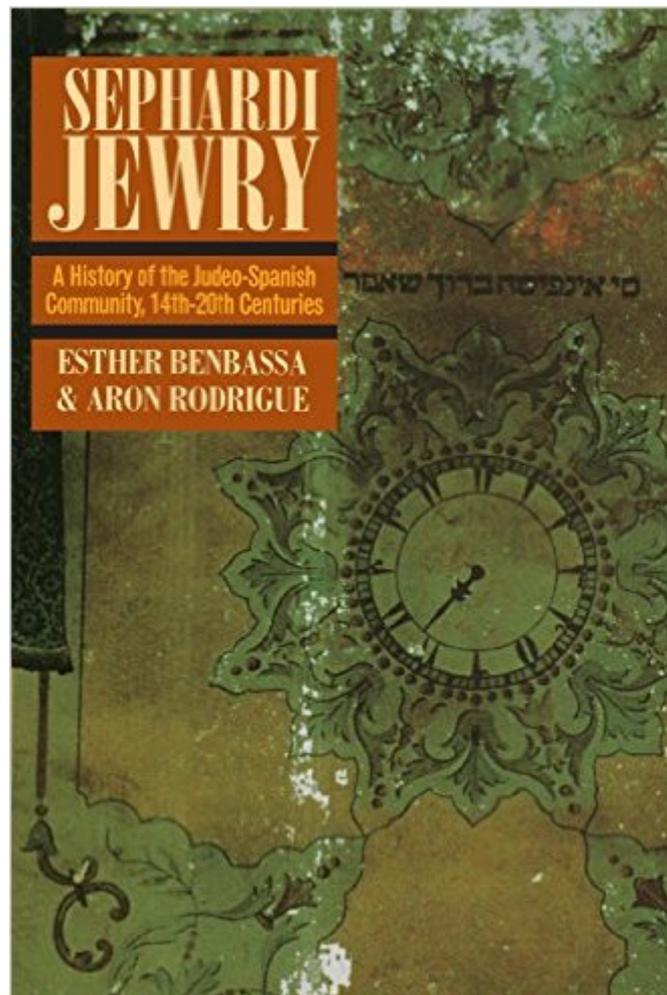


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Sephardi Jewry: A History Of The Judeo-Spanish Community, 14th-20th Centuries (Jewish Communities In The Modern World)



Synopsis

Until the publication of this remarkably comprehensive history of the Sephardi diaspora, only limited attention had been given to the distinctive Judeo-Spanish cultural entity that flourished in the Balkans and Asia Minor for more than four centuries. Yet the great majority of Sephardi Jews, after their expulsion from Spain in 1492 and subsequently from Portugal, found their way to this region, drawn by the political stability and relatively tolerant rule of the Ottoman Empire, as well as by promising socioeconomic conditions. Esther Benbassa and Aron Rodrigue show how Sephardi society and culture developed in the Levant, sharing language, religion, customs, and communal life as they did nowhere else, both during prosperous times and during the declining fortunes of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The impact of westernization, the end of Ottoman power, and the rise of fragmenting nation-states transformed this vital community in the modern era. And, like many other Jewish communities, the unique Judeo-Spanish culture was dispersed and destroyed by the Holocaust and the migrations of the twentieth century. Sephardi Jewry presents its vivid history in a readable, well-documented narrative.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book is truly informative if you're interested in what happened to the 15th century Jewish refugees from Spain and Portugal. The author begins by talking about the position and status of the Jews in Spain on the eve of their expulsion and the circumstances leading to their forced conversion and expulsion at the end of the 1400s. Many Jews were prosperous and held high positions in

Spain (some continued to do so after converting to Christianity). The author states that many Jewish families were torn apart and separated as some chose conversion whilst other family members left so that they can remain Jewish. These Sephardic Jews were dispersed all over : some to Southern France, Italy, Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Syria, the Balkans and Turkey...others to Holland and England, sometimes using them merely as transit points to the New World. This book discusses the Sephardim refugee community in the Balkans only and the rest of the Sephardic Jews who settled elsewhere are actually outside the scope of this book [which is quite disappointing]. I guess the number of Sephardim refugees must have been enormous as even those who settled in the Balkans (and those who chose to stay on in Spain and become Christians) were quite substantial in numbers. The author does describe in fairly great detail the condition of the Sephardim in the Balkans under Ottoman rule, the organisation of their religious communities and their relationship with other communities; both Gentile (i.e. Armenians, Greeks, Turks) and other Jews (i.e. Greek-speaking Romaniots, Arab-speaking Mizrachim, the Yiddish-speaking Ashkenzaim) in the Ottoman Balkans. Sabbatai Zevi, the "Jewish Messiah" and the conversion of himself and his followers to Islam (hence the founding of the Donmeh community) is also briefly mentioned.

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