home. I remember a similar story from childhood, which spoke of a poor Jew from Cracow who in his dream saw a great treasure hidden underneath the Charles Bridge in Prague. When he got to the Charles Bridge, he met a man who recounted him his own dream, in which he also saw a treasure – which was, of course, hidden under the threshold of a poor Jewish house in Cracow.

Jews in the Ottoman Part of the Bay of Kotor

From 1481 until 1687, the northwestern part of the Bay of Kotor including the coastal towns of Herceg Novi and Risan found itself under Ottoman rule. Apart from a short-lived Venetian and Spanish intermezzo during the siege of Herceg Novi (1538–1539), this region was an integral part of a large and religiously relatively tolerant empire, where the Jews – unlike their kin in many Christian European states – enjoyed greater degree of freedom and lived without the fear of periodic pogroms. In the eastern Mediterranean area and the Ottoman Balkans, the Sephardim, descendants of Jews who had been expelled from Spain in the late 15th century and settled in the Ottoman lands, were the most numerous. (Benbassa – Rodrigue, 1993) Some of them also found their way to the two ports of the Bay of Kotor under Ottoman control. According to historian Saša Brajović, most merchants active in Risan and Herceg Novi during the Ottoman rule were actually Jews. The grain trade was almost exclusively in their hands. The author notes that the Jews encountered problems with the authorities only once, under the episodic rule of Dželal Hasan-paša, the Ottoman *kapetan* of Herceg Novi in 1602, who had a proclivity for unjustified violence. However, the Highest Porte took steps against this local representative after it became known that Dželal Hasan-paša secretly discussed with the Venetians the possibility of selling them the town of Herceg Novi. Dželal Hasan-paša was soon captured by the central authorities, tried and executed (Brajović 2013: 228). „Southern Adriatic and especially the continental part of the Bay of Kotor was a stretch of land where the Jews embarked on their caravan journeys to the East. How many of them settled in the Bay of Kotor permanently is impossible to know, because no written documents have been found. In the middle of the 16th century, Risan and Herceg Novi were still under the Turkish rule and a large number of Sephardic Jews

had a significant share of control over the salt trade. Since the 1570^s, the Jews from Herceg Novi also took active part in oversea trade, especially with Ancona (...) Thanks to its commercial and seafaring importance and its link with the East, the Bay of Kotor was certainly an area attractive for Jewish settlement (...) It is certain that the Jews played the main role in oversea trade in the Bay of Kotor and also played an important role in the trade between Dalmatia and Albanian ports“ (*Jevreji u Kotoru*, 2021: 8–9).

Some Jews could probably just stay in the area temporarily or return periodically for professional reasons, but some of them also settled here for the rest of their days. During the Ottoman rule, there was a Jewish (Sephardic) community in Herceg Novi and there was also a Jewish graveyard. It was located close to the shore and was identified as *Sepoltura de Ebrei* at one of the maps from the period. There is no mention of a synagogue in available historical sources, but we can assume that it probably existed in Ottoman Herceg Novi, given the fact that there was a Jewish community in the town for several successive generations (Brajović, 2013: 228). The Jewish graveyard of Herceg Novi was largely destroyed in the big earthquake of 1667, which also catastrophically damaged nearby Dubrovnik and some other coastal towns on the southeastern shore of the Adriatic. Despite that, there are mentions of a Jewish graveyard in Herceg Novi even after this date. It seems possible that at least one part of the original graveyard might have survived the earthquake after all or that a new cemetery was founded in a place adjacent to the one which had fallen into the sea. This small Jewish graveyard above the shore, next to the fortress Forta Mare guarding the seaside, survived according to local informers in a neglected state until the late 1970^s and was allegedly even partly documented by local amateur photographers. However, in May 1979, the remaining part of the Jewish graveyard of Herceg Novi fell into the sea during a major earthquake which hit the south of what was then the Socialist Republic of Montenegro.⁴

In 1599, according to tradition and some (but not all) scholars, Didak Pir (as the South Slavs call him) or Diego Pires, also known as Didacus Pyrrhus Lusitanus, Flavius Eborensis or doctor Isaiah Cohen, was buried at the Jewish graveyard in Herceg Novi. This man of many names and many talents who distinguished himself as a poet, humanist, physician and teacher, was born in a Sephardic Jewish family in the town of Evora in Portugal in 1517. In his search for knowledge and secure existence, he lived in many different places around Europe and the Mediterranean, including Constantinople, Antwerp and Ferrara. In 1557, he finally settled in Dubrovnik where he actively

⁴ This information was related to me by Gordan Stojović from Herceg Novi.

spent the remaining four decades of his life (Stulli, 1989: 26). The fascinating life and oeuvre of Didak Pir has been attracting the attention of scholars and writers for decades. In this article, we will focus solely on the question of his stay and alleged burial at the local Jewish cemetery in Herceg Novi.

There is a consensus in scholarly literature that Didak Pir, who lived in nearby Dubrovnik for several decades, also spent some time in Herceg Novi (Tadić, 1971: 240). Several of his literary works confirm that he indeed knew the town and its surroundings: „During his stay in Herceg-Novı he wrote an elegy about his exile and also an epitaph to the Spaniards who died there in the years 1538–1539 in battles with the Turks“ (Tadić, 1971: 249). Historian Jorjo Tadić agreed that Didak Pir did indeed live in Herceg Novi for a time, however, he argued that he was in fact buried in Dubrovnik where he died. According to Tadić, „his elegy from the Three Books of Moral Songs, written in Herceg Novi, was cited as a proof that he was also buried in this place“, without sufficient evidence. „Until recently nothing was known about Didak’s death. Instead, different speculations based upon one of his poems were made. Fr. M. Apendini says that in his time (1803), there was still a living tradition among the people of Dubrovnik that in old age, he moved to Herceg Novi where he died, because he wished to be buried at a Jewish graveyard. However, Jewish graveyard existed also in Dubrovnik, and it was not therefore necessary to leave for Herceg Novi, where the Jews were always far less numerous“ (Tadić, 1971: 244–5). In order to support his claim that Didak Pir was not buried in Herceg Novi, Jorjo Tadić cited from a testament which he discovered during his research. The document was written on November 6, 1597 and a few additions were made several days before the death of Didak Pir (according to Tadić, he died on May 16, 1599). The testament begins with the following words: „I, Isaiah Cohen, doctor, by the will of God, with a healthy and conscious memory, but with a weak body, write this as my last testament (...) by which I commend my soul to the Lord and the body I want and I decide to be buried in Ploče, at the place where my brothers the Jews are being buried“ (Tadić, 1971: 245).⁵ Some contemporary authors are, however, of a different opinion and believe that Didak Pir was indeed buried in Herceg Novi, although this does not necessarily have to mean that he also died there. Historian Marianna D. Birnbaum in the monograph *The Long Journey of Gracia Mendes* maintains that „Allegedly, Diego was buried at Hercegnovi (Ragusa had no Jewish cemetery at that time). His grave too has disappeared“ (Birnbaum, 2003: 105). In her study on the Bay of Kotor and the Montenegrin

⁵ Ploče – the old Jewish cemetery of Dubrovnik, abolished and demolished before the First World War.

Littoral between the Republic of Venice and the Ottoman Empire in the early modern age, historian Saša Brajović also claims that Didak Pir was buried at the Jewish graveyard of Herceg Novi which subsequently succumbed to an earthquake (Brajović, 2013: 228).

Jews in the Bay of Kotor and the Montenegrin Littoral under the Habsburg Empire

Historian Saša Brajović has rightly noted that we have little knowledge regarding the possible presence of the Jews in the Bay of Kotor and the Montenegrin Littoral during the renaissance and baroque period (that is, in the early modern age until the end of Venetian rule in 1797) (Brajović, 2013: 228). In any case, even if individual Jews or families were present at some point during this relatively long time, they certainly could not be numerous enough to be able to form a Jewish community in the classical sense of the term, whose existence would definitely leave some traces in the historical records known to us today. Necessarily, such Jews, if there were indeed any, would have to live and coexist in everyday close contact with their Christian (Roman Catholic and Christian Orthodox) neighbors.

According to some locals, scattered on the coast of the present-day Bay of Kotor and the Montenegrin Littoral, there can still be found descendants of Jewish families which have been intermarrying for generations with the local inhabitants of the Roman Catholic and Christian Orthodox faith, until many of them lost the consciousness of the Jewish origin of their ancestors. The alleged assimilation and historical oblivion, as well as some local last names that could according to him be of Jewish origin, were mentioned by Slaven Radimiri Levi, active member of the Jewish Community of Montenegro from the Bay of Kotor, in his article published in 2017 by the Community's periodical *Almanah*: „From the 18th century, in the Bay of Kotor and Budva, there lived many Jewish merchants who were forming families, mixing with local inhabitants and had already before the First World War lost their Jewish identity (*iščezli kao Jevreji*). Today these families live in this area but they do not count as Jews, today they are the believers of the Roman Catholic or Christian Orthodox faith. Some of them know their past, some of them do not accept it and deny it, some are simply not interested... Gross, Mayer, Gotesberger, Hirsch, Homen, Verona, Bergam, Klajn, Šenk, Farkaš, these are just some of the last names of families which were Jewish upon their arrival to the Bay of Kotor and Budva“ (Radimiri Levi, 2017: 60). These and similar claims about the alleged Jewish origin of some local families would obviously first have to be proven or refuted by further research.

In scholarly literature, some basic facts and many interesting details regarding the presence of the Jews on the territory of the Bay of Kotor and the Montenegrin Littoral, based on archival research of the Jewish community of nearby Dubrovnik, can be found in the monograph *Židovi u Dubrovniku* (The Jews in Dubrovnik) by the Croatian historian Bernard Stulli, published posthumously in 1989. Importantly, his research proves that the Bay of Kotor and the Montenegrin Littoral fell under the jurisdiction of the Dubrovnik Jewish Community from the second half of the 19th century until the break up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the beginning of the 1990^s. Under the Habsburg Empire as well as within Yugoslavia, Dubrovnik with southern Dalmatia and the Bay of Kotor with the Montenegrin Littoral were not separated by international border. The Habsburg Empire first occupied the Bay of Kotor and the Montenegrin Littoral following the fall of the Venetian rule in 1797. After a turbulent period of the Napoleonic wars, when this region, together with a large stretch of the South Slavic lands all the way to the Alps came under French rule for several years as part of the Illyrian provinces, the Bay of Kotor and the Montenegrin Littoral became part of the Habsburg Empire for good by the decision of the Congress of Vienna from 1815. According to the report of the French administration from 1811, there were only six Jews living in Kotor at the time (*Jevreji u Kotoru*, 2021: 16).

In the first decades of the Austrian rule before 1848, in certain segments of life, the civil rights of Dalmatian Jews were more restricted than in the previous period. Stulli reminds us that this was „an inescapable consequence of the Austrian legal order as part of which individual lands-provinces of the Austrian monarchy (...) had even stricter restrictions regarding the status of the Jews“ (Stulli, 1989: 61). Similarly to other populations, the reforms of civil laws, elimination of the remnants of the previous feudal relations and gradual political liberalization brought emancipation, equality and freedom to further develop their collective religious and other rights also to the Jews of the Habsburg monarchy. The Pillersdorf Constitution (April 25, 1848) and the subsequent March Constitution (March 4, 1849) established complete equality of the Christians and Jews from the point of view of public as well as private law. After the dualization of the Habsburg monarchy which was transformed into Austria-Hungary in 1867 (the so-called *Ausgleich*), Dalmatia, along with the Bay of Kotor and the Montenegrin Littoral all the way to Spič in the south became part of the Austrian half of the Empire. Austria provided a more liberal milieu for the development of political, national and cultural rights than Hungary which instead aimed at achieving greater homogeneity through the program of Magyarization of the non-Magyar nationalities. The December Constitution of December 21, 1867 abolished on the Austrian territory all the

remaining restrictions related to the Jews who were since then definitely treated as fully equal citizens.

The Austrian law on the Jewish religious communities of March 21, 1890 provided the main impulse for the establishment of a modern religious community centered around Dubrovnik, which also included the southernmost part of the Habsburg dominions on the Adriatic. This was no longer a traditional town community in the narrow sense of the word. It instead encompassed a far larger territory where, apart from the main urban center, smaller groups of Jews or individuals lived scattered in a number of localities (Stulli, 1989: 62). In the province of Dalmatia, the above mentioned law was regulated by a special order of February 8, 1892. Based on this order, Dalmatia was divided into just two Jewish communities in questions of religious jurisdiction. The Dubrovnik Jewish community included the counties of Dubrovnik, Korčula and Kotor. The area further north including the counties of Metković, Split, Šibenik and Zadar fell under the jurisdiction of the Zadar Jewish community (Stulli, 1989: 62). „In this way, the Dubrovnik Jewish community ceased even legally to be a simple local community of Dubrovnik and its much more extensive territorial jurisdiction was confirmed“ (Stulli, 1989: 64).

The elaboration of the status of the Dubrovnik Jewish community, which first had to be thoroughly inspected and authorized by the Ministry of Religion and Education in Vienna, took a considerably long time. The correspondence of the Jewish community with the central state authorities related to the finalization of the status also includes some interesting details which shed more light on the situation of the Jews in the Bay of Kotor and the Montenegrin Littoral. Representatives of the Dubrovnik Jewish community reminded the state authorities that their community had many specific problems, especially as a result of negative demographic trends. In the beginning of the 1890s, the community numbered „only 11 adult males in Dubrovnik and 4 in Kotor; members from Kotor pay the state tax, but do not contribute anything to the budget of the community; only 6 of the Dubrovnik members are paying the state tax...“ (Stulli, 1989: 64). The community was struggling with low numbers, poverty of most of its members and geographic dispersion. Some points raised by the representatives of the community provide a more detailed insight into the problems they had to deal with: „This community cannot take on itself the obligations it is unable to fulfill; this community is not the same as communities in Trieste and Vienna; for this community it is sufficient to regulate the obligations for the performance of religious rituals in the temple, and for religious instruction; as for paid functionaries, the community has only the religious teacher who also performs the ritual slaughtering of animals, and he is employed on a contract; all other functionaries are honorary, and the com-

munity is not able to pay them. The Dubrovnik community tried to convince the Trieste community to agree that their rabbi will serve both communities, and citing reasons of poverty and lack of means, it proposed that all the expenses should be covered by the Jewish community of Trieste. The reply from Trieste was negative“ (Stulli, 1989: 64).

As Stulli documented, the Jews living on the coast of present day Montenegro north of Spič belonged under the jurisdiction of Dubrovnik also in another important aspect for the life of a religious community – keeping of the birth records (*matične knjige*). According to the order on the keeping of the birth records from December 7, 1892, only two places were foreseen for the keeping of the Jewish birth records: in Dubrovnik for the territory of the Dubrovnik Jewish community and Split for the territory of the Zadar Jewish community (Stulli, 1989: 64).

The main problem which negatively influenced most Jews living on the territory under the jurisdiction of the Dubrovnik Jewish community was poverty and impossibility to make a decent income. Antisemitism, present at the turn of the 19th and 20th century with different intensity in various parts of the Habsburg monarchy and elsewhere in Europe, was less detectable on the coast of southeastern Adriatic. Stulli maintains that this was a result of the decreasing influence of the Catholic Church, which was gradually losing its positions in the race with general modernization, progress of sciences and secularization. However, as he also points out, „anti-Jewish prejudice supported and instrumentalized for centuries, could not disappear quickly, especially since it was kept alive by militant church and clerical circles. The example from the turn of the 18th and 19th century, when the Dalmatian people were scurried from above against the Jacobinites and „Čifuti and Žudije“,⁶ did not remain isolated“ (Stulli, 1989: 66).

The Jews of Dubrovnik under the Habsburg rule were mostly engaged in commerce, mostly with food provisions, to a lesser degree with leather, and just like earlier some of them were also making a living as middlemen. Their commercial activities were oriented towards Trieste, the main Austrian port on the northern Adriatic, which was undergoing a rapid boom during the 19th century.

„Some of them even moved to Trieste, while others moved to smaller Dalmatian towns from Benkovac to Budva at the south of the province“ (Stulli, 1989: 66). In the late 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, the number of Jews living in the Bay of Kotor and the Montenegrin Littoral was gradually

⁶ Traditional folk terms for Jews. For the use of folk terms with Jewish connotations in neighboring Montenegro, see: (Šístek, 2022).

increasing. Stulli reminds us that this was a result of a wider process which was characteristic for the entire period of the Habsburg rule. The Jews of Dalmatia were traditionally concentrated in several important towns such as Dubrovnik, Split and Zadar. After they achieved full equality and civil liberties, and also for professional reasons and in search of new possibilities, they moved to a number of smaller towns on the Adriatic coast. Stulli brings the following data which we cite in full in order not to take the statistics regarding the area of our primary concern out of wider context: „According to the census from 1818, there were 7 Jews in Zadar, 151 in Split and 243 in Dubrovnik. According to the census from 1880, there was 1 Jew in Benkovac, 3 in Budva, 4 in Herceg Novi, 17 in Kotor, 6 in Metković, 155 in Split, 4 in Šibenik and 26 in Zadar. According to the census of 1910, there were 8 Jews in Blato (on the island of Korčula), 20 in Budva, 20 in Herceg Novi, 72 in Kotor, 12 in Perast, 5 in Makarska, 4 in Metković, 6 in Sinj, 159 in Split, 1 in Trogir, 2 in Supetar (on the island of Brač), 35 in Šibenik, 5 in Vis and 55 in Zadar. There is a notable concentration in the southernmost part of the province of Dalmatia, that is in the Bay of Kotor and the Montenegrin Littoral, where this group grew to 124, thus outnumbering Dubrovnik“ (Stulli, 1989: 69). Melita Švob situates this migration process into the following context: „The settlement of Jews in Dalmatia was from the start linked with the cities, unlike in northern Croatia and Slavonia. Later we find them in some smaller places, but never a large number. The only exception is the increased number of Jews in the south of what was Dalmatia at the time, in the Bay of Kotor and the Montenegrin Littoral. This was a result of migrations from Bosnia and Herzegovina and good trade links“ (Švob, 2004: 62).

The material situation of the members of the Jewish community of Dubrovnik at the turn of the 19th and 20th century is documented in the representative report from 1896 (according to Stulli, reports from 1897–1898, 1900 and 1901 provided a largely similar picture). Out of the 40 members of the community, 11 members living in the town of Dubrovnik and 4 living in Kotor were well situated enough to be able to pay the religious tax and contribute to the finances of the community. The leadership of the community was composed of one person and two advisors. The religious board included the „gestald“ and a functionary of the rabbinate. The functionary of the rabbinate was elected for life, the other two representatives were (re)elected every three years. The main assembly was composed of adult (male) members, 11 from Dubrovnik and 4 from Kotor (it is almost certain that they were the same ones who were paying the tax to the community). „The community has only one public temple, the one in Dubrovnik. There are no permanent private places of worship, these are improvised in Kotor, Gacko and Bileća. The duty of the

rabbi is performed by S. Tolentino; this has been an unpaid position since 1820; for certain religious ceremonies he asks the rabbi of Trieste; this rabbi's education consists of 3 years of high school (gymnasium). Of the paid functionaries, the community has only one religious instructor, who is also slaughtering animals according to ritual (shochet) and this duty has been performed by J. Tolentino“ (Stulli, 1989: 70). The second person on the pay list was the cleaner of the Dubrovnik synagogue.

Given its strategic importance as a huge and well protected natural harbor, in addition to the proximity of the Principality of Montenegro, with its warrior spirit and dangerously close ties with Russia, and also the Ottoman Empire before the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1878, the Bay of Kotor grew into the largest naval base of the Habsburg monarchy with a great concentration of military personnel in the second half of the 19th century. They also included people of Jewish origin from other parts of the Habsburg monarchy. The number of soldiers increased significantly especially during the First World War (1914–1918). Further research in the archives and libraries of the successor states of the Habsburg monarchy could probably shed more light on the everyday, religious and cultural life of the Jewish soliders in this region, of which we know very little so far. For several decades, the number of Jews in the Bay of Kotor and the Montenegrin Littoral was on the rise. As we have seen, according to the last Austro-Hungarian census from 1910, there were more Jews living in this part of the present-day Montenegrin coast than in Dubrovnik, the traditional center of an ancient and proud Jewish community which could boast with one of the oldest synagogues in Europe – but not much else. However, the dramatic political, economic and social changes that accompanied the end of the First World War resulted in a great demographic fall. Most Jews left the southeastern Adriatic coast after the break-up of Austria-Hungary in 1918, returned to the places where they came from or moved to other regions of the new Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in search of employment and better opportunities. One such example is provided by the life trajectory of the stomatologist Hinko Amper, born in Kamionka in Poland in 1894, who in 1918 relocated from the Bay of Kotor to Bijeljina in Bosnia and later settled in Zagreb (*Židovski biografski leksikon: Amper, Hinko*).

Thanks to recent research of the modern history of the Jews in the Bay of Kotor and their traces, whose results were published in the study *Jevreji u Kotoru: tragovima arhivskih nalaza u XVI–XX vijeku* in 2021, we now have a far better picture about the demographic developments of the Jewish population as well as many valuable details about a certain number of Jewish families and individuals who settled in the area temporarily or permanently. „During

the period of the second Austro-Hungarian rule, a continuity of Jewish settlement in the town was documented for the first time. Sporadic mentions of the Jews during the Venetian administration of Kotor do not provide a clear picture of their numbers neither their civil and legal status. The oldest population censuses from the second Austro-Hungarian rule over Kotor which mentions the Jewish element dates to 1829, when just only three Jews were recorded in the town and vicinity. The following year, only two of them remained. (...) The 19th century was economically very difficult for the population of Kotor. Frequent epidemics of cholera which broke out in Kotor in 1855 and 1867 significantly slowed down the economic development of the town. At that time, there were fourteen Jews in the town of Kotor according to the census of 1854 and the same number according to the census of 1871“ (*Jevreji u Kotoru*, 2021: 17).

One of the families whose members lived in Kotor for several generations and left a deeper historical trace in the sources was the Finzi (Finci) family which moved to Kotor from Trieste before 1835. In December 1876, sixteen years after the lifting of the ban which did not allow the Jews to own property from February 18, 1860, the Finzi family signed a purchase contract for a house in the old town of Kotor (*Jevreji u Kotoru*, 2021: 16). “Finzi, important as a co-founder of the Jewish graveyard at Škaljari, owned a house in the old town of Kotor under the cadaster number 314 until 1912. The house was then bought by the Jewish family of Mandel and it remained in their possession until 1926. Mauricio Moše Mandel, a very able merchant, moved to Kotor before 1853 from Bohemia. He had ten children, and was also one of the co-founders of the Jewish graveyard at Škaljari. The Jesurun family were among the Jews of Split who became linked with Kotor. Raffael Josef Jesurun, son of Daniel Jesurun from Split, is buried at the Jewish graveyard in Kotor. It is not known how long he had been living in the town. (...) The Janni family moved to Kotor from Dubrovnik. Rahela Janni, daughter of Josef Izak Vito Tolentino, was born in Kotor in 1824. (...) Other Jewish families mentioned in Kotor in the 19th century include the following: Andauer, Tedeschi, Tolentino, Herzer, Linenberger, Löwenschuss, Steiner, Valenzin, Winkler, Werner, Pardo and Popper“ (*Jevreji u Kotoru*, 2021: 17). Apart from Sephardic names such as Finzi and Tolentino (the largest Jewish family of Dubrovnik, whose members moved to Kotor from Split), Ashkenazic Jews from different parts of the Habsburg monarchy also settled in Kotor, for example the Herzer family (from the vicinity of Zagreb), Linenberger family (from Burgenland in Western Hungary, today in Austria) and Löwenschuss family (from Czernowitz in the Bukovina, today in Ukraine). While some families settled in the Bay of Kotor permanently and their members remained in the area for several gene-

rations, other Jews stayed just temporarily, mostly for professional reasons: „Of the Winkler family, only Jenka Winkler was recorded in Kotor. She was born around 1890 in Subotica. She worked as a house maid and died in Kotor on January 7, 1908“ (*Jevreji u Kotoru*, 2021: 27).

Apart from individuals and families which remained faithful to Judaism, we also find some mentions of persons of Jewish origin who converted to Catholicism, dominant and despite official religious equality still the most prestigious confession of the Habsburg empire. One of them was doctor Leon Pardo, physician and private professor who spent the last months of his life in Kotor and died there in 1898. Pardo was born in Dubrovnik in a Jewish family in 1810. In Kotor, he was given a pompous Catholic funeral. His most lasting contribution to Kotor is the valuable painting *Ecce Hommo* by the Spanish painter Louis Morales from the 16th century, which Pardo donated to the local Franciscan Monastery of Saint Clara (*Franjevački samostan sv. Klare*), where it has been exhibited until today (*Jevreji u Kotoru*, 2021: 22).

Most Jews in the area tended to reside in the old town of Kotor. Apart from Kotor, the last Austro-Hungarian census from 1910 also recorded Jews living in the town of Perast. In Herceg Novi, Jews appeared in the census in 1880 and 1910. „In the old town of Kotor during the Austro-Hungarian rule, the number of Jews rose from two in 1829 and 1830 to seventy-two in 1910. The average number of Jews during the Austro-Hungarian administration over the Bay of Kotor was eight, if we do not take into the account the year 1910. A sudden demographic jump recorded in that year was a result of great migrations of the Jewish population to the Adriatic coast, most often from northern Dalmatia towards the south, from the larger Jewish communities including Dubrovnik and Split to smaller towns and communities including Kotor. The greatest migrations of the Jewish population were those of the Jews of Bosnia and Hercegovina towards the coast at the beginning of the 20th century“ (*Jevreji u Kotoru*, 2021: 17). These statistics do not include the members of the Habsburg army of Jewish origin who were stationed in the area on a temporary basis. Nevertheless, we can assume that at least some of them established contact with the local Jewish inhabitants during their stay.

In the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, a local Jewish graveyard, in fact a small, separate Jewish plot with its own entrance adjacent to the larger Roman Catholic and Christian Orthodox town cemetery at Škaljari, was used by the local Jewish community of Kotor. The cemetery has been well-preserved and recently reconstructed. Today it represents one of the few places of memory related to Jewish history in Montenegro in the proper sense of the term. The last grave dates from 1904. It is interesting that the cemetery ceased to be used at a time when the number of Jews

in Kotor and other communities on the coast started increasing. It is possible that the capacity of the small graveyard became limited. This would logically result in the closing of the cemetery for further burials. According to Jewish religious tradition, it is forbidden to open the graves, exhume and manipulate with the remnants of the deceased or use an old grave for a new burial (among the Christian Orthodox and Roman Catholic inhabitants of the region, on the other hand, such practices were widespread).⁷ It is not clear which graveyards were used by local Jews after 1904. The closest Jewish graveyard in use in the first half of the 20th century was the Jewish graveyard of Dubrovnik. It is quite likely that some deceased from the Bay of Kotor and the Montenegrin littoral found their final resting place there.

The Jewish graveyard, separated from the main part of the municipal cemetery of Škaljari by a wall, was subjected to scholarly research in 2019–2020 as part of a larger transnational project aimed at the Jewish heritage of Kotor and Montenegro entitled *Discovering, exhibiting and using Jewish heritage in the Danube region*. After the Bay of Kotor became part of Austria in 1815, similarly to other parts of the empire, burials in churches and in town centers were forbidden. In 1820, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Kotor founded a new municipal cemetery in the locality of Škaljari, far enough from the city walls. The Catholics gave half of the cemetery to the Christian Orthodox church. „On June 10, 1858, Meyer Finzi, Maurizio Mandel and Giacomo Tolentino reached an agreement with the office of the Catholic Church in Kotor according to which the Church allocated them with a cemetery plot at Škaljari for the burials of their deceased“ (*Jevreji u Kotoru*, 2021: 28). The Bishop of Kotor personally granted the request of the local Jewish community. „In 1861, the above mentioned Jews paid the first rate of 60 florins out of the total 121.10 florins for the mentioned cemetery plot at Škaljari. On February 21, 1884, the request for the transfer of property of the plot nr. 485/2 from the Municipality of Kotor to the Jewish community of Kotor was signed by Giuseppe, son of Meyer Finzi. The plot was officially recorded as a property of the Jewish community of Kotor on June 21, 1884“ (*Jevreji u Kotoru*, 2021: 28). According to a letter from the Kotor Archive written in 1884 in Italian, as a representative of the Jewish community, Giuseppe Finzi requested that the part of the municipal graveyard used by the Jewish community is officially registered as a property of the Jewish community (Comunità Israelitica) because it was still wrongly recorded as a property of the Kotor municipality.

⁷ We have to note, however, that exhumations and reburials at another location did occasionally occur even at Jewish cemeteries in the wider region. In the beginning of the 20th century, for example, the old Jewish cemetery of Dubrovnik (Ploče) was abolished and the remnants of the deceased transferred to a new Jewish graveyard at another location.

The graveyard has the shape of a walled rectangle, with a gate in the southern wall. There are altogether nine graves. The gravestones include the names of the deceased, years of birth and death. Detailed descriptions of the graveyard, individual gravestones and information on the identity of all the deceased buried at the Jewish cemetery at Škaljari, including visual documentation, can be found in two recent studies which were published as a result of the above mentioned transnational research project devoted to the Jewish heritage of Kotor: *Jevreji u Kotoru: tragovima arhivskih nalaza u XVI–XX vijeku* and *Cemetery Tourism Study / Cemetery studija turizma (Jevreji u Kotoru, 2021: 27n; Cemetery Tourism Study, 2021)*. According to the authors of this research, in the 20th century, some Jews of Kotor and their descendants were buried in the Catholic section of the municipal cemetery (*Discovering Jewish heritage, 2019: 8*). During my research visit in October 2022, I indeed managed to identify several graves of people of Jewish origin in the Catholic part of the cemetery, however, all of them dated from the second half of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century. It cannot be excluded that some graves from the first third of the 20th century are no longer marked by proper gravestones, but currently there are no graves of persons identifiable as Jewish in the Catholic part of the cemetery that would date back to the late Habsburg period.

We can assume that the Jews who settled in the Bay of Kotor were, as a result of their family and professional links with other regions of the Habsburg monarchy and their predominant loyalty to the central state authority impersonalized by the Emperor as a guarantor of gradual Jewish emancipation, exhibited their loyalty to the Empire. Such attitudes were in general characteristic for the majority of Jews living in the Habsburg Empire in the 19th century. They are also evident from the following lines about Mauricio (Moritz) Moše Mandel, one of the founders of the Jewish graveyard at Škaljari and distinguished representative of one of the Kotor Jewish families of his era: „Two documents found in the Archive of Kotor provide a testimony of Mauricio’s philanthropic spirit. From the first of them, dated May 13, 1853, we learn that Mauricio Mandel gave a voluntary donation of four florins for the erection of the monument to the Emperor Francis Joseph I in Vienna. The other, undated document, mentions him as a sponsor of dowry for a poor girl in order to help her get married and also in relation to the voluntary contributions for the celebration of the arrival of the Colonel Baron Marshall Mamula, when Mandel again donated four florins“ (*Jevreji u Kotoru, 2021: 38*). On the graveyard of Škaljari, we also find two graves of Jews who came to the Bay of Kotor in the uniform of the Habsburg army or as family members who accompanied them. Military doctor Salomon Werner served during the 1870^s with the regiment of Erzherzog Ferdinand. During his service in Kotor, his sons were born and his

daughter died and was buried here in 1876. Her gravestone at the Jewish cemetery at Škaljari is the only one on this cemetery with an inscription exclusively in Hebrew. Infantry sargeant Leo Popper, born in Moleschilz⁸ in Hungary on August 19, 1872, died in Kotor on April 24, 1893. His gravestone is the only one with an inscription in German (*Jevreji u Kotoru*, 2021: 50).

The sources of Dubrovnik origin researched by Bernard Stulli confirm that there was no synagogue in the region of the Bay of Kotor and the Montenegrin Littoral during the late Habsburg era. However, in the last years of the Austro-Hungarian rule, there was a space in Kotor that was regularly used by local Jews for religious purposes. The authors of the recent study on the history of the Jews in Kotor from 2021 claim that, based allegedly on „the oral tradition of the Jews of the Bay of Kotor“, Jewish religious ceremonies were held in an improvised synagogue (prayer room) in the Old Town of Kotor, in a house which stands on today's Prison Square (Trg od zatvora) (*Jevreji u Kotoru*, 2021: 17). In the interwar period, there existed, apart from Kotor, another „filijala“ or branch of the Dubrovnik Jewish community active in Herceg Novi (Fischer, 1929: 235). It is possible that a similar place for religious ceremonies existed in this town at the Bay's entry already in the last years of the Austro-Hungarian rule, at a location which has so far remained unknown. There was no permanent rabbi residing in the Bay of Kotor under the Habsburgs. As Bernard Stulli showed in his monograph, Dubrovnik itself did not have enough funds to maintain a permanent, regularly paid rabbi in the old town synagogue and the representatives of the Jewish community of Dubrovnik even made unsuccessful attempts to hire a free-of-charge rabbi on a periodic basis from a relatively distant Trieste, main Habsburg port on the northern Adriatic. No wonder that the few and scattered Jews of the Bay of Kotor and the Montenegrin Littoral had to get by somehow on their own.

In their religious life, the Jews of the Bay of Kotor were almost certainly using a Sefer Torah (handwritten Torah scroll for ritual purposes), which has not been preserved at the territory of present-day Montenegro. After the renewal of Montenegrin independence in 2006, when the Jewish Community of Montenegro (JZCG) was officially formed and recognized by the state, it received a Sefer Torah as a gift from the Jewish Community of Hódmezővásárhely in southern Hungary. This community owns several dozen Sefer Torahs, which survived the destruction of a large number of Jewish communities in the town and its rural surroundings in the Holocaust in 1944. This Torah scroll, made in the 19th century in the town of Nitra (Hungarian: Nyitra) in present

⁸ Most likely a rarely used German name of a locality in the Trenčín (Hung. Trencsén) county in present-day western Slovakia.

day Slovakia, was ceremonially installed in the provisional synagogue at the seat of the Jewish Community of Montenegro in Podgorica. The founder and first President of JZCG Jaša Alfandari claimed at the occasion that the last Sefer Torah known to be in use on the territory of present-day Montenegro was brought out of Kotor „more than 160 years ago, and it most likely ended up in Dubrovnik“ (Ćorić, 2015: 23). Due to Jaša's unexpected passing in July 2018, I did not have a chance to ask him whether he could back this claim with some written evidence. It also cannot be excluded that a Sefer Torah was kept on the premises used by the Jewish community of Kotor for religious purposes as long as there was a need or a possibility of a Jewish life, and that period might have also included the interwar years under royal Yugoslavia (Šístek, 2021, *Ibid.*, 2023).

Conclusion

The last population census conducted under Austria-Hungary in 1910 recorded over 120 Jews living in the Bay of Kotor and the Montenegrin Littoral. The first population census undertaken by the new Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1921 recorded only eleven Jews on the territory of the Kotor District (out of the total 35.305 inhabitants): five in Dobrota, four in Herceg Novi and two in Kotor. The end of the First World War, the break-up of the Habsburg monarchy and the creation of the new Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918 resulted in a sharp and abrupt demographic fall. The Jewish population of the Bay of Kotor and the Montenegrin Littoral, which had been steadily increasing from the beginning of the 20th century, became ten times less numerous virtually overnight as a result of migrations of most of its members to other parts of the new unified state or to other successor states of the former Habsburg monarchy (Šístek, 2021: 184). Since the 1920^s, the coastal region, for centuries separated by international border from nearby South Slavic hinterland, was administratively linked with continental Montenegro rather than Dalmatia. From 1929 until the Italian occupation in 1941, the Bay of Kotor and the Montenegrin Littoral, together with the entire territory of the old Kingdom of Montenegro and several other regions, was an integral part of the Zeta Banovina, one of the nine provinces of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, as the state was called after the introduction of the dictatorship of King Alexander in 1929. The second and as it turned out, also the last population census conducted by royal Yugoslavia during the interwar period in 1931 found 35 Jews (out of the the total 38.989 inhabitants) living in the Kotor District (Šístek, 2021: 185).

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František ŠÍSTEK

**JEVREJI BOKOKOTORSKOG ZALIVA I CRNOGORSKOG
PRIMORJA OD SREDNJEG VIJEKA DO 1918. GODINE**

U ovome radu, autor donosi istorijski pregled prisustva Jevreja u Bokokotorskom zalivu i na crnogorskom primorju od srednjeg vijeka do 1918. godine. Na početku, autor raspravlja o tragovima jevrejskog prisustva prema raspoloživim izvorima iz srednjevjekovnog perioda i mletačkih vremena. Upućuje se i na malo istraživanu istoriju jevrejskog naseljavanja pod osmanском dominacijom u severozapadnom dijelu zaliva. Ipak, najviše pažnje posvećeno je bolje dokumentovanom prisustvu Jevreja tokom vladavine Habsburga (1815-1918). Migracije iz drugih djelova Habsburškog carstva dovele su do uspostavljanja kontinuiranog jevrejskog naseljavanja i stalne jevrejske zajednice s preko sto ljudi u periodu prije Prvog svjetskog rata.

Ključne riječi: *Jevreji, Aškenazi, Sefardi, Crna Gora, Jadransko more, Bokokotorski zaliv, crnogorsko primorje, Mletačka Republika, Otomansko carstvo, Habsburško carstvo, Judaizam*