

**Adina Selimović**

**REMEMBERING INTERWAR JEWISH WRITERS: THE URBAN AND  
LITERARY HERITAGE OF SARAJEVO**

**MA Thesis in Cultural Heritage Studies: Academic Research, Policy, Management**

**Central European University**

**Budapest,**

**June 2020**

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by

Adina Selimovic

(Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,  
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
of the Master of Arts degree in Cultural Heritage Studies: Academic Research, Policy,  
Management.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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Chair, Examination Committee

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June 2020

I, the undersigned, **Adina Selimović**, candidate for the MA degree in Cultural Heritage Studies: Academic Research, Policy, Management declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Budapest, 7 June 2020

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## **Abstract**

This thesis aims to investigate the literary Jewish heritage of Sarajevo by studying the local memory of three interwar authors: Laura Papo, Isak Samokovlija, and Kalmi Baruh. This thesis has three interrelated thematic parts. The first presents the biography and creations of the three authors, who approached the Jewish culture from the historical standpoint of memory and heritage preservation. The second part is the memory creation and heritagization of these Jewish authors after the Holocaust. More attention will be given to the analysis of the rediscovery of Bohoreta's work and the influence of Kuić's novels to the creation of memory about Laura Papo Bohoreta. Gordana Kuić was Bohoreta's niece who wrote several fictional novels about her family history that influenced the reinterpretation of the figure of Laura Papo and her sisters. The third theme is the historical topography of Jewish everyday life in Sarajevo, as it is represented by Jewish authors or connected with the remembrance and efforts to commemorate their life and work.

## Acknowledgments

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## Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the literary Jewish heritage of Sarajevo by studying the local memory of three interwar authors: Laura Papo, Isak Samokovlija, and Kalmi Baruh. The subject of this thesis is a marginalized part of Jewish heritage; and my analysis of literary work and memory of the three authors can help to uncover hidden Jewish heritage. The interwar Jewish writers are not only witnesses of their own time, but they are also important for the memory of earlier periods, each of them has contributed to the knowledge of the culture and everyday life of the Sephardim that had flourished in Sarajevo during Ottoman times. This thesis has three interrelated thematic parts. The first chapter presents interwar Jewish Sarajevo with its cultural organizations and Jewish writers, and it asks how the latter's work reflects the socioeconomic situation. The second theme is the memory and heritagization of these Jewish authors after the Holocaust. The third theme is the historical topography of Jewish everyday life in Sarajevo, as it is represented by Jewish authors or connected with their life and work.

In the interwar period, Sarajevo Jewry consisted of two communities: Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews. On the eve of the Second World War, around ten thousand Jews were living in Sarajevo, representing one of the four main ethnicities in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (the Kingdom of Yugoslavia from 1929).<sup>1</sup> In 1931, half of the Jewish population in Sarajevo spoke Judeo-Spanish, around 40% spoke Serbo-Croatian, and a small percentage spoke Hungarian or German.<sup>2</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina were forcibly incorporated into the Independent Croatian State during the Second World War. In September 1941, the Ustaše (Croatian fascists) started sending

<sup>1</sup> Francine Friedman, "Writing for Survival: Letters of Sarajevo Jews Before Their Liquidation During World War II", in *Nostalgia, Loss and Creativity in South-East Europe: Political and Cultural Representations of the Past*, edited by Catharina Raudvere, 189–212, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-71252-9\\_8](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-71252-9_8). Accessed 29 May 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Harriet Pass Freidenreich, *The Jews of Yugoslavia : A Quest for Community* (Illinois: Varda Books, 2001), 215.

Jews to concentration camps, and during the Holocaust 10,000 of the 14,000 Bosnian Jews perished.<sup>3</sup>

The literary work of interwar Jewish authors contributes to the memory of Jewish life before the Holocaust as the imperfect remnants of the past experiences of everyday Jewry. All three authors were part of the group of Jewish intellectuals in Sarajevo active in the cultural associations and writing for periodical publications of the Jewish community. Bohoreta's cultural activity was directed towards the revitalization and preservation of the Sephardic culture and Judeo-Spanish language, while Isak Samokovlija, a doctor by profession, wrote fictional tales about the life of Jews in Sarajevo. Unlike the other authors, Isak Samokovlija wrote his stories in Serbo-Croatian. Therefore, his stories were better available to the wider audience and became more well-known than literature in Judeo-Spanish. Thus, he was seen as the prime authority on the memory of the Sephardic past.

### **Jewish heritage in a multicultural city**

Today there are efforts in branding Sarajevo as a multiethnic and multicultural city where West and East meet.<sup>4</sup> Sarajevo is often described as the European Jerusalem in the touristic offers or promotional articles but can also be seen as such by Jews living in Sarajevo.<sup>5</sup> Besides the frequent appearance of these and similar labels about Sarajevo, several monuments are destined to

<sup>3</sup> Friedman, "Writing for Survival: Letters of Sarajevo"; Stepahnie Persin, "Bosnia & Herzegovina Virtual Jewish History Tour". Accessed 29 May 2020. <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/bosnia-and-herzegovina-virtual-jewish-history-tour>.

<sup>4</sup> Hayley Long, "Sarajevo, the City Where East Meets West", *The Observer*, Accessed May 30, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2018/sep/02/sarajevo-city-break-bosnia-and-herzegovina-holiday>.

<sup>5</sup> Armin Aljović "Eli Tauber: Sarajevo Za Mene Jeste Evropski Jerusalem", Al Jazeera Balkans. Accessed 3 June 2020. <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/eli-tauber-sarajevo-za-mene-jeste-evropski-jerusalem>; Destination Sarajevo, "Discover Why Sarajevo Is Called a European Jerusalem", DetinationSarajevo.travel, Accessed 3 June 2020. <https://sarajevo.travel/en/text/discover-why-sarajevo-is-called-a-european-jerusalem/202>; Sarajevo-tourism.com "European Jerusalem". Accessed 3 June 2020. <http://m.sarajevo-tourism.com/european-jerusalem->

emphasize the multiculturalism of the city. In the main square of the town, there is the *Monument to Multiculturalism*, and on one of the main streets, Ferhadija, there is the pavement marker *Sarajevo Meeting of Cultures*. Before the Yugoslav war, Sarajevo was indeed a multiethnic city, and its mosques, synagogues, and churches still stand next to each other to witness the multicultural history of the city. The old city center of Sarajevo, Baščaršija, has visible Ottoman elements in the style of architecture, while other districts, especially *Marijin Dvor*, represent the Austro-Hungarian legacy. After the war, the city became predominantly Muslim. However, among the 20 % of inhabitants who belong to minorities, there are approximately 800 Jews still living in the city; and the Jewish heritage remains an important part of its multi-ethnic identity.<sup>6</sup>

The Jewry has left a mark on urban topography in Sarajevo. The most visited sites of Jewish heritage in Sarajevo include the Jewish cemetery, the Old Synagogue (now the Jewish Museum), and the Ashkenazi synagogue. Moreover, there are dozens of hotels, apartment buildings, trade houses, and palaces previously owned by Jews. However, the most emblematic aspect of Jewish heritage in Sarajevo is the Haggadah.<sup>7</sup> The manuscript book originated in the 14th century in Spain and has survived countless dangers: the Inquisition, the Holocaust, and in the last war, it was saved from destruction. Thus, more than ever, it has become a symbol of indestructibility and freedom. Therefore, the Haggadah has a very strong symbolic value for non-Jewish citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina as well.

This thesis intends to contribute to the recent endeavor in Jewish studies to map out the geography of Jewish everyday life and hope.<sup>8</sup> This project is not the first to present the Jewish heritage in Sarajevo. For instance, the *Haggadah* association offers several different tours that uncover the

<sup>6</sup> Maja Zuvela, "As Bigotry Stirs Globally, Bosnian Jews, Muslims Recall Lesson in Tolerance – Reuters". Accessed 29 May 2020. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-bosnia-jews-muslims/as-bigotry-stirs-globally-bosnian-jews-muslims-recall-lesson-in-tolerance-idUSKBN1XH24W>.

<sup>7</sup> Mirsad Sijarić, "Sarajevo Haggadah", Zemaljski Muzej.ba, Accessed 22 May 2020. <https://www.zemaljskimuzej.ba/en/archaeology/middle-ages/sarajevo-haggadah>.

<sup>8</sup> Julia Brauch, Anna Lipphardt, and Alexandra Nocke, *Jewish Topographies : Visions of Space, Traditions of Place* (Aldershot : Ashgate, 2008.), 1-2.

Jewish heritage of Sarajevo and, more broadly, of Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>9</sup> However, the novelty of this thesis is that it focuses on the heritage of Jewish authors within the topography of Sarajevo.

The amount of research dealing with Bosnian and Yugoslav Jewish literature as well as with Sephardic culture is substantial. Firstly, there is an overview study by Muhamed Nezirović<sup>10</sup>, Jagoda Večerina<sup>11</sup> on Judeo-Spanish, and Laura Papo, Predrag Palavestra's study on modern Jewish literature.<sup>12</sup> As primary sources, I will use publications of Jewish periodical papers from the interwar period, *Židovska svijest* and *Jevrejski Glas*. Moreover, I will use tales by Isak Samokovlija and novels by Gordana Kuić, for mapping the geography of Jewish life as it is remembered by these authors.

My research includes a component of oral history. I have conducted semi-structured interviews in November 2019 with the *Bohorete*, a local female association devoted to the cultural memory of Jewish literary and urban heritage. It was the librarian of the Jewish community who directed me to speak with the *Bohorete* after I had introduced my research to him. He suggested that I speak with the *Bohorete* because this is an association that explicitly continues Laura Papo Bohoreta's legacy and activities. I aimed to find out about their incentives to join the organization and their memory of Bohoreta. The interviews confirm that even here, novels by Gordana Kuić have shaped the cultural memory of Laura Papo as a female intellectual in a patriarchal society. I will be using Kuić's novels as a primary source for the memorialization of Laura Papo Bohoreta.

<sup>9</sup> Haggadah.org.ba, "Association Haggadah". Accessed 22 May 2020. <http://haggadah.org.ba/>.

<sup>10</sup> Muhamed Nezirović, *Jevrejsko-španjolska književnost* [Judeo-Spanish literature] (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1992)

<sup>11</sup> Jagoda Večerina, *Bohoreta: Najstarija Kći* [Bohoreta: the oldest daughter] (Zagreb: Bet Izrael, 2016)

<sup>12</sup> Predrag Palavestra, *Jevrejski pisci u srpskoj književnosti* [Jewish writers in Serbian literature] (Beograd: Institut za književnost i umetnost, 1998)

I have used a structured questionnaire to interview Tamara Sarajlić Slavnić, the curator at the Museum of Literature and Theatre Arts via Facebook. I acquired information about the permanent exhibition and collections devoted to *Kalmi Baruh* and *Isak Samokovlija*. My inquiry intended to find out when those collections arrived at the museum and when they were included in the permanent exhibition. I also asked about the number of visitors to the temporary exhibition of Laura Papo Bohoreta.

## Outlines of chapters

In the first chapter, I will present the Jewry of Sarajevo in the interwar period, with a focus on the cultural and humanitarian associations that became a framework of activities for Baruh, Bohoreta, and Samokovlija. Furthermore, I will present the work and life of each author based on scholarship about them. Additionally, I will present Laura Papo's ethnographical study *The Sephardic Woman in Bosnia* and analyze Samokovlija's tales. At the end of the chapter, I will present the efforts of heritagization undertaken on the Jewish writers, based on the efforts done by the Museum of Literature and Theater Arts.

The second chapter deals with the memory of Laura Papo Bohoreta and Isak Samokovlija. I will present different stages of remembrance of the former and her ethnological study, and then study the reception of the latter's work. However, more emphasis will be placed on Bohoreta, considering that there are several factors and stages in the revitalization of her legacy. She has been a subject of novels and popular culture. It is peculiar that her memory is not transmitted by her work, as this is usually the case with writers, but through a novel that reimagines her. I will also analyze the reception of Kuić's novels. I will present testimonies of the *Bohorete*, a female association that carries the legacy of Bohoreta. Finally, I will present the commemoration and festivals organized in Samokovlija's honor.

The third chapter is divided into five subchapters. The first subchapter deals with places that were named in honor of Jewish writers. There are three streets and one elementary school bearing names of Jewish writers. None of them are recognizable Jewish places, except Velika Avlija (The Great Courtyard). Therefore, in the second subchapter, I will reflect on the historical importance of Velika Avlija for the development of Jewry in Sarajevo and the visible markers of Jewish heritage in this area.

The third subchapter brings together places that feature in Isak Samokovlija's tales, the unmarked heritage of the lower-class hillside settlement where his protagonists live, with the author's house at the end. The fourth subchapter deals with largely forgotten or unmarked places that feature in Papo's biographies or Kuić's novels. The final fifth subchapter presents the *La Benevolencija* building as a former space for the most important Jewish cultural activities in the interwar period. Here, I also will present *Prva Gimnazija*, a place where Baruh and Samokovlija were educated, and later Baruh worked.

### **A remark about terminology**

In this thesis, I refer to an author as a Bosnian Jewish writer, even if in the secondary literature they are noted as Serbian authors.<sup>13</sup> However, since the First World War, the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina has been part of four different states: the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the Independent Croatian State, Socialist Yugoslavia and, at the very end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it became an independent state. This also meant that the name of the official language kept changing and the nationality of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina has also been subject to constant modification. However, in this paper, I am writing about authors who spent their active years in

<sup>13</sup> Predrag Palavestra, *Jevrejski Pisci U Srpskoj Knjizevnost* [Jewish writers in Serbian Literature], Accessed 22 May 2020. <http://elmdosefarad.wikidot.com/jevrejski-pisci-u-srpskoj-knjizevnosti>.

Sarajevo and often set their novels there. Consequently, they will be regarded as Bosnian Jewish writers irrespective of what language they used, since Bosnian is used here as geographic belonging, not ethnicity.

This notion of Bosnian Jewish writer presents the idea of a *hybrid culture* introduced by Moshe Rosman.<sup>14</sup> He speaks of multiple Jewish cultures that Jewish communities in the diaspora created with local cultures. Therefore, Isak Samokovlija does not stop being a Jewish writer because he wrote in the local language, nor does Laura Papo's work stop being the heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina because it is written in Judeo-Spanish. However, the three authors are not chosen as Jewish writers merely because they have Jewish origins.<sup>15</sup> Samokovlija and Papo wrote about Jewish topics, Jewish characters, and often incorporated Jewish cultural elements.

Generally speaking, Jews are an inseparable part of Bosnian culture. Jewish artists have made contributions to Bosnian culture, and the Jewish tradition has also influenced Bosnian folklore. One of the examples is the impact of Sephardic music on traditional Bosnian *sevdalinka*: several *sevdalinks* have the same melody as traditional Sephardic music.<sup>16</sup> I would like to note that I am writing this thesis consciously from the perspective of someone who is not part of the Jewish community so that for the present case study, I have chosen authors that are already known to the general Bosnian public and whose work is already heritage to a certain degree.

<sup>14</sup> Moshe Rosman, "Hybrid with What?: The Relationship between Jewish Culture and Other People's Cultures." In *How Jewish Is Jewish History?* 82–110. Oxford; Portland, Oregon: Liverpool University Press, 2007. [www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1rmhq7.8](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1rmhq7.8).

<sup>15</sup> Even-Zohar Itamar, "Israeli Hebrew Literature: A Model," Papers in *Historical Poetics* (Tel Aviv: The Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics, 1978), 80.

<sup>16</sup> Eljas Tauber, "Jevreji kao nerazdvojni dio razvoja privrede i kulture u Bosni i Hercegovinizvoja" [Jews as an inseparable part of the development of the economy and culture in Bosnia and Herzegovina]. Književnost.fandom.com, Accessed 30 May 2020. [https://knjizevnost.fandom.com/bs/wiki/Jevreji\\_kao\\_nerazdvojni\\_dio\\_razvoja\\_privrede\\_i\\_kulture\\_u\\_Bosni\\_i\\_Hercegovinizvoja](https://knjizevnost.fandom.com/bs/wiki/Jevreji_kao_nerazdvojni_dio_razvoja_privrede_i_kulture_u_Bosni_i_Hercegovinizvoja).



I am focusing on three authors, but I need to stress that these are not the only Jewish writers from Sarajevo. Some notable others are Moshe Atijas, Isak Papo, and Gina Camhy. However, I have decided to focus on the interwar period and those three authors as the most representative example, authors who have already been included in the national and Jewish heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Samokovlija and Baruh are included in the permanent exhibition of the Museum of the Literature and Theater Arts. Moreover, all three authors have streets named after them, which is a visible sign of their presence in the public policy of marking heritage in the urban space of Sarajevo.

### **Other aspects of the Jewish heritage and commemoration sites**

Sites like the Jewish Museum, the Jewish Cemetery, and the Ashkenazi Synagogue are not the only reminders of Jewish built heritage. For instance, the *Haggadah* Association offers guided tours of *Jewish Sarajevo*, where tourists can visit formerly owned Jewish hotels, mansions, and former synagogues. In this thesis, I consider that these elements are in no way the full representation of the Jewish heritage in Sarajevo. Indeed, it is impossible to present the full intangible and tangible heritage that the Jewish society has created in Sarajevo over four hundred years.

One specific element of the intangible heritage of Sarajevo Jewry is *Purim di Saray*, the local Jewish holiday that commemorates a historical event in 1819. According to legends, the *vali* (governor) Rushd-pasha arrested Sarajevo Chief Rabbi Rav Moshe Danon and some other prominent Jews under a false pretext. He requested payment from the Jewish community, otherwise, he would kill the hostages. However, the local Muslim elite rebelled against this injustice and freed the imprisoned Jews. Around 80 years later, Moshe Atijas, also known as Zeki Effendi Rafajlović, recorded those events in the *Megila di Saraj* (Sarajevo Scroll). In 2004, the

*Megila di Saraj* was translated into Bosnian and English from Judeo-Spanish by Eliezer Papo<sup>17</sup>, who also wrote a historical novel based on those events.

Regarding the memory of catastrophes and survival in local Jewish history, it is important to reflect on the non-existence of Holocaust memorials in Sarajevo. The commemoration of the Second World War Jewish or Roma persecution did not happen during Socialist Yugoslavia. There were no ethnic exceptions in the commemoration; all victims in the Second World War were marked as “victims of fascist terror”. Even if the official statistics of Socialist Yugoslavia acknowledged in 1981 that of the 10,961 Sarajevans who died as civil “victims of fascist terror”, 7,092 were Jews (65%).<sup>18</sup> Two places in Sarajevo indirectly commemorate Jewish suffering. One is *Viječna Vatra* (the Eternal Flame) that is located next to the former Grand Hotel. The second place is the *Vraca Memorial Park*, the memorial park for national heroes and civil victims of the Second World War. The Memorial Park consists of several different sections: a pyramid fountain with an eternal flame, a bronze sculpture of a female fighter, the Josip Tito Memorial, the tomb of the city's National Heroes, Victim's memorial wall, and the museum in the Austro-Hungarian fortress.<sup>19</sup> The victims were commemorated, but not their Jewishness, although their Jewishness was the only reason why they were murdered. On the Victim's memorial wall there are 9,000 names engraved, out of which 7,092 were Jewish. The Memorial Park was badly damaged during the last war and today it is still in a poor condition.

<sup>17</sup> “Sarajevska Megila Megila“. Elmundosefarad.wikidot.com, Accessed 29 May 2020.

<http://elmundosefarad.wikidot.com/sarajevska-megila-megila-de-sarajevo-the-sarajevo-migila>.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Donia, *Sarajevo: A Biography* (Sarajevo: Institut za Istoriju, 2006), 223.

<sup>19</sup> Spomenikdatabase.org, “The Vraca Memorial Park at Sarajevo“. Accessed 22 May 2020. <https://www.spomenikdatabase.org/sarajevo>.

## First Chapter

### Jewish associations and the Jewry of Interwar Sarajevo

Jews constituted ten percent of Sarajevo's population before WWII. Most of them were living in the main business district Baščaršija or the hillside settlements of Bjelave and Kovači. The Askenazi Jews lived mostly in the Baščaršija, while Bjelave and Kovači were inhabited by the Sephardi population.<sup>20</sup> Humanitarian associations and cultural organizations were very important for Sarajevo's Jewry. In the 1920s at least twenty Jewish associations existed in Sarajevo. They had different aims: there were cultural, educational, religious, Zionist, charity, sportive sports, and youth associations.<sup>21</sup>

The biggest and most influential organization was *La Benevolencija*, founded in 1892. Its main goal was to provide scholarships to talented Jewish students and to encourage the cultural activities among the local Jews. Samokovlija and Baruh were both recipients of a scholarship from *La Benevolencija*. Moreover, Laura Papo Bohoreta was commissioned by the organization to write about the traditions and customs of Sephardi Jews, in Judeo-Spanish. The aim was to record oral tradition to preserve the uniqueness of the Sephardic idioms spoken in Sarajevo. To some extent, Bohoreta never stopped with this work. For the rest of her life, she continued collecting *romances* and proverbs as well as folk tales, which she incorporated into her literary work.<sup>22</sup>

At the end of the First World War, there was a high number of poor Jews, especially young adults. In articles published in *Židovska svijest*, Dragutin Tolentino wrote that there was an alarmingly high number of neglected Jewish children. Children were left on their own since there were many single mothers after the First World War who had to work to feed their families. Children were

<sup>20</sup> Freidenreich, *The Jews of Yugoslavia*, 17

<sup>21</sup> Ana Pavlović, "Sephardic Pride: Jewish Associational Networks and Ethnic Modernity in Interwar Sarajevo", Master's thesis, Central European University, 2014. 13-15.

<sup>22</sup> David Kamhi, "LA Benevolncija: Od osnivanja 1892 do 1941", *Jevrejski Glas*, no.76, 11-12.

forced to spend their days on the street, sell flowers, steal and commit petty crimes to survive. Dragutin Tolentino claimed that the humanitarian associations that existed in Sarajevo at the time were not doing their job properly.<sup>23</sup>

*Matatja* was one of the societies created out of a need to educate impoverished Jewish youth. Laura Papo Bohoreta was part of the Jewish intellectuals who worked in the cultural associations *Benevolencija*, *Lira*, and *Matatja*.<sup>24</sup> David Kamhi reported Bohoreta's prestige in *Matatja*. He clarifies that she was completely in charge of the production of plays, from writing, scenography, and playing the piano or guitar. Members of the association had respect for her and listened to her instruction; the nickname they had for her *La Madre de la Matatja*, speaks of respect they had for her. Moreover, Bohoreta often held public lectures about socio-political movements in *Matatja*.<sup>25</sup>

In another article Tolentino published in 1919, he depicts the position of women in the Jewish society in Sarajevo and their role in public life, which was according to him mostly restricted to work in the cultural associations. He wrote an article after the representatives had voted against giving the right to women to vote in the Jewish community. He acknowledges this act as discriminatory and unfair toward women. However, he considers, women are partly responsible for not being more active in public life. He claims that women never requested to be part of public life, except their participation in humanitarian societies. Moreover, he advises men to allow women to be more active, yet, women are still responsible to fight for their own space within the public sphere for the benefit of Jewry. <sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Dragutin Tolentino, "O nama I za nas" April, 1919, *Židovska svijest*, no 22, 3.

<sup>24</sup> Palavestra, "Jevrejski Pisci U Novijoj Srpskoj Knjizevnosti".

<sup>25</sup> David Kamhi, "Odnos Laure Papo - Bohorete prema društveno-političkim kretanjima između dva svjetska rata" [Laura Papo - Bohoreta's relation to socio-political movement between two world wars], *Separat*, Jewish voice (July 2017.), 8.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, no. 23, 2.

Having in mind that women had no right to vote, that their participation in public life was generally discouraged and limited to participation in humanitarian societies, it is indeed remarkable how women like the writer Laura Papo or her sisters managed to enter the public sphere as intellectuals, artists, or businesswomen. The work in humanitarian and cultural societies was a female version of assimilation. Bosnian women followed the models from Western societies, where middle-class women took over the care of the younger and less fortunate members of the Jewish minority, and thus entered the public sphere.<sup>27</sup> Yet the work of the cultural association was perceived as less valuable; it was important to work only insofar as it was one of the ways that the Jewish identity and culture have been transmitted until today.

The modernization of Jewry in Bosnia and Herzegovina is typically connected with the Austro-Hungarian Occupation. However, certain patterns of modernization were similar to the modernization of Ottoman Jewry. It occurred a local Jewish elite would turn to their Western counterparts for support, which resulted in the establishment of associations such as *Alliance Israélite Universelle* (AIU), the *Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden*, and the World Zionist Organisation.<sup>28</sup> However, the biggest change happened at the beginning of the 20th century Bosnia was a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. After the occupation, Ashkenazi Jews moved to Bosnia; before only Sephardi Jews lived in Bosnia. Local Jews gained the opportunity to study in the big cities of the Empire, which continued even after the First World War when Bosnia became part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

Isak Samokovlija and Kalmi Baruh were among the Jews who studied in Vienna. After finishing their studies, both authors returned to Bosnia. They are examples of the modernization and emancipation of Bosnian Jewry at the beginning of the 20th century, thanks to the new

<sup>27</sup> Paula Hyman, *Gender and assimilation in modern Jewish history: The roles and representation of women*. University of Washington Press, 2017, 31.

<sup>28</sup> Esther Benbassa, "The Process of Modernization of Eastern Sephardi Communities", in *Sephardim and Middle Eastern Jewries*. (1996), 89-90.

opportunities that came with the new government. Differently from them, Laura Papo Bohoreta received her education in Istanbul and Paris. Her education represents another form of the modernization process that occurred in the Ottoman Empire after the Jewish elite of Europe (mostly from France) started intervening in the life of the Jewish communities of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>29</sup>

A group of Jewish intellectuals that was active during the interwar period in Sarajevo was responsible for the continuation and modernization of old Sephardi literature. Their work was linked to cultural and political associations. There was even an unofficial Jewish High School, organized after the 1940 decision by Minister Anton Korosec to restrict the number of Jewish students that could enroll in high school. The school had around 70 students; the director was Kalmi Baruh, the professors were both Jews and non-Jews.<sup>30</sup>

Bohoreta belonged to a group of Sarajevo intellectuals, together with Jekica Atijas, Samuel Kamhi, and Eliezer Levi, who advocated the phonetical use of the Latin letters in the writing of the Judeo-Spanish language. Their postulate *Me siervo de fonetika (eskrivir komo se avla)* [I use phonetics (to write like speaking) ],<sup>31</sup> was similar to the motto of Vuk Karadžić, the reformer of the Serbian language: “read as you write - write as you read”.

In contrast to Baruh and Bohoreta, Samokovlija was an author who wrote in Serbo-Croatian. It is believed that Isak Samokovlija considered the use of the Judeo-Spanish as a way by which Jews had closed themselves in linguistic ghettos. This was argued in an essay written in 1925 that was published in the periodical paper *Jevrejski život* [Jewish life], a paper that is a continuation of the already mentioned paper *Židovska svijest*. In the article, the author called Judeo-Spanish a “pseudo

<sup>29</sup> Benbassa, “The Process of Modernization of Eastern Sephardi Communities”, 89-90.

<sup>30</sup> Palavestra, “Jevrejski Pisci U Novijoj Srpskoj Knjizevnosti”.

<sup>31</sup> David Kamhi, Mirta Papo-Kamhi, “Laura Papo Bohoreta i njen doprinos Bosanskoj kulturi.” [Laura Papo Bohoreta and her contribution to Bosnian culture], *Forum Bosnae*, no. 78–79 (2017), 199.

mother tongue”. The author of the essay is unknown since only initials were given, but it is commonly believed that the author was Isak Samokovlija.<sup>32</sup>

## Isak Samokovlija

The work of Isak Samokovlija represents the beginning of modern Jewish literature in Yugoslavia. He was among the first Bosnian Jews to write in the Serbo-Croatian language. Born in Goražde in 1889, he finished the First Gymnasium in Sarajevo and then studied medicine in Vienna. He worked as a doctor in his home town and some other towns in Bosnia and Herzegovina. From 1926 until the Second World War he worked in a hospital in Sarajevo. In 1941 he was arrested and transported to the refugee camp *Ali-pašin Most*, where he worked as a doctor. Later he escaped *Ustaše* and hid until the Liberation. After the end of the Second World War, he worked as editor magazine *Brazda* from 1948 to 1951, and after that, he was an editor in the publishing house *Svjetlost* until his death. He died in Sarajevo in January 1955.<sup>33</sup>

Samokovlija started writing and publishing short tales in 1929 when he joined the *Group of Sarajevo writers*. He published his first short story *Rafina Avlija* [Rafo's Courtyard] at the age of thirty-eight, and by the end of his life, he wrote about thirty short stories, four dramas (*Hanka*, *The Blond Jewess*, *He is crazy* and *The Fusion*)<sup>34</sup> and poems, published in various magazines.<sup>35</sup> His book of selected stories *Nosač Samuel i druge pripovijetke* is included in the curriculum of elementary schools, therefore every child is familiarized with the work of Isak Samokovlija and the everyday life of Sarajevo Jewry.

<sup>32</sup> Nirha Efendić, “Pogled na sefarski romansu u Bosni i Hercegovini” [A view of Sephardic romance in Bosnia and Herzegovina], *Narodna umjetnost* 47, br. 2 (2010):, 166

<sup>33</sup> Historija.ba, Rođen Isak Samokovlija [Born Isak Samokovlija]. Historija.ba, Accessed 4 June 2020. <https://www.historija.ba/d/348-roden-isak-samokovlija/>.

<sup>34</sup> Palavestra, “Jevrejski Pisci U Novijoj Srpskoj Knjizevnosti”.

<sup>35</sup> El Mundo Sefarad, “Isak Samokovlija”, [Elmundosefarad.wikidot.com](http://elmundosefarad.wikidot.com/isak-samokovlija) ( Accessed 31 May 2020)

Eliezer Papo claims that Samokovlija's tales are less folkloristic, anecdotal, and cheerful than the other literature that the Sephardim in Bosnia created in Judeo-Spanish. Additionally, he critiques Samokovlija's tendency to attribute "oriental flaws" to his characters.<sup>36</sup> Nonetheless, Samokovlija's tales, even if poorer in cultural context, until now have been the most important medium for the memory of Bosnian Sephardic Jewry, considering that for decades these works have been part of the school curriculum and the only work about Sarajevo Jewry available in the local language.

Samokovlija's tales all belong to the same literary universe, set in the hillside settlement of Bjelave during the Ottoman empire. The trademark of his work are characters that are outcasts, the most well-known one being "Samuel the Porter," whose job is to carry goods others purchase at the market. His life is filled with regret, bitterness, and sadness. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, his name has become a synonym for hard uninspiring work that receives no recognition. Isak Samokovlija created a character that serves as the modern version of the mythological Sisyphus in the folklore of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

<sup>36</sup> Eliezer Papo, "Sefardi Bosna i Samokovlija Rafael i Simha" [Sephardim Bosnia And Samokovlija, Rafael and Simha] Elmundosefarad, wikidot.com ( Accessed 31 May 2020). <http://elmundosefarad.wikidot.com/sefardi-bosna-i-samokovlija-rafael-i-simha-eliezer-papo>.





Figure 1 Cover of the book *Nosač Samuel*, Svjetlost edition

Samuel the Porter Mačoro was a man of his 35 years. He was quite bony, thin, pale, and had little patience. Ascending along *Banjski brijeg*, he would pant and be cranky. Everything bothered him. All the way he cursed the uphill, cursing holes in the cobblestones and rocks about which he stumbled. <sup>37</sup>

Four of Samokovlija's tales, *Samuel the Porter*, *Saruča's debt*, *Samuel's letter*, and *How Rafo became man*, narrate the story of Samuel and his wife Saruča, starting from the time they were promised to each other. Saruča's father does not have enough money to pay her dowry, therefore she is dependent on her bad-tempered brother, Jakov. The day Samuel finds out that Jakov agreed to pay for Saruča's dowry was:

the most beautiful of all the days of his life. To him, the day seemed like a holiday. He felt like he was wearing Sabbath clothes, not his old shabby *fez* and smeared *chaksire*...He will be a merchant, a merchant! And it won't happen again to be called "Samuel the Porter", but "merchant Samuel."

His hope is frustrated since Jakov publicly embarrasses Samuel during their betrothal dinner. Samuel decides to marry Saruča anyway.

<sup>37</sup> Samokovlija, "Nosač Samuel" [Samuel the Porter], *Pripovijetke*, 186.

Samokovlija's characters often display the ugliest side of human nature. They fight with each other, refuse to go to the synagogue or respect Shabbat (like Juso from the tale *The Jew who does not pray on Saturday*) they are petty, bitter, and aggressive. However, they are never presented as villains, they are like this because of their harsh living conditions. Therefore, the reader can easily sympathize with them and understand their pain. Samokovlija's tales may be set in a closed Jewish society, but his characters' problems are universal, and non-Jews can relate to them.

Samokovlija's only work that was written with non-Jewish characters is the drama, *Hanka*. It has been reported that he wrote it based on a real event. When he worked as a doctor in a small town near Sarajevo, a beautiful Roma girl was killed by her fiancé because he believed she was unfaithful. Samokovlija did her autopsy and informed her fiancé that he was mistaken.<sup>38</sup> We can see that Isak Samokovlija again chose to write about another minority, staying true to his writings about outcasts.

*The Blond Jewess, Hanka, Simha, Samuel's Wedding, and War Breads* are movies based on Samokovlija's work. A play with the main character Mrijama, called *The Blond Jewess*, was performed in Sarajevo in 1932, however, it had more editions after the Second World War. In 1969 the drama was converted into a movie by Radio Television Belgrade. The director was Jovan Konjović, and the main roles were played by Milena Dravić and Milan Gutović, both prominent actors in Yugoslavia. Furthermore, *The Blond Jewess* had another edition as radio drama, made in 2013 by Radio Belgrade.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Predrag Finci, "Isak Samokovlija", El-mundo Sefarad, Accessed 20 December 2019. <http://elmundosefarad.wikidot.com/isak-samokovlija-predrag-finci>.

<sup>39</sup> KyrieEleson, *Isak Samokovlija – Plava Jevrejka (2013)*. Accessed 19 May 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3j3oSDhQd2Q>.

*Mirjama's hair* is a story about Mirjama who was bullied for her appearance in her childhood. *The Blond Jewess* describes her life in adulthood. These tales are about the intolerance and the internalization of racial prejudice within the Jewish society. Her father treats Mirjama better than his other children because she is blond. However, he later says he treats her better only because everyone is laughing at him for having a blond daughter, so he does it despite them. Mirjama is said to be the punishment for a sin committed by one of her ancestors in Spain, who cheated on her husband with a Christian man. Therefore, in every generation, there are blond children. She is rejected by her peers who never play with her, bully her, and give her degrading names. After she grows up, Mirjama falls in love with a Christian man but refuses to convert. The story ends tragically, with her killing herself after being rejected by her Jewish fiancé and unsuccessfully trying to return to her *mahala* [neighborhood].

Isak Samokovlija wrote a lot about female characters and the problems they were facing in patriarchal societies: hard house labor, domestic abuse, rejection by society for transgressing expected norms of behavior. However, his opus is better known for giving a voice to the marginalized lower-classes society than for the gender perspective. For instance, in the tale, *Simha, a Tale about Happiness*, the female protagonist of the story has no direct speech. Simha is the object of the platonic desire of the widower Rafael.<sup>40</sup> The author who gives a real insight into the life of Sephardic women was Laura Papo Bohoreta.

<sup>40</sup> "Simha means happiness", he thought as he day-dreamed about married life with her, and the joy she would bring to his household. And like all Samokovlija's tales, this story does not finish with a happy ending, just like his father, Samuel, Rafael's dreams do not come true. See: Samokovlija, "Simha", 257-288.

## Laura Papo Bohoreta – The first feminist writer in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Laura was born in Sarajevo in 1891 as the oldest daughter of Estera and Judo Levi, hence the nickname Buka. Her pseudonym Bohoreta comes from this nickname and has the meaning "firstborn". When she was ten, her family members moved with her to Istanbul, hoping to improve their financial situation. However, they did not succeed, so they returned to Sarajevo. While living in Istanbul, Laura attended the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* school. To assimilate into the new school, she changed her birth name Luna to Laura and started learning French. According to Eliezer Papo, learning a new language at such a young age enhanced her linguistic sensibility, which had a huge impact on Laura's work.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, she completed a six-week training course in Paris. The international organization *Alliance Française* awarded her the diploma of *Supérieure*, after which she gained the right to teach the French language and literature.<sup>42</sup> According to Gordana Kuić, this was her main income, which she used to support her sisters, and later her two sons.

Laura Papo Bohoreta was one of the first feminists and socialists in Bosnia; she joined the *Matatja* Society, which was formed in 1923 as an educational society for Jewish youth. Bohoreta frequently held lectures for members of *Matatja*, where she often emphasized the idea that "working-class people are carriers of progress."<sup>43</sup> Moreover, in her plays, she often ridiculed merchants, elitism, snobbery, and those who tended to brag about their doctoral and other titles. She emphasized the virtues of ordinary, often poor people, workers, and small craftsmen, and therefore her ideas easily appealed to them.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Eliezer Papo. Croatian translation "Entre la modernidad y la tradición, el feminismo y la patriarquia: Vida y obra de Laura Papo 'Bohoreta', primera dramaturga en lengua judeo-española." *Neue Romania* 40 (2010), 98.

<sup>42</sup> Ešref Čampara, "Laura Papo Bohoreta". *Jevrejski almanah 1965-67, 1967*, 135.

<sup>43</sup> David Kamhi, "Odnos Laure Papo - Bohorete prema društveno-političkim kretanjima između dva svjetska rata" [Laura Papo -Bohoreta's relation to socio-political movements between Two World Wars], *Separat, Jewish voice* (July 2017.), 8.

<sup>44</sup> Kamhi, Papo-Kamhi, "Laura Papo Bohoreta i njen doprinos Bosanskoj kulturi", 20.

Scholars often explain her works as divided between patriotism and Zionism. In her earlier works, she wrote the play *Moreni*, about a young couple from Sarajevo that faces anti-Semitism during their studies in Germany. Later on, after returning to Sarajevo, Morena falls ill and the couple decides to move to Palestine. Kamhi claims that Laura was a supporter of the idea of Zionism in her youth, but later changed her mind and “above all became a great Bosnian patriot”.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, in her later work, she even discouraged Jews from moving to Palestine. In the drama *Eskarino*, she incorporated and translated the famous poem of Šantić *Ostajte ovdje [Stay here]*, a poem that was written to keep the Bosnian Muslims from moving to Turkey after the Austro-Hungarian occupation. Additionally, Bohoreta translated a poem by Jovan Jovanović, one of the greatest Serbian poets, into Judeo-Spanish. The translation of the poem was published in *Jevrejski život* together with the article *We have no prophet nor fatherland*, in Judeo-Spanish. The purpose of this article was to familiarize Sarajevo’s Jewry with the works of Yugoslav non-Jewish writers because she noticed Jewish people’s tendency to admire western poets. Moreover, she wanted to convince the Jews to appreciate and familiarize themselves with the Slavic culture, rather than glorifying only the Western culture.<sup>46</sup>

In 1916, Laura started collecting Sephardic romances; she collected sixteen, ten of which she planned to publish in *Romancero*. All her explanations about these romances were written in German, indicating that her work was not for a local Jewish population, nor other locals but researchers.<sup>47</sup> Laura was cooperating with Kalmi Baruh, who published seven romances in his article *Spanish romances of Bosnian Jews*. Moreover, she worked with Spanish philologist Manuel Manrique de Lara who, according to her testimony, was amazed by the beauty of the Sephardim songs in Bosnia.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Kamhi, “Odnos Laure Papo - Bohorete prema društveno-političkim kretanjima između dva svjetska rata“, 8.

<sup>46</sup> Papo, “Between modernity and tradition, feminism and patriarchy”, 108.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 102.

<sup>48</sup> Kamhi, Papo-Kamhi [Laura Papo Bohoreta and her contribution to Bosnian culture], 199

In the periodical paper, *Jevrejski život* Laura started publishing in Judeo-Spanish. The first article she published in Judeo-Spanish was *Madres* [Mothers]: on this occasion, she used her pseudonym Bohoreta for the first time. The article *Madres* was an answer to Avram Romano Buki's story *Dos vizinas in el kortižo* [Two Neighbours Converse in a Yard]. The story was a fictional conversation between two neighbors, Lea and Bohoreta. They talked about how education has a negative impact on the personal development of women. In the next issue, Laura Papo Bohoreta wrote her answer to Buki, where she disagreed about his viewpoints. Eliezer Papo assumes that she uses the pseudonym Bohoreta as a reflection on the character from Buki's story.<sup>49</sup>

Laura Papo was writing for the *Bosnische Post*. The first article she wrote for this publication was later expanded into the ethnographic study *La mužer sefardi de Bosna* [The Sephardic woman in Bosnia].<sup>50</sup> The study is structured according to the Jewish life cycle, which is described from birth to death, explaining the Sephardic traditions and rituals connected with female activities and life. Bohoreta intended to write about:

a Sephardic woman...one from a previous era, unknown, disrespected for her merits. We will talk... about her and describe her, all the way to the woman of our time. I have a lot of rich material given to me by my dear mother, Mrs. Estera Levi. She belongs to the previous generation whose prototype she is. For me, she is the spokesperson of a not so distant age, one between the near present and the unknown yesterday. It was my mother who encouraged me to write so that the last living relics of the last woman of one age would not disappear before my eyes.<sup>51</sup>

*The Sephardic woman in Bosnia* is classified as an ethnographic study, nevertheless, the book is an easy and poetical reading experience. This was done intentionally because Bohoreta wanted the study to be understandable for everyone. She intended to collect the testimonies and forgotten traditions to preserve them and show their beauty to the Sephardic culture. Laura Papo notices the

<sup>49</sup> Papo, "Between modernity and tradition, feminism and patriarchy", 106; Jagoda Večerina, "Laura Papo Bohoreta - the First Feminist in Bosnia". Accessed 3 June 2020.

[https://www.academia.edu/11552263/Laura\\_Papo\\_Bohoreta\\_-\\_the\\_first\\_feminist\\_in\\_Bosnia](https://www.academia.edu/11552263/Laura_Papo_Bohoreta_-_the_first_feminist_in_Bosnia).

<sup>50</sup> In the next chapter, I will treat the publication and reception of this study more in detail.

<sup>51</sup> Laura Papo, *Sefardska žena u Bosni*, 43.

interest others are taking in the cultural values of Sarajevo Sephardim. Furthermore, this study is all the more valuable as it was written by a Sephardic woman. Papo does not have a colonial view on her society nor does she strive to present it as exotic.

### **Kalmi Baruh- *Little Spinoza***<sup>52</sup>

Born in 1896, Kalmi Baruh was from Višegrad. He attended the classical secondary school in Sarajevo, where he joined the Jewish literary students' club *Jehuda Makabi*. During his high school years, he started translating stories of Jewish writers and writing his own short stories. He went to university in Zagreb and Vienna, and like Isak Samokovlija, he received the support of *La Benevolencija* society. As a researcher for *La Benevolencija*, he went to Dubrovnik in 1920 to research about Jews in the city archives.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, he was the only person from the Balkans who received a scholarship from the Spanish government for attending a seminar at the Historical Center in Madrid.<sup>54</sup> He was the director of the *Safa Berura* linguistic school for studying Hebrew. The importance of this school was that it served as a middle ground between Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews, as well as between the Zionists and the Liberals.<sup>55</sup>

Baruh was a teacher of Romance languages in many schools in Sarajevo, and additionally, he translated Spanish literary classics into Serbo-Croatian. According to his students, his lectures always had a social character. He was an inspiring professor whose lectures were focused on teaching students about the importance of their education for the Jewish minority.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore,

<sup>52</sup> Stav, "Dr. Kalmija Baruha zaslužen su zvali 'Mali Spinoza,'" [Dr KAMHI Baruh, rightfully called "Little Spinoza"], December 20, 2019. <https://stav.ba/dr-kalmija-baruha-zasluzeno-su-zvali-mali-spinoza/>;

<sup>53</sup> Eli Tauber, "Spomenice i Druga Izdanja" [ Memorials and other editions] *La Benevolncija- specijalno izdanje* [La Benevolencija- Special edition], Sarajevo: 2012, issue. 55

<sup>54</sup> Stav, "Dr. Kalmija Baruha zaslužen su zvali "Mali Spinoza"; Kamhi, David, "O Kalmiju Baruhu." *Život - Časopis za književnost i kulturu*, no. 1–2 (2019): 268–69.

<sup>55</sup> Kamhi, "O Kalmiju Baruhu" , 272.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

his translation of Spanish literature is also important for non-Jews in countries of the former Yugoslavia, since he introduced and promoted the work of Spanish writers such as Cervantes.<sup>57</sup>

In 1940, after the minister of education Antona Koroše restricted the number of Jewish students in schools in Yugoslavia, Kalmi Baruh opened the so-called *Jewish Gymnasium* in a building of the Jewish municipality in Sarajevo. Thanks to his prestige, many Jewish and non-Jewish professors were working in this school, even though they risked being sanctioned by the government. Kalmi Baruh's career ended in 1941 when he was laid off from all positions without a pension. After the Germans occupied Sarajevo, he tried to escape to Montenegro, however, he was captured and transported to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. According to reports of survivors, he held lectures about Judeo-Spanish and other languages spoken by Jews to maintain the morale of the prisoners. He lived until the end of the war but died of illness shortly after Liberation.<sup>58</sup>

In 1952, the publishing house *Svijetlost* in Sarajevo issued a book of his essays and articles about Spanish literature.<sup>59</sup> In 2005, his *Selected Works on Sephardic and Other Jewish Topics* were published in Jerusalem in the English language. This book is a collection of ten essays, nine of them about Sephardic language and literature, and one about Jews in Germany. This article was published in 1933 in the *Jugoslavenski list*, to familiarize the non-Jewish population of Yugoslavia with the anti-Semitic laws in Germany.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Stojanović, Jasna “Dragocen doprinos Sefarda poznavanju Servantesa u Srbiji I Jugoslaviji” [Sephard's valuable contribution to the knowledge of Cervantes in Serbia and Yugoslavia], *Zbornik jevrejske opštine* (2009), no 9. 382.

<sup>58</sup> Stav, “Dr. Kalmija Baruha zaslužen su zvali “Mali Spinoza”

<sup>59</sup> Samuel Kamhi, “Dr Kalmi Baruh Biografija”, *Elmundosefarad*, Accessed June 2, 2020. <http://elmundosefarad.wikidot.com/dr-kalmi-baruh-biografija>.

<sup>60</sup> Ivan Ninić, “Razgovor sa Aleksandrom Nikolicem o knjizi Dr. Kalmi Baruha: Izabrani radovi o sefardskim i drugim temama”, Makabija.com, Accessed June 1 2020, <http://makabijada.com/kalmi.htm>.



## Heritagization of Jewish writers in the Museum of Literature and Theater arts

In the last few years, the Museum of Literature and Theater Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina has put significant efforts to promote the work done by Jewish writers. In 2016, the permanent exhibition was expanded and some items from the Kalmi Baruh collections were displayed. Collections of *Kalmi Baruh* and *Isak Samokovlija* are among the first collections that arrived at the museum in the 1960s. The collection *Isak Samokovlija* is, at the same time, one of the richest and most comprehensive collections in the museum - and it is probably the most displayed at the temporary exhibitions. As for the collection *Kalmi Baruh*, it was neither exhibited nor promoted. The reason for this was that the books in the collection are in Spanish and Judeo-Spanish, while the curators did not have the prospect to study them in detail.

In May 2018, the Literature and Theater Museum and *La Benevolencija* organized an exhibition about the life and work of Kalmi Baruh. The exhibition was called *Past and present - traces and mirrors, Kalmi Baruh: writer, people, language, and city*.<sup>61</sup> According to the museum curator, the museum's initiative meant to put Baruh back on the cultural map of the city. "Because he was an essayist and scholar, and as he dealt with foreign languages, he was, in our opinion, less present, though very important to our history. It was a big project that we worked on internationally".<sup>62</sup> The project was done in collaboration with Yad Vashem - The World Holocaust Remembrance Center. The exhibition was accompanied by a series of lectures dedicated to the research of Sephardic culture in Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Srpska Info. "Izložba o Kalmi Baruhu u Sarajevu: Pisac koji je zadužio narode bivše Jugoslavije," [Exhibition on Kalmi Baruh in Sarajevo: A writer to whom the people of the former Yugoslavia are in debt] Accessed November 25, 2019. <https://srpskainfo.com/izlozba-o-kalmi-baruhu-u-sarajevu-pisac-koji-je-zaduzio-narode-bivse-jugoslavije/>.

<sup>62</sup> Tamara Sarajelic Slavinić, Facebook Messenger interview, 5 May 2020.

<sup>63</sup> Radiosarajevo.ba, "Vratite s Nama Kalmija Baruha u Sarajevo, Grad Kojem Je Uvijek Pripadao" [Return Kalmi Baruh with us to Sarajevo, the city to which he always belonged]. Radio Sarajevo. Accessed 1 June 2020.

In 2017, the Museum of Literature and Theater Art held the exhibition *Laura Papo Bohoreta-Sephardic Woman in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. This event brought more awareness about Laura Papo and her work for the wider audience in Sarajevo. The project was supported by the *Sarajevo Open Center*, an independent feminist civil society organization and advocacy group. The author of the exhibition was Tamara Sarajelić-Slavnić.<sup>64</sup> The Museum does not know the exact number of visitors to the exhibition, however, the staff claimed it was “a few hundred”.<sup>65</sup>

In the interwar period, a strong group of Jewish intellectuals lived and created in Sarajevo. Baruh and Bohoreta worked on the education of interwar Jewry, Baruh as professor and Bohoreta through her activism in Jewish associations. The existence of Jewish cultural and charitable associations, *Jewish Gymnasium* is confirmation of the highly developed sense of unity of Sarajevo Jewry in the interwar period. The efforts of Bohoreta greatly contributed to the preservation of Sephardic culture and literature. Isak Samokolvija was less active in the Jewish associations in the interwar period, however, his tales serve as the medium for the transmission of the memory of pre-Holocaust Jewry

<https://radiosarajevo.ba/metromahala/kultura/vratite-s-nama-kalmija-baruha-u-sarajevo-grad-kojem-je-uvijek-pripadao/296173>.

<sup>64</sup> Radiosarajevo.ba."Ne Propustite Izložbu: “Laura Papo Bohoreta - Sefardska Žena u Bosni”". Radio Sarajevo. Accessed 19 May 2020. <https://radiosarajevo.ba/metromahala/kultura/izlozba-laura-papo-bohoreta-sefardska-zena-u-bosni/266469>.

<sup>65</sup> Tamara Sarajelić Slavnić, Facebook Messenger interview, 19 May 2020.

*And who will remember those, who remember?*  
Yehuda Amichai

## **Second Chapter**

### **From Laura Papo Bohoreta to *Bohorete*: The cultural memory of Laura Papo Bohoreta and Sephardic women**

The three authors approached Jewish culture from the historical standpoint of memory and heritage preservation. And at the same time, these authors, while remembering the Sephardic past, had their biographies and creativity within their own time. In this chapter, I will present the stages of remembrance of Laura Papo Bohoreta and the reception of Samokovlija's tales. However, more emphasis will be on Bohoreta, considering that there are more factors and stages of the revival of her work. It is peculiar that her memory is transmitted by another author's novel rather than by her work, as this is usually the case with writers. Moreover, I will analyze how Gordana Kuić's novel influenced and shaped cultural memory about Sarajevo and its Jewry in the interwar period. And lastly, here I will present testimonies of the *Bohorete*, a female association that claims to carry the legacy of Bohoreta.

Laura Papo was active in the interwar period in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, a period that is marked by a revival of Sephardic culture.<sup>66</sup> Throughout this period Sarajevo's Jewish community had 12 000 members, around 8 000 were killed in the Holocaust.<sup>67</sup> The Second World War and the Holocaust destroyed the Jewish community, and the war also changed the political and social situation in the country. In 1945, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was transformed into Socialist

<sup>66</sup> Magdalena Koch, "Lost–Regained–Revised: Laura Papo Bohoreta, Sephardic Women in Bosnia, and Transcultural Survival Strategies in Memory", Translated by Thomas Anessi, *Studia Judaica* 41 (2018)", 21.

<sup>67</sup> JewishHeritageEurope.eu "Bosnia and Herzegovina", Accessed April 15, 2020, <https://jewish-heritage-europe.eu/bosnia-and-herzegovina/>.

Yugoslavia. The leaders of Socialist Yugoslavia strove to build a society with a united Yugoslav nation, therefore erasing all cultural differences between different religious groups. Many surviving Jews left Yugoslavia and emigrated to the US or Israel; and those who stayed were more prone to adopting a secular Yugoslav identity.<sup>68</sup> In such an environment, the ethnographical work of Laura Papo underwent “structural amnesia”. First, novels of Gordana Kuić helped to popularize Laura Papo and discover her work: first the romancero collections, then the essay, and only in the end her literary work of poetry, prose, and drama.

### **Bohoreta in novels by Gordana Kuić**

Novels by Gordana Kuić started the popularization of Laura Papo, especially two novels that can be classified as semi-biographical. The novels *The Scent of Rain in the Balkans* and *The Ballad of Bohoreta* serve as another media for the transmission of memory and culture. It transmits the personal memory of one Jewish family in Sarajevo to a wider audience in Socialist Yugoslavia. Kuić's writing prolonged the memory and remembrance of Laura Papo by planting her in the memory of future generations.<sup>69</sup> Among non-Jews, Laura Papo is only known through the novel, and surprisingly even among Jews, this is the case. The members of the Bohoreta Society identify Laura with the character portrayed in the novels. That is why analyzing their reception is essential for understanding the creation of the cultural memory of Laura Papo.

Gordana Kuić's novels belong to the realm of popular culture and as such, they can be classified as “collective texts”, a term introduced by Astrid Erll to highlight the difference between them and cultural texts that usually belong to high culture. Collective texts are often accidentally used as the medium for collective remembrance, and literature can also have a significant influence on shaping

<sup>68</sup> Lea Šiljak, "Jewish Identities in Croatia – a Social Psychological Perspective." *Migracijske i etničke teme* “Migration and ethnic issues”, Issue. 4 (2003), 376-378.

<sup>69</sup> Aleida Assmann. "Texts, Traces, Trash: The Changing Media of Cultural Memory". *Representations*, no. 56 (1996): 125. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2928711>.

individual and collective memory.<sup>70</sup> In the next subchapter, I will explain how this is evident in the testimonies of the *Bohorete*.

The novels of Gordana Kuić have become an authority in remembering the life of Laura Papo and her sisters. The novel shaped the historical image even though the author had intended it to be literary fiction, as she told me in an e-mail correspondence when I asked her for permission to use her novels. Indeed, some academic articles about Laura Papo's life replicate stories that appear only in Gordana Kuić's novels, such as the fact that her husband was mentally ill and that she had to raise her sons on her own. This trend is evident in articles about the other sisters as well. A most striking example is an article by historian Hatidža Dedović about the first professional ballerina Riki Salom<sup>71</sup>. The real surname of Riki was Levi, the surname of the family in the records of the Jewish community of Sarajevo, while Salom is the last name Kuić used in the novels instead of Levi.

*The Scent of Rain in the Balkans* is the first novel of the so-called *Balkan trilogy*, published in 1986. The second and the third novels of the trilogy are *The Blossom of Linden in the Balkans* and *The Calming of Days in the Balkans*, both novels set in Socialist Yugoslavia. The first novel was issued by the most renowned publishing house in Belgrade *Vuk Karadžić*. The first edition had three thousand copies, all sold in just six months. The book became a bestseller, without being promoted. Allegedly, the book's success was unexpected, even for the publisher, and it was “passed from hand to hand like a treasure”.<sup>72</sup> So far the novel has had sixteen editions, with approximately

<sup>70</sup> Erll constructed this term concerning the term "cultural text" introduced by Aleida Assmann. The term "cultural text" that describes literary works that serve as a canonical media for "cultural memory." The cultural text affects the "frame of reception" of a certain way of reading literature. See: Astrid Erll, "Reading literature as collective texts: German and English war novels of the 1920s as media of cultural and communicative memory." *Anglistentag: Proceedings. Trier: WVT* (2003): 335-354.

<sup>71</sup> Hatidža Dedović, "Sjećanje na život i rad prve Sarajevske balerine kroz prikaz jugoslovenske dnevne štampe" [Remembrance of the life and work of the first Sarajevo Ballerina through the presentation of the Yugoslav daily press], in *Feministička čitanja društvenih fenomena* (Sarajevo: Sarajevo Open Center 2016); 330–38.

<sup>72</sup> Ida Salamon, "Der Mensch denkt und Gott lenkt", Accessed 1 June 2020 <https://nunu.at/artikel/der-mensch-denkt-und-gott-lenkt/>.

three thousand copies each.<sup>73</sup> It was translated into Hebrew in 2012<sup>74</sup> and into English, German, Spanish, and Italian in 2015.

Besides Kuić's novel, in 1986, Rikica Ovadija wrote radio drama *Bohoreta i njeni* (Bohoreta and hers), which was broadcasted on Radio Sarajevo. The drama was part of the series *Tragom dokumenata - žene prosvjeiteljci u Bosni i Hercegovini* (Following the documents - women educators in Bosnia and Herzegovina). The drama was about Bohoreta and "her" amateur actors from *Matatja*. The play also includes parts from Bohoreta's plays *Esterka* and *Avia di ser*, that Rikica Ovadija translates from Judeo-Spanish. Radio drama also included parts from Jan Baran's show about the romances of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian Sephardim, and recordings from the concert of Flory Jagoda, American musician from Bosnia. The concert was performed in the Jewish community during the making of the drama.<sup>75</sup>

The reputation of the Kuić novel is made evident by the fact that it was turned into a ballet, TV show, and theatre play. First, the ballet was played on stage in Sarajevo, in the National Theatre, in 1992,<sup>76</sup> and then in Belgrade in the same year. In 2009 the novel was turned into a play. The play was shown twice a month for three years on the stage of *Opera & Theatre Madlenianum* in Belgrade, the first private theatre in South-Eastern Europe. The play was directed and played by the most prominent director and actors in Serbia, and the project was carried out in collaboration with Gordana Kuić.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Vijica Ognjenović, "Ballad of Bohoreta- Gordana Kuić", Accessed 1 April 2020. <http://www.makabijada.com/dopis/kujic-bohoreta.htm>.

<sup>74</sup> Gordanakuić.com, "Prevedeni romani" [Translated novels], Accessed 1 April 2020. <https://gordanakuic.com/pages/prevodi.htm>.

<sup>75</sup> Nezirović, "Jedan Književni biser" (One literary pearl); in *Sefardska žena u Bosni*, 284-240.; Papo, *Između modernizma i tradicije*, 116.

<sup>76</sup> The year 1992 is a symbolic year for the Sephardim since it is 500 years after the expulsion of Jews from Spain, in this year there were commemorations all over the world, so the staging of this play in Sarajevo was probably part of the larger celebration of Jewish culture.

<sup>77</sup> Opera and Theatre Madlenianum, "The scent of rain in the Balkans". [Operaandtheatremadlenianum.com](http://operaandtheatremadlenianum.com), Accessed 2 June 2020. <https://operatheatremadlenianum.com/miris-kise-na-balkanu>.

The novel was disseminated once again in 2010 when the Serbian National Television RTS in 2010 made a tv series *The Scent of Rain in the Balkans* (figure 1). Considering that the RTS broadcasts in other countries of the former Yugoslavia, the TV series reached regional acceptance. Comparable to the novel that was published in the '80s and had an impact on Yugoslav society, the TV series, thanks to modern media, reached the same audience (geographically speaking) despite the break-up of Yugoslavia. The TV series was filmed in Sarajevo, Belgrade, Dubrovnik, and some villages in Serbia, and the actors portraying the characters are also from Bosnia, Serbia, and Croatia, which gave the TV show a regional character.<sup>78</sup>



Figure 2 Family Salom in TV series *The scent of rain in the Balkans*

<sup>78</sup> Serbia, RTS, Radio televizija Srbije, Radio Television of. "Miris kiše na Balkanu". Accessed 2 June 2020. <http://www.rts.rs/page/tv/sr/story/22/rts-svet/805074/miris-kise-na-balkanu.html>.

## The Scent of Rain in the Balkans as part of contemporary Jewish literature

When in 2008, Nolden and Liska published *Contemporary Jewish Writing in Europe : A Guide*, the territory of former ex-Yugoslavia was not included in the volume. However, it can be identified that Gordana Kuić's works have similar traits of many of today's Jewish writers' works. She is part of the generation of European Jewish writers born during the Holocaust who entered the public sphere in the 1980s.<sup>79</sup> Kuić does not have the memory of the Holocaust as part of her personal experience; nevertheless, it is a part of her consciousness. Moreover, she also carries the legacy of the communist era, which defines her identity and therefore influences her writing.<sup>80</sup> Resembling other Jewish writers, she prefers the genres of memoir and family saga, which are suitable for historical reflection and often focus on experiences of separation, displacement, persecution, loss, and recovery.<sup>81</sup> The main theme of Kuić's novels is the aspiration of women to personal freedom.

The first novel of the trilogy includes the years of the Second World War, writing about the persecution of the Jews and strategies of the survival of her family. All the five Levi sisters, according to the novel, managed to survive the war, except Laura Papo. She died of illness, hiding in the Catholic hospital run by the Sisters of Charity after her two sons had been taken to the concentration camp Jasenovac. In the novel, Kuić includes the poem *Mother* that Laura Papo wrote for her sons after they had been deported. Nina, Klara, and Blanka escaped persecution since they were married to non-Jews and had already changed their names. The youngest sister Riki Levi survived because she hid in a Serbian village under a false name.

<sup>79</sup> Thomas Nolden, Vivian Liska. *Contemporary Jewish Writing in Europe : A Guide*. Jewish Literature and Culture. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008, xv.

<sup>80</sup> The novel *The Blossom of Linden in the Balkans* shows the fall of the bourgeoisie during communist time. The publisher refused to publish the manuscript for two years. The novel was published only in 1991, after the fall of Communism. See: "Gordana Kuic, Gordana Kuić, Književnica, Srpska Književnost ". Accessed 10 April 2020. <https://gordanakuic.com/pages/naslovi.htm>.

<sup>81</sup> Nolden, Liska. *Contemporary Jewish Writing in Europe*, xi.



In the chapters covering the Second World War, Kuić writes more about the male members of the family than she usually does. This deviation from her usual canon of presenting the feminine perspective almost exclusively is understandable, since the persecution was not gendered but targeted all Jews. Moreover, the novel was published in 1986, in Yugoslavia, where all victims of the Second World War were grouped under the term "victims of fascism."<sup>82</sup> Therefore, her novel has a specific significance for the wider public for accentuating the persecution of Jews.

What sets her work apart from other European Jewish writers is that she comes from a Sephardic background. On the one hand, some Ashkenazi writers belong to the second generation of East European Jews and who are writing about Nazi persecution and life in shtetls. On the other hand, we have Sephardic Jews from North Africa that moved to Europe after the Second World War, and their writings are shaped by a cultural, national, historical, and linguistic distance to the places where their parents grew up being observant Jews.<sup>83</sup> Kuić represents the mixture of both experiences, the memory of a Sephardic Jewish family that was prosecuted and displaced. The displacement from Sarajevo to Belgrade may not be such a big shift as moving from North Africa or Argentina to Europe since it meant moving from one part of Yugoslavia to another. However, there is a cultural and historical void that is presented in her novels. Sarajevo is presented as a traditional city, where the Levi sisters had to fight with their family for their autonomy, while in Belgrade they found their freedom. Sarajevo represents the old way of life, that the Levi sisters, except Laura, wished to escape. However, later in life, they felt a great nostalgia for Sarajevo.

Besides Sarajevo, in Kuić's novels, there is a nostalgic representation of Spain as the origins of her family. When Riki Levi goes to Spain with her dancing company, everyone in her family and neighborhood wants to hear her story about the ancient homeland. Moreover, the representation of

<sup>82</sup> Emil Kerenji, "Jewish Citizens of Socialist Yugoslavia: Politics of Jewish Identity in a socialist state, 1944-1974", PhD diss., The University of Michigan, 2008, 112-115.

<sup>83</sup> Nolden, Liska. *Contemporary Jewish Writing in Europe*, xvii.

Spain as a homeland is also present in Kuić's writings. Her novel the *Legend of Luna Levi* starts with the expulsion from Spain. The book is dedicated to her aunt Klara Levi, even if the main hero of the story has the same name as Laura Papo, who was born as Luna Levi.

The female perspective is rooted in Kuić work, just like it was in the work of Laura Papo. Both women authors, the aunt, and the niece provide an outlook to a changing world and a recognition of the feminine capacity and potential. Ben-Zion states that the novels of Kuić reflect the idea of “secular grace”,<sup>84</sup> meaning that she adds a secular humanist meaning to the religious notion of grace. The Jewishness of Kuić's novels and the way she portrays her family is not expressed in the religious belonging to Judaism, but through modes of behavior and moral values, and cultural affiliation with the Jewish people and the use of Judeo-Spanish. At the same time, the characters of her novels belong to different social environments. They speak the language of the local people, Judeo-Spanish, and foreign languages such as German and French, which makes their identity even more fluid.

### **Bohorete: Female humanitarians inspired by Laura Papo**

Today in Sarajevo, besides the street name *Velika Avlija Laure Papo Bohorete* [The Great Courtyard of Laura Papo Bohoreta], the main carrier of her legacy is a group organized during the Yugoslav war. While the Sephardic communities everywhere were commemorating the 500th anniversary of the expulsion from Spain, the Yugoslav war broke out and Sarajevo was besieged. However, there were some forms of commemoration: The *Ballet of Riki Levi* was performed in Sarajevo and Belgrade, and in the Institute for History, Nežirović and other academics prepared

<sup>84</sup> Dina Katan Ben-Zion, "A Symphony of Unique Voices: The Literary Testimony of Jewish Women Writers in Post-World War II Yugoslavia". *Studia Judaica* 21, no. 41 (2018), 62.

*Sefarad '92*, a conference held on 11-14 September. The volume was published after the war, in 1995.<sup>85</sup>

In besieged Sarajevo, the Jewish community opened the doors of the Ashkenazi Synagogue<sup>86</sup> and their communal space to non-Jews. They offered shelter, food, and medical support to those in need. During the siege, a group of women who called themselves *Bohorete* joined the Jewry in its effort to assist citizens of Sarajevo during the siege. The group is a subsection of the humanitarian organization *La Benevolencija*. The association still exists. However, the group has become a space for elderly women to meet once a week in the reading room of the library of the Jewish community.

For this research, I met the *Bohorete* on two occasions. Today the group is less concerned with humanitarian work. Instead, their main activity is helping to organize events during Jewish holidays. They proudly spoke of preparing traditional food and bringing it for everyone to enjoy. The group is relatively small. On the occasions when we met there were eight members present, who explained to me that some of the women were sick or busy and they could no longer join the meetings. The group is not composed only of women of Jewish origin, one woman is married to a Jewish man and two of them identified themselves as “friends of the Jewish community”, saying they had no official affiliation with the Jewish community until the war when they received help from them and decided to join the group of the *Bohorete*. Interestingly, both of the women had read the book of Gordana Kuić before and already knew who Laura Papo was, which further motivated them to join this group, as they said.

<sup>85</sup> Muhamed Nežirović, Boris Nilević, Muhsin Rizvić, *Sefarad '92: zbornik radova, Sarajevo, 11.09.-14.09.* (Sarajevo: Institut za istoriju 1995.)

<sup>86</sup> The Ashkenazi synagogue was built in 1893, before the Second World War a space for offices, a library, and an archive was built on the west side of the synagogue. After the Holocaust, this Synagogue was the only one that stayed in possession of the Jewish community, which no longer was divided into Sephardic or Ashkenazi. In 1964 divided into two parts by creating a new floor, which was used for social gatherings of the Jewry. See: Benevolencija, “Sarajevska Aškenaska Sinagoga”. Accessed 2 June 2020. <http://www.benevolencija.eu.org/content/view/128/35/>.

This group continues the tradition of *La Benevolencija*, where Laura Papo Bohoreta was active before the Second World War. *La Benevolencija* was organized in 1892 to support talented Sephardic men to study in the big cities of the Austro-Hungarian Empire: Vienna, Budapest, and Prague. There was also a female subsection that collected dowry for underprivileged girls. In the interwar period, it became an umbrella organization for all activities of the Jewish communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. After the Second World War, the group changed its name to *Sloboda*. Due to the political situation, the organization ceased to exist in 1948. Nevertheless, the Jewish community continued some aspects of *La Benevolencija's* work.<sup>87</sup>

During the Yugoslav period, the female section continued. One of the *Bohorete* explained that they are daughters of women who continued participating in the work of the Jewish community during the time of Socialist Yugoslavia:

After the Second World War, women kept meeting here. Those were our mothers or grandmothers...They kept busy with humanitarian work, with preparations for holidays, and they worked on providing stipends for students. They no longer provided a dowry for women.

*La Benevolencija* officially continued operating in 1991, after the political changes. However, instead of dealing with cultural activities when the war had started, their main activity was to provide aid to citizens of besieged Dubrovnik and then Sarajevo. In that situation, Sonja Elazar had the idea to organize a group named “Laura Papo Bohoreta” from the female section of the Jewish community. The women I spoke with were part of the organization during the war. They did not leave the city because they belonged to the younger generation who did not consider it a priority to leave the city. They say Sonja Elazar, daughter of the scholar Samuel Elazar, chose the name Laura Papo Bohoreta because she and others had great respect for Laura Papo.

<sup>87</sup> Jakob Finci, "120 Godina La Benevolencije". Accessed 2 June 2020.  
<http://www.benevolencija.eu.org/content/view/383/36/>.

I met this organization to speak about their memory of Laura Papo Bohoreta, and their reception and thoughts of Kuić's novels. During my interview with the *Bohorete*, it was evident that they position their memories within the narratives in Kuić's novels. One of the *Bohorete* remembers her childhood during Socialist Yugoslavia and compares her experience to the scene described in the novel *The Blossom of Linden in the Balkans*. She described how her family had to share their apartment with another family, a very common practice in communist countries, where more than one family had to share an apartment. Often the apartment used to belong to the wealthy bourgeois like in the case of the Korać family.<sup>88</sup> Therefore, this experience is not unique, but it is peculiar that a woman describes her housing situation. She explained how she had come from an educated urban family, that she had to share an apartment with a family coming from a rural area, and how her mother needed to rise above this situation and showed newcomers the modern ways of life in the city.

Furthermore, *Bohorete* told me how they identify “old Sarajevo” (prewar Sarajevo) with the way it was presented in the books of Gordana Kuić. The oldest among the *Bohorete* was born in 1939, thus she does not remember the life in Sarajevo before the Second World War. She explained that her mother did not talk to her much about Jewish life before the Holocaust. However, she adds that Kuić “... knew everything so well because her mother told her about life in Sarajevo.”

Through the novels of Gordana Kuić, a broader public had the opportunity to learn more about the life of a Jewish family. In an interview, Kuić herself said she felt the need to tell the story of the life of her mother and aunts not only because of what they did but because of who they were, Sephardic women.<sup>89</sup> Kuić wrote her novel as a strategy to preserve the memory of different times and circumstances from the period before the Second World War when Sarajevo's numerous

<sup>88</sup> Korać is the last name used instead of Kuić in The Balkan trilogy, just like the last name Levi was replaced with Salom.

<sup>89</sup> Mira Adanja-Polak- Zvaničan Kanal, “Mira Adanja-Polak Gordana Kuić - Autor Knjige” *Miris Kise Na Balkanu* ””, Youtubevideo, 3:22, 2 Jule 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gnBVjPJLh-0>.

Jewish communities still existed. Kuić novels tell the story of the brave attempts of female emancipation and breaking away from the traditional way of life.

Kuić novels serve as a medium for the memory of interwar Sarajevo and Belgrade. In *The Scent of Rain in the Balkans*, the past is presented as remembered and told by her mother. In the *Ballad of Bohoreta*, Kuić once again depicts the memory of Sarajevo, this time in a fictional diary of Laura Papo. *The Scent of the rain* does not speak only of Laura, but of her whole family. Gordana Kuić wrote a novel featuring the five Levi Sisters. I already mentioned Riki Levi, who was the first professional ballerina in Sarajevo, Nina was a fashion shop owner, Klara was a musician, and Blanka a tobacco worker. All of them are presented as progressive women, and as such, they are remembered today.

## Historical research and publications

Today, Bohoreta's most acknowledged work is *La mušer sefardi de Bosna* (The Sephardic Woman in Bosnia). There are two versions of the study, in Judeo-Spanish and has over 100 pages, and a shorter one that has only six pages, and one essay in German.<sup>90</sup> The German essay was Bohoreta's response to an article titled *Die südslavische Frau in der Politik* [The South Slavic Woman in Politics] that the ethnographer Jelica Belović Bernadžikovska had published in 1916 in the *Bosnische Post*. In this article, Belović devoted one part to an unfavorable description of the Jewish woman. Laura Papo Bohoreta disagreed with this description, therefore a week later Laura Papo published the article *Die Spaniolische Frau* in the same journal, defending Sephardic women and their role in society. Laura Papo states that she was encouraged by the curator of the National Museum, Carl Patsch,<sup>91</sup> who she referred to as the director of the National Museum. In 1931,

<sup>90</sup> Muhamed Nezirović, "Sudbina jednog nepoznatog a značajnog pisca" [Destiny of important but unknown writer], in *Sefardska žena u Bosni* [The Sephardic woman in Bosnia] (Sarajevo: Connectum, 2005) 31-32.

<sup>91</sup> Laura Papo, *Sefardska žena u Bosni*, 43;

Bohoreta decided to continue writing this study and she was encouraged by Vita Kajon to translate her article to Judeo-Spanish.<sup>92</sup>

The first to publish articles about Bohoreta were Rikica Ovadija and Ešref Čamfara. Rikica Ovadija wrote an essay about Bohoreta in 1965, in the volume *Spomenica 400*. Additionally, in Belgrade's periodical *Jevrejski almanah* in 1965, Ešref Čamfara also wrote about Bohoreta. Moreover, according to the available records about research log from the City Archive of Sarajevo scholars have been researching the fund *Laura Papo Bohoreta* since 1971.<sup>93</sup> The first one was Harriet Pass Freidenreich, whose research results were published in the book *The Jews of Yugoslavia*, where she dedicated one paragraph to Laura Papo, the first educated Sephardic woman.<sup>94</sup> Therefore, even though the study of Laura Papo was not yet published, researchers and scholars were aware of the existence of her manuscripts.

Furthermore, there are two occasions of Bohoreta's manuscripts being purchased or gifted to the city archive. First, was the purchase in 1961 from her sister, and all papers fill one archive box with the signature O-BP-168.<sup>95</sup> Second, two handwritten notebooks were donated to the Archive, by Gordana Kuić.<sup>96</sup> One contained the shorter version, a draft for *La mužer sefardi de Bosna*, and the second notebook was a collection of six romancers. All romancers were published first in 1986 in paper *Linguistica*,<sup>97</sup> and then in a book prepared by Samuel Elazar.<sup>98</sup> Elazar's contribution is often overlooked in the literature about Bohoreta and the main emphasis is on efforts by Nezirović. He published the translation in 2005, of the longer version of *La mužer sefardi de Bosna* written

<sup>92</sup> Nezirović, "Sudbina jednog nepoznatog a značajnog pisca", 32.

<sup>93</sup> Laura Papo Bohoreta, Sejdalija Gušić, Edina Spahić, and Ana Cecilia Prenz. *Rukopisi. Knjiga 1* [Manuscripts, Book 1] (Sarajevo: Historijski arhiv, 2015.), 2015, 2.

<sup>94</sup> Freidenreich, *The Jews of Yugoslavia*, 132.

<sup>95</sup> "EHRI - Papo Laura – Bohoreta". Accessed 6 June 2020. [https://portal.ehri-project.eu/units/ba-006040-o\\_bp\\_168](https://portal.ehri-project.eu/units/ba-006040-o_bp_168).

<sup>96</sup> Nezirović, "Sudbina jednog nepoznatog a značajnog pisca", 12; Magdalena Koch, "Lost–Regained–Revised", 18.

<sup>97</sup> Nezirović, "El cancionero de los romances judeo-españoles de Sarajevo de Laura Papo-Bohoreta", *Linguistica* 26 (1986), pp. 115–130

<sup>98</sup> Samuel Elazar, *El romancero judeo-español*, Sarajevo: Svetlost, 1987.

between 1931 and 1932. This manuscript was kept in the City archive of Sarajevo under the signature BP-19 (Collection of the gifts and purchase). Nonetheless, Nezirović's translation into Bosnian allowed Papo's work to be included in and recognized as part of the cultural heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Her study also has an international reception, especially in Spanish and Hebrew. Bohoreta is recognized as "the most popular and prolific in the twentieth century".<sup>99</sup>

In the last fifteen years, there is a significant increase in research on Laura Papo's work, with the most significant study done by Eliezer Papo and Jagoda Večerina. Eliezer Papo, the Sarajevo-born Israeli scholar in 2004 in 2004 he defended an MA thesis in *Jewish Languages and Literature* at the *Hebrew University in Jerusalem*, written in Hebrew with the title: *Dramas and Folklore Plays of Laura Papo "Bohoreta": Historical and Social Background, Survey and Linguistic Analysis*.<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, he is one of the contributors to the web-platform *El Mundo Sefarad*,<sup>101</sup> which aims to promote the cultural heritage of Jews on the territory of Former Yugoslavia. On the online platform *El Mundo Sefarad*, Eliezer Papo published a translation of Bohoreta's three-act play *Strpljenje para vrijedi* (Patience is worth money). It is one of the rare existing and available translations into the Bosnian language of the drama of Laura Papo. In 2016 Večerina, a Croatian scholar wrote a monograph about the life and work of Laura Papo: *Bohoreta-the eldest daughter*. Večerina published other studies about Laura Papo, including her *dissertation Folklore in the Service of the Theater and the Theater in Service of Folklore: Sephardic oral tradition, its place and role in the theatrical opus of Laura Papo Bohoreta*.<sup>102</sup>

Jagoda Večerina is the first one to call Laura Papo the First Bosnian Feminist, an epithet often used in the media.<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, the feminist association Cure (Girls)], included a bibliography

<sup>99</sup> Glenda Abramson, *Encyclopedia of Modern Jewish Culture*. (Routledge, 2004), 813.

<sup>100</sup> Academia.Edu, "Eliezer Papo | Ben Gurion University of the Negev", Accessed 5 June 2020. <https://bgu.academia.edu/EliezerPapo/CurriculumVitae>.

<sup>101</sup> *El Mundo Sefarad*, Accessed 25 May 2020. <http://elmundosefarad.wikidot.com/>.

<sup>102</sup> Academia.Edu, *Jagoda Večerina, University of Zagreb, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences*, Accessed 19 May 2020. <https://ffzg.academia.edu/JagodaVe%C4%8Derina>.

<sup>103</sup> Ana Rajković, "Laura Papo Bohoreta – Prva Balkanska Feministkinja", Voxfeminae.net,



of Laura Papo in a publication in 2009, *Homage to Significant B&H Women and Their Achievements*. Moreover, the portrait of Laura Papo has been included in the less known publication by Aida Začiragić, *Žene is priča i legendi Bosne i Hercegovine* [Women in the stories and legends of Bosnia and Herzegovina]. From the point of view of women's history, Nela Kovačević has written a Ph.D. thesis about Laura Papo's work and position of females in it.<sup>104</sup> Moreover, Kovačević has published a book in 2018 *La Mujer Sefardí: Cuentos, textos y poemas*, and an article *Autentičnost ženske pozicije utemeljene u obrazovanju i književnosti Bosne i Hercegovine krajem XIX i početkom XX vijeka* [The authenticity of the female position founded in the education and literature of Bosnia and Herzegovina at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century].

In the latest stage in the revitalization of Laura Papo's creation, a project was carried out in 2015-2017 under the name *Digitization and Publication of the Private Collections of Laura Papo Bohoreta*. This project was focused on the digitalization of the papers from the archive box with the signature O-BP-168. The work was done in collaboration by the City Archive of Sarajevo, the University of Sarajevo, the University of Trieste, and the Spanish embassy in Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>105</sup> Although this project helped secure and digitize manuscripts, they still are in the Judeo-Spanish language, therefore understandable only to a small group of those who speak it.

Accessed 19 May 2020. <https://voxfeminae.net/strasne-zene/laura-papo-bohoreta-prva-balkanska-feministkinja/>.

<sup>104</sup> Nela Kovačević, *El Mundi Sefardí En La Obra De Laura Papo Y El Lugar De La Mujer En Él*, PhD thesis, University of Granada, 2014.

<sup>105</sup> Arhivsa, "Digitalizacija i Publikovanje Fonda Laure Papo Bohorete" [Digitization and Publication of the Laura Papo Bohoreta Fund - Historical Archives of Sarajevo], *Arhivsa.ba*, Accessed 19 May 2020. <http://www.arhivsa.ba/wordpress/?p=1934>.

## Documentaries

Additionally, the local television in Sarajevo TVSA made two documentaries about Bohoreta. The first documentary was published in 2015 as part of the series *Tarih*. This series consists of five minutes long TV pieces about Bosnian authors and also includes a documentary about Isak Samokovlija. Another documentary is one hour long. The documentary is structured as lectures by David Kamhi and Edina Spahić, the head of the Romance studies department at the University of Sarajevo and Hispanist. David Kamhi was a professor at the Musical Academy of Bosnia and Herzegovina and a board member of *La Benevolencija*. Considering that most of Papo's opus is not translated, Kamhi and Spahić give valuable summaries of some of her plays, and translation on poems. Furthermore, in the video Professor Midhat Riđanović speaks about his memory of Bohoreta. He knew Bohoreta when he was a child. He recalls Laura Papo as a charismatic and kind woman.

## Receptions of Isak Samokovlija's tales

As noted, TV Sarajevo has made short documentaries about Isak Samokovlija. Another important documentary about him was made by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, in 2013.<sup>106</sup> The documentary was part of the series *Nedjeljna Lektira* (Sunday Reading), a series of short films about prominent Bosnian writers. The speakers in the documentary are literary historians, literary critics, and professors from the University of Sarajevo. The documentary is focused on analyzing Samokovlija's work and his contribution to Bosnian literary heritage, as well as on the pluralization of Bosnian cultural identity. Kazaz highlights that Samokovlija "gives voice

<sup>106</sup> OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, "Nedjeljna Lektira: Nosač Samuel i Druge Priče (Isak Samokovlija)" [Sunday Reading: The Porter Samuel and Other Stories (Isak Samokovlija)], YouTube video, 26:00, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TBS4x3qC2iY&t=180s>.

to those who are marginalized on the Bosnian cultural scene, and he strives to bring them to the main stage of the patriarchal culture as equal participants”.

One interesting point in the documentary is the inclusion of Samokovlija's tales as obligatory reading in schools. Isak Samokovlija is a valuable addition to the list of Bosnian writers and his tales are important in the education of children about the Jewry of Sarajevo. However, Bjanka Šabotić argues that it is not enough to include just one Jewish writer. She rightfully claims that Bosnian Jewish writers are marginalized, and she brings up Kami Baruh's essays as one of the examples that should be studied.

Since 2004 in Goražde there has been an annual cultural event called *The days of Isak Samokovlija - Sun above the Drina*. In 2008 the ceremony was jointly organized with the City of Sarajevo as an illustration of joining two cities and a promotion of multi-ethnic culture in Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>107</sup> The commemoration of the Jewish authors in Bosnia and Herzegovina is often aiming to promote the multicultural past. It is often done as an idealized version of the past on which the Holocaust and the Yugoslav wars had devastating effects. However, it is important to remember that the coexistence of communities is possible and it is something that this commemoration can offer.

<sup>107</sup> Jakob Finci, “Dani Isaka Samokovlije - Sunce nad Drinom Goražde Sarajevo 2007/08” [Days of Isak Samokovlija- Sun above Drina, Goražde, Sarajevo 2007/2008], *Jevrejski Glas [Jewish voice]*, December 2008, 8.

## Third Chapter

### The Literary Urban Heritage: Places of Memory

This chapter is divided into five subchapters dealing with Jewish space and place in Sarajevo: places with names in honor of Jewish writers; the historical *mahala Velika Avlija*; Isak Samokovlija's world; forgotten or unmarked places that come up in Laura Papo's biographies or Kuić's novels; and the fifth element is *La Benevolencija* building and *Prva Gimnazija*.

Looking into what qualifies as Jewish space for this work, I have adopted the definitions given by Mann and the *Makom* research group.<sup>108</sup> According to Mann, what makes a space "Jewish" is what constitutes them as places: memory, history, and ritual. <sup>109</sup> Brauch gives a similar definition of the Jewish space, defining it "as spatial environments in which Jewish things happen, where Jewish activities are performed, and which in turn are shaped and defined by those Jewish activities".<sup>110</sup> Furthermore, if we speak of the spaces in literary works, then it can be perceived as a frame, a spatial concept designed to provide the surroundings for fictional characters, objects, and places.<sup>111</sup>

#### Places named in honor of Jewish writers

All three authors referred to in this research have streets named after them. Kalmi Baruh Street was named after him in the 1970s, when it was formed in the neighborhood of *Marijin Dvor*.<sup>112</sup> This is an indicator that his remarkable work and contribution to the literary heritage were not

<sup>108</sup> More about *Makom* see: Brauch, Lipphardt, Nocke. *Jewish Topographies*, ix.

<sup>109</sup> Barbara Mann, *Space and Place in Jewish Studies, Key words in Jewish Studies*. (Piscataway: Rutgers University Press, 2012.), 3.

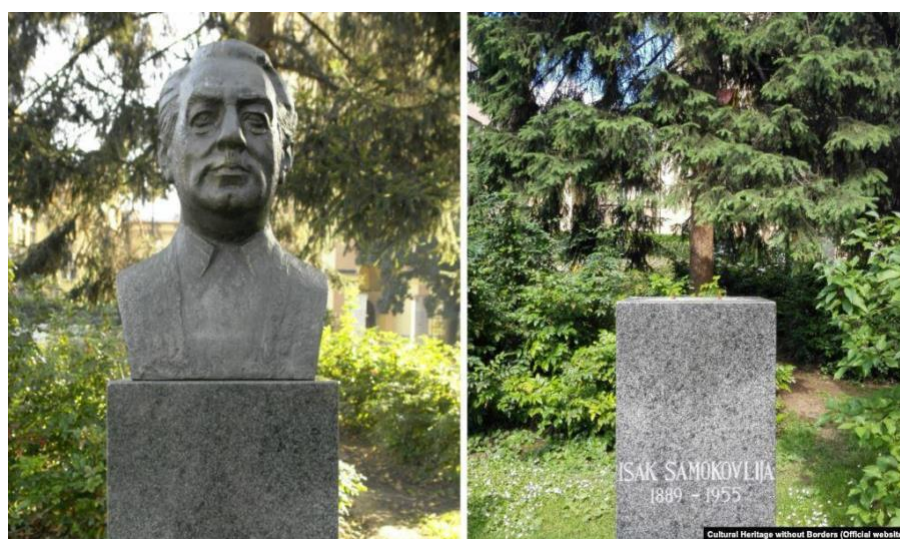
<sup>110</sup> Brauch, Lipphardt, Nocke. *Jewish Topographies*, 4.

<sup>111</sup> Ruth Ronen, "Space in Fiction." *Poetics Today* 7, no. 3 (1986): 423.

<sup>112</sup> Općina Centar Sarajevo, "Ulica Kalmija Baruha", YouTube video, 1:20, 30 May 2019, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVEGaf2UQ9w>.

forgotten in Socialist Yugoslavia. Furthermore, this naming of the street followed nine years after Baruh's private collection had been included in the permanent collection of the Literary Museum.

In Sarajevo, three places honor the work of Isak Samokovlija, besides museums. Formerly, there was a bust in the main square, Trg Oslobođenja [Liberty Square]. Samokovlija's bust was one of eight busts of prominent Bosnian writers that were placed in the square in the '80s. All were removed during the Yugoslav war; however, in 1995 they were returned to their place.<sup>113</sup> In June 2016 Samokovlija's bust was removed, its stand was left intact (figure 1), and it is still missing. It is most likely that the bust was stolen because it was made of bronze, as similar thefts are very common in Sarajevo.<sup>114</sup> Second, Samokovlija Street is located in the suburban residential area of the city, in a neighborhood that has no connection with the life or work of Isak Samokovlija.



*Figure 3 Isak Samokovlija's bust*

<sup>113</sup> Čusto Amra, "Spomenici i identiteti na primjeru sarajevskog Trga Oslobođenja Alije Izetbebović". Accessed 13 May 2020.

[https://knjizevnost.fandom.com/bs/wiki/Spomenici\\_i\\_identiteti\\_na\\_primjeru\\_sarajevskog\\_Trga\\_Oslobo%C4%91enja\\_Alije\\_Izetbebovi%C4%87](https://knjizevnost.fandom.com/bs/wiki/Spomenici_i_identiteti_na_primjeru_sarajevskog_Trga_Oslobo%C4%91enja_Alije_Izetbebovi%C4%87).

<sup>114</sup> Radio Slobodna Evropa. "Nebriga i lopovluk: "Sjeća" bronzanih glava". [Negligence and theft: "Cutting" bronze heads "]. Accessed 13 May 2020. <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/nebriga-i-lopovluk-sjeca-bronzanih-glava/27802482.html>.

Third, in 1994 an elementary school in the neighborhood *Marijin Dvor* that was named after Partisan hero Slaviša Vajner Čiča was renamed to Isak Samokovlija School.<sup>115</sup> However, this change does not illustrate that the new government was more philo-Semitic than the communist government. The initial goal was to remove the commemoration of the Second World War anti-fascist heroes.<sup>116</sup> For instance, after the Yugoslav break-up, the street<sup>117</sup> named after Jewish Partisan hero Šalom Albahari<sup>118</sup> was renamed, therefore virtually erasing his public memory. And at the same time, a school was named after Jewish writer Isak Samokovlija.

Furthermore, it is hard to come to overall conclusions regarding the policy behind naming public places. The assertive politics of changing street names in Sarajevo after the '90s are often perceived to have followed revisionist intentions to erase the multiethnic identity of Sarajevo. However, most of the changes were only directed towards heroes and politicians of the former regime. The same practice can be noticed in all other countries of the former Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, in Sarajevo, there were several cases of controversial place naming, such as the school and street named after Mustafa Busladžić, an interwar writer and anti-Semitic propagandist. Though, recently both places that were named after him have been renamed.<sup>119</sup>

In 2005 the small street between the Jewish Museum and the gallery *Novi hram* was renamed from *Velika Avlija* to *Velika Avlija Laure Papo*.<sup>120</sup> This is a positive initiative from a point that gives

<sup>115</sup> "O školi". Accessed 4 May 2020. <http://osis.edu.ba/o-skoli/>.

<sup>116</sup> Darko Karačić, Tamara Banjeglav, Nataša Govedarica. *RE: Vizija Prošlosti Politike sjećanja u Bosni i Hercegovini, Hrvatskoj i Srbiji od 1990. Godine* [RE: Vision of the Past of the Politics of Remembrance in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia since 1991] (Sarajevo; ACIPS, 2012.), 23,

<sup>117</sup> Šalom Albaharija Street is currently Ćemaluša Street, there will be more mention about this street below.

<sup>118</sup> Milutin Đurašković, "Šalom Albahari". Accessed 25 May 2020. <https://www.jews.ba/post/54/%C5%A0alom-Albahari>.

<sup>119</sup> Radio Slobodna Evropa. "Antifašistička tradicija ponovo pobijedila Busuladžića". Accessed 25 May 2020. <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/skola-mustafa-busuladzic-sarajevo/29082495.html>, Husnija Kamberović, "Slučaj Mustafe Busuladžića – Sa Povijesne Margine Ka Politikantskom Centru" [The Example of Mustafa Busuladzic – From the Marginal Historical Person to the Political Center]. Accessed 5 May 2020. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334208506\\_Slucanj\\_Mustafe\\_Busuladzica\\_-\\_sa\\_povijesne\\_margine\\_ka\\_politikantskom\\_centru\\_The\\_Example\\_of\\_Mustafa\\_Busuladzic\\_-\\_From\\_the\\_Marginal\\_Historical\\_Person\\_to\\_the\\_Political\\_Center/stats](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334208506_Slucanj_Mustafe_Busuladzica_-_sa_povijesne_margine_ka_politikantskom_centru_The_Example_of_Mustafa_Busuladzic_-_From_the_Marginal_Historical_Person_to_the_Political_Center/stats).

<sup>120</sup> Arnautalic, Ismet Nuno, Velika Avlija- Laure Papo Bohorete, 2019. <https://vimeo.com/313180691>.

space for the commemoration of those who are neglected in the cultural memory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Laura Papo for long has been marginalized on two accounts, for being a woman and being Jewish. However, naming the street of the Old Temple after Laura Papo shows the minimum of an initiative to properly commemorate her work. *Velika Avlija* already has some significance for the Jewish heritage of Sarajevo; adding Lara Papo to the street name did not expand the markers of Jewish heritage in the city. This initiative shows a tendency to create the concentration of Jewish heritage only in one spot around the Old Temple/Jewish Museum. Alternatively, it would make more sense to rename one of the streets connected with her life or work.

### **Velika Avlija- Jewish neighborhood in Sarajevo**

The first development of Jewish presence in Sarajevo is connected to the *Baščaršija*, the Ottoman business district. Baščaršija started developing after Isa bey Ishaković built the caravanserai on the left bank of Miljacka, in 1462. During the next century in Baščaršija, many Islamic educational and religious institutions opened, but also Catholic and Orthodox churches.<sup>121</sup> In 1565 the first Jewish community was officially created. It is not known where its members lived or where they prayed until 1581 when Siyavus Pasha Beylerbey of Bosnia established the Jewish *mahala* [quarter]. The *Mahala* was officially named *Siyavus Pasha's दौरا*, but Jews called it *Il Kurtižiko* [the courtyard]. Siyavus Pasha permitted the Jews to build the first known synagogue in Sarajevo, *Il Kal Grandi*, or the Grand Temple.<sup>122</sup> However today this synagogue is called the Old Temple, with respect to the later synagogues *Il Kal Muevu* [the New Temple] and the Great Temple.

<sup>121</sup> Dijana Alić and Maryam Gusheh. "Reconciling National Narratives in Socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Baščaršija Project, 1948-1953." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 58, no. 1 (1999), 8.

<sup>122</sup> Vedrana Gotovac, *Sinagoge u Bosni I Hercegovini [Synagogues in Bosnia and Herzegovina]* (Sarajevo: Novi Hram, Sarajevo: 1987.), 19.

*Velika Avlija* is the most visible Jewish heritage site today, there is a major investment of cultural memory. The Old Temple now houses the Jewish Museum, and the literary heritage plays an important role in the synagogue exhibition. Furthermore, the art gallery *Novi Hram* was opened in the mid-'80s by the Jewish community in the restored New Temple, which had been destroyed in the Second World War.<sup>123</sup> The gallery is still operating under the committee established by the community.

## **Jewry and Baščaršija in Ottoman times**

To illustrate Jewish life as it is presented in Samokovlija's novels, I will give a brief historical overview of the position of the Jews in Ottoman times. The legal position of Jews in Sarajevo was regulated by the *millet* system of self-governed religious minorities: among other things non-Muslims had to pay a special tax called *harač*. However, according to Samuel Pinto, Jews had some privileges and they were paying less than other non-Muslims.<sup>124</sup> Furthermore, it is important to understand the psychical position of the Jewish space in Sarajevo, considering that Jewish spaces can develop only in the midst of non-Jewish spaces.<sup>125</sup> *Il Kal Grandi* and *Il Kurtižiko* are built right next to the biggest mosque in Sarajevo, the Gazi Husrev Bey Mosque. This means that the Jews did not live somewhere on the border of the town but in its center.

Moreover, Jews were allowed to open their shops in the *Baščaršija*. For the most part, Jews engaged in trade and crafts, however, many Jews were doctors and pharmacists.<sup>126</sup> During the Ottoman era, business owners were part of the so-called *esnaf* (guild), and Jews like Muslims had the right to join the guild. It should be kept in mind that many Jews owned no more than small

<sup>123</sup>Gotovac, *Sinagoge u Bosni i Hercegovini*, 23.

<sup>124</sup> Samuel Pinto, "Položaj bosanskih Jevreja pod turskom vladavinom". *Jevrejski almanah 1954 [Jewish almanac]*, 1954, 59.

<sup>125</sup> Alina Gromova, Felix Heinert, Sebastian Voigt, "Introduction," in *Jewish and Non-Jewish Spaces in the Urban Context* (Berlin: Neofelis Verlag GmbH, 2015.), 14.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid, 55-56.



shops or had no possessions, especially those who lived in the hillside settlement of Bjelave. The Jews who lived in Bjelave were mostly unprivileged, and as they had many children, they were more numerous than the privileged Jews.<sup>127</sup> Isak Samokovlija writes about exactly this lower-class Jewry.

## Isak Samokovlija's world

### Bjelave

Samokovlija's tales are about the Jewry of Sarajevo's neighborhood Bjelave. The time of the stories is not specified, except that they happened before the Austro-Hungarian period, which means before the Berlin Congress of 1878. We know that at the beginning of the 16th century, *Mahala* Bjelave already existed, even before the arrival of Jews in Sarajevo, and at the beginning, it was not a Jewish neighborhood.<sup>128</sup> The neighborhood of Bjelave is located near *Baščaršija* and *Il Kurtižiko* (figure 4). It is important to note that Bjelave is up on the hill, therefore relatively harder to reach and that neighborhoods up on the hills of Sarajevo have traditionally been residential areas for the middle or lower class. Furthermore, *Il Kurtižiko* was the area between the business district and Bjelave. Thus, Jews settled in Bjelave, considering it was close to *Il Kal Grandi*. They tended to settle in one area close to the synagogue, because of the travel restrictions of the Sabbath. Furthermore, Ottoman cities were organized by ethnic and religious differences, hence Jews had to settle in the same neighborhood.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>127</sup> Verka Škurla-Ilijić, “Bosanski Sefardi“, *Jevrejski Glas*, 1929. infobiro.ba. Accessed 29 April 2020. <http://www.idoconline.info/article/845371>.

<sup>128</sup> Vladislav Skakić, “Postanak Sarajeva i Njegov Teritorijalni Razvitak u 15. i 16. Vijeku.“ [The Genesis of Sarajevo and Its Territorial Development in the 15th and 16th Centuries.], *Glasnik zemaljskog muzeja*, 1929. [Gazette of the National Museum], infobiro.ba. Accessed 29 April 2020. <http://www.infobiro.ba/article/908721>.

<sup>129</sup> Mann, *Space, and Place in Jewish Studies*, 119-120.



Figure 4 Sarajevo at the end of the XVI century

Besides the literary representation of Bjelave as Jewish space, the only visible element of Jewish life in Bjelave today is the former synagogue, *Bet Tefila* (House of Prayer). Also known as *Il Kal di la Bilava*, it was named after the part of the city where it was located, Bjelave.<sup>130</sup> The address of the former synagogue is No.7 Mejtaš and belongs to the local municipality Mejtaš-Bjelave. The synagogue was built in 1900, therefore it cannot be imagined as the house of prayer that is mentioned in Samokovlija's tales. In the Second World War, the *Ustaše* turned *Il Kal di la Bilava* into a detention facility.<sup>131</sup> Today it is used as an apartment building. On the facade, there are Jewish symbols of the menorah and the star of David. However, there is no plaque to give more information about the original use of this building. (figure 5)

<sup>130</sup> Gotovac, *Sinagoge u Bosni i Hercegovini*, 25

<sup>131</sup> Valerijan Žujo, *Sarajevske Sinagoge*. Accessed 3 June 2020.

<http://www.makabijada.com/dopis/gradovi/SA%20valerijan.htm>.



Figure 5: *Kal di la Bilava*

### Avlija- (Courtyard)

The *avlija* as a center of family or private life is often mentioned in Samokovlija's works. One of the tales is even named *Rafina Avlija* [Rafo's Courtyard]. Rafo is an old man living in Bjelave, who lives alone in the room on the ground floor, "...the room was small, with low ceilings and damp". However, even if he lives alone, the other people that share the *avlija* with him are his family. When he falls sick, his neighbors make sure not to disturb him, they show their compassion by not letting children play in the *avlija*, nor making any noises, "the *avlija* was covered in whispers and steps soft like cotton". <sup>132</sup>

Among Rafo's neighbors, there are two non-Jews, *baba* <sup>133</sup> Kata and Ankica. They are, unlike the other neighbors, Christians. They are some of the rare non-Jewish characters that are shown to

<sup>132</sup> Isak Samokovlija, "Rafina avlija", *Pripovijetke Prva Knjiga* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost 1951.) 67-81.

<sup>133</sup> Old lady, in BHS languages *baba* or *baka* can mean both grandmother and old lady. However, it is most commonly used in Christian families to call their grandmothers *baba*.

coexist with Jews in Bjelave in Samokovlija's novel. Ankica is a young girl who likes to sing, yet after Rafo falls sick she stops singing, and one day she even goes to his room to tell him that she has prayed for him to the Holy Mother. However, Rafo does not understand what Ankica has told him, which might be Samokovlija's way of showing that even if they live in the same *avlija* they do not know much about each other's religion.

Today still in the old part of Sarajevo, many private houses share closed-type courtyards. It is possible to see a similar courtyard in the already mentioned Museum of Literature and Theater Arts or the Svrso's House Museum. However, both objects used to be houses of wealthy families, therefore they are not identical to the housing types of poor Jewry in Bjelave. Nonetheless, in the courtyard of Svrso's House, the drama *Simha* was filmed, therefore it has a connection with Samokovlija's work, as it served as the space for the environment of his work. (figure 6)



Figure 6 Scene from the movie *Simha*

## Ćemaluša Street

In the novel “A Jew who on Sundays does not pray” Isak Samokovlija depicts a scene in the life of Juso, a poor merchant. Juso has come to Sarajevo from an unknown small town, hoping to become a shopkeeper. He has no luck, all he is able to do is to obtain a small street stand.

... he stood behind the round stove at the corner of Ćemaluša street, close to the old baths. He was selling roasted chestnuts. Pacing on the spot (to make blood flow in his legs) he lifted the lid from the hot grate in which the hot chestnuts were roasted, then he rolled them over with the tips of his fingers (as sinful people will burn in another world, in hell), since then he believed that after his death, his soul would go straight to Gan Eden.<sup>134</sup>

Ćemaluša Street is part of today's Mula Mustafa Bašeskija Road.<sup>135</sup> In Ottoman times, this route was divided into three separate streets - Ćemaluša, Za Baja, and Varoš.<sup>136</sup> However, today another street is named Ćemaluša, the former Sulejman Street. (figure 7) After the Second World War, this street was named after Šalom Albahari, a member of the Partisans.<sup>137</sup> It is important to note that in the former Ćemaluša Street there used to be a larger building that housed a school, the Sephardi Jewish municipality, and a smaller synagogue.<sup>138</sup> Furthermore, it is notable that Laura Papo Bohoreta had her wedding in this synagogue.<sup>139</sup>

If one stands at the corner of Ćemaluša and Mula Mustafa Bašeskija, there are no visible markers in either street of the Jewish heritage it bears. On one hand, we have literary heritage preserving the memory of the street as a sort of Jewish space, and on the other hand, we have tangible built heritage, but no connection is made between these two. The building of the former Jewish municipality is still extant in Ćemaluša Street, as well as the Jewish Gymnasium, the *Talmud-Tora*

<sup>134</sup> Samokovlija, “Jevrejin koji se subotom ne moli bogu”, 81-82.

<sup>135</sup> Općina Centar Sarajevo, “Ulica Mula Musrafe Bašeskije”, YouTube video, 12 June 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6iYWExH8GYo>.

<sup>136</sup> Sarajevo.travel. “Mula Mustafe Bašeskije”. Accessed 30 April 2020. <https://sarajevo.travel/ba/sta-raditi/mula-mustafe-baseskije/773>.

<sup>137</sup> Đurašković Milutin – Đuraš, “Šalom Albahari“, Jews.ba, Accessed 30 April 2020. <https://www.jews.ba/post/54/%C5%A0alom-Albahari>.

<sup>138</sup> Vedrana Gotovac, *Sinagoge u Bosni I Hercegovini*, 32.

<sup>139</sup> Archive of the Jewish Community in Sarajevo, Register

school, many formerly Jewish owned palaces and residential buildings. Comparable to *Il Kal di Bilave*, the buildings in Ćemaluša Street and Bašeskija Street were not returned to the Jewish community.



Figure 7 Part of the Map of Sarajevo in 1912

### ***Stara Banja (Old Baths)***

Gazi Husrev Bey's hammam (figure 8) is mentioned several times in Samokovlija's novel, as the *Stara Banja* [Old Bath], however never as a place that Jews in Bjelave visited, nor is it mentioned by name. However, in the hammam there used to be a *mikveh*, therefore Jews could visit this and all other hammams in Sarajevo for their ritual baths.<sup>140</sup> As we said, Gazi Husrev Bey's hammam is only mentioned as a *banja* (bath) that characters would pass by or the place where Juso sold chestnuts. Furthermore, the street that the porter Samuel has to climb every day

<sup>140</sup> Isak Bey's hammam, was leased and maintained by Jews. Moreover, like Gazi Husrev Bey's hammam and Firusbey's Mikveh, the Mikveh in Firusbey's hammam was built in 1787 by Jews themselves, and they had to pay annually for the rent of the space for the mikveh, besides paying the regular tax *hammam-paru*. See: Kreševljaković, *Izabrana djela III*, 26-32.; Ibid 53



when returning home, Banjski Brijeg (Bath Hill), is named in the novel Gazi Husrev Bey's hammam. Today this street is named after Mehmed Paša Sokolović.<sup>141</sup> Gazi Husrev Bey's hammam is located only 250 meters away from the old Jewish synagogue and the old Jewish *mahala*. Today the building houses the Bosniak Institute-Foundation Adil Zulfikarpaši. (figure 9)



Figure 8 Gazi Husrev Bey's Hammam



Figure 9 Gazi Husrev bey's hammam today

<sup>141</sup> Općina Centar Sarajevo, "Ulica Mehmed Paše Sokolovića", YouTube video, 1:27, 30 May 2019, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bGIrjD77PXo>.

Even if Bjelave is predominantly remembered as a Jewish neighborhood thanks to the works of Isak Samokovlija, Laura Papo also wrote about the Jewish inhabitants of Bjelave. Nazirović translated a few lines from her drama *Esterka*, where Papo describes how this old Sephardic woman “climbing Bjelave, meets a group of vagrants, those young men who, due to unfortunate conditions, grew up and were raised by the street.”<sup>142</sup> Both authors depict the climbing to Bjelave or Banjski Brijeg every day as if it was an agonizing task that made the already hard life of Porter Samuel and Esterka even harder.

### **Isak Samokovlija's house**

Approximately one kilometer away from Bjelave there is the house where Isak Samokovlija lived (figure 10). It is located near the city's hospital Koševo, where he worked, at No. 10 Mehmed-bega Kapetanovića Ljubušaka. This house today is decrepit, in 2015 it was put up for sale after Isak's daughter died. After that, for a very short period, there was an interest in the media and the general public in this building.<sup>143</sup> There was an initiative to enlist it as the national monument, however, the Commission for National Monuments decided that the building did not meet the criteria to be enlisted.<sup>144</sup>

<sup>142</sup> Muhamed Nezirović, “Sudbina jednog nepoznatog a značajnog pisca”, 25.

<sup>143</sup> Semra Hodžić. “Kuća Isaka Samokovlije u Sarajevu Neće Postati Muzej: “Nema Interesa” “ [Isak Samokovlija's house in Sarajevo will not become a Museum: “There is no interest” ], Radio Sarajevo. Accessed 7 May 2020. <https://radiosarajevo.ba/metromahala teme/kuca-isaka-samokovlije/240355>.

<sup>144</sup> Službeni List, “Pregled Dokumenta“. Accessed 7 May 2020. <http://www.sluzbenilist.ba/page/akt/YFc17BokdnA>.





Figure 10 Samokovlija's house

## Laura Papo's world

According to records in the Archive of the Jewish community, the family Levi lived near the already mentioned former Čemaluša Street on Gajev Trg (in figure 7 see Sajmište Street): this is the combination of two streets that are on two sides of the Market Hall. It is another important invisible marker of literary heritage. In the novel *The Scent of Rain in the Balkans*, there is no mention of the location of the Levi home. However, on multiple occasions, the spatial frame for the Levi home is mentioned. Reading Kuić's novel it can be reimagined that the Levi house was not in the city center, that they did not live in an apartment but in a house with a garden.

In 1929, according to an advertisement in *Jevrejski glas*, Laura Papo offered French language instruction. The address in the advertisement is 12 Stepe Stepanovića,<sup>145</sup> today this is Obala Kulina Bana.<sup>146</sup> Probably Laura Papo held lessons in her apartment. This location is near the Great Sephardic Synagogue, built-in 1930. It used to be the third biggest synagogue in Europe.<sup>147</sup> Today the synagogue is turned into the Bosnian Cultural Centre. The building was donated by the Jewish community to the city of Sarajevo after the Second World War.<sup>148</sup> In a way today it is a forgotten Jewish space with some signs of being retrieved, since there are a memorial and an information plaque for the former synagogue in the Bosnian Cultural Center, a Jewish paraphernalia shop, and a Haggadah association.

### **Hat Shop near Hotel Europe**

The oldest Levi sister Nina opened a shop in a central location in Sarajevo, in No. 11 Kralja Petra. It was located right across the street of the Hotel Europe, called *Chapeaux Chic Parisien* [Hats, Parisian elegant style, in French] (*figure 11*).<sup>149</sup> The area where she opened the shop was and still is the center of the economic and cultural life in Sarajevo. Today there is a bank in the place where Nina's shop used to be. In an interview, Kuić described that her aunt Nina was a designer and the owner of a successful business, which was a remarkable achievement for a woman coming from an impoverished Sephardic family. Furthermore, she shows a place where both Jews and gentiles worked.<sup>150</sup>

<sup>145</sup> Laura Papo, "Dajem časove" Accessed 6 June 2020. <http://www.infobiro.ba/article/845617>.

<sup>146</sup> Općina Centar Sarajev, "Obala Kulina Bana", YouTube video, 1:20, 12 June 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jy2xI4Tb8DQ>.

<sup>147</sup> Gotovac, *Sinagoge u Bosni I Hercegovini*, 37

<sup>148</sup> bkc.ba, "Bosanski Kulturni Centar." Accessed May 4, 2020. <https://bkc.ba/>.

<sup>149</sup> Tamara Sarajlić-Slavnić, "Laura Papo Bohoreta", *Homage to Significant B&H Women and Their Achievements*, Cure 2019, 10.

<sup>150</sup> Mira Adanja-Polak- Zvaničan Kanal, "Gordana Kuić"



*Figure 11 Nina Levi with her workers in front of her hat store*

As already mentioned, Gordana Kuić changed the name of the family from Levi to Salom, to emphasize her literary invention. Salom is also a very common Sephardi name. In Sarajevo, it was the name of the richest Jewish family of the city; the name change consequently gives the family a certain social upgrade. There are at least nineteen buildings connected with the investments of the Salom family, all of which are under certain legal protection according to their cultural, historical, or architectural significance.<sup>151</sup>

Some of the many properties connected with investment of the Salom family are Trading House Ješua and Mojse Saloma (now the Art Gallery of Bosnia and Herzegovina, No. 3 Zelenih Beretki), Salom's palace (Maršala Tita 54), and the Grand Hotel (today Institution of Finances) (Figure 12). The Grand Hotel opened in 1895, whose owners wanted to open a hotel that could compete with

<sup>151</sup> Federalno ministarstvo prostornog uređenja, "Lista zgrada bez obaveza" [List of the buildings without obligations], Accessed 14 May 2020. <http://www.ee-infos.ba/kojegrade/>.

the Hotel Europe in the high-status market. The building is located on the corner of Fehardija and Maršala Tita Street. However, a year later it was turned into the theater and then it became the *Landesbank*. Today there is a plaque (figure 13) mentioning the Salom investment. Furthermore, now a Second World War memorial with the eternal flame is right next to it.<sup>152</sup>



Figure 12 Hotel Grand



Figure 13 Plaque on the former Grand Hotel

## Places for leisure

### Bentbaša/ Bembaša as the place of freedom

Two places in the Kuić novel are frequently mentioned as places of leisure for the Salom sisters in Sarajevo: the *Bečka Kafana* (Viennese café) in the Hotel Europe and Bentbaša. Both of the places

<sup>152</sup> Mary Sparks, *The Development of Austro-Hungarian Sarajevo, 1878-1918* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 172.

are invoked in the novel as places of freedom, where different ethnicities could meet. Furthermore, Bentbaša is also featured in Samokovlija's tales.

Bentbaša (often pronounced as *Bembaša*) is a dam located on the outskirts of Sarajevo. The place is mentioned several times in the Kuić novel and in Samokovlija's tale *The Porter Samuel*. Bentbaša started developing in the 15<sup>th</sup> century when first an inn and a hammam were built. Later, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the inn became a *khaniqah*, the place of gathering of a Sufi brotherhood.<sup>153</sup> Moreover, allegedly the oldest *kafana*<sup>154</sup> was built in *Bentbaša*, near the *khaniqah*.<sup>155</sup> (figure 14) Damir Imamović, a prominent interpreter of *sevdalinka*, made in 2015 a multimedia exhibition called *Sevdah, umjetnost slobode* [Sevdah, the art of freedom], where he tried to redefine the negative image that the *kafana* has and of the music played in such localities.<sup>156</sup> Now I will present how Bentbaša is portrayed in works of Isak Samokovlija and Gordana Kuić.

<sup>153</sup> Hamdija Kreševljaković, *Izabrana djela III: Banje, vodovodi, hanovi, karavansaraji* [Selected Works III: Baths, Water Supplies, Inns, Caravansaray] (Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1991) 274-275.

<sup>154</sup> *Kafana* originally implies coffeehouse, however, the term can better be translated as a tavern, considering that alcohol was served in this object, there were also musicians and dancers to entertain the guests.

<sup>155</sup> TT Group, "Sarajevske kafane: kahva je da se pije s merakom ili nikako" [Sarajevos coffee: Drink coffee with *merak* or do not drink it], Accessed 2 May 2020. <http://www.tt-group.net/video/sarajevske-kafane-kahva-je-da-se-pije-s-merakom-ili-nikako/>.

<sup>156</sup> Klix.Ba, "Damir Imamović Predstavlja Izložbu: Sevdah, Umjetnost Slobode". Accessed 6 May 2020. <https://www.klix.ba/magazin/kultura/damir-imamovic-predstavlja-izlozbu-sevdah-umjetnost-slobode/151123004>.





Figure 14 Postcard with Old Cafe in Bendbaša

Samokovlija mentions Bentbaša in the tale *The Porter Samuel*; Samuel never enters the *kafana* in Bentbaša, he does not have any money to waste on drinking and paying dancers. He goes to Bentbaša to peek through the cracks in the wall and watch women dancing for his brother-in-law. Knowing that Jakov spends money in such a way enrages Samuel, because Jakov has never paid the promised dowry for his sister. Moreover, Jakov is always in the company of Ahmed Anadolac, his Muslim friend; both are depicted as aggressive and indolent men. <sup>157</sup>

Bentbaša as a place of leisure is mentioned in *The Scent of Rain in the Balkans* as well. Riki Salom “wanted to go for a swim at the beautiful, exciting Bentbaša, decorated by joyful people, where Miljacka is the warmest and the sun is the brightest.” Her mother does not let her go, which makes little Riki so upset that she decides to stage suicide together with her older sister Blanka.<sup>158</sup> After they grow up, Blanka and Riki during the summer visit *Bentbaša* daily, often with their partners. *Bentbaša* becomes even a special meeting place for Blanka and her partner Marko.

<sup>157</sup> Samokovlija, “Nosač Samuel“, 205.

<sup>158</sup> Gordana Kuić, *Miris Kiše na Balkanu* (Beograd: Narodna knjiga Alfa, 2007), 23.

We can notice that in both works of fiction Bentbaša has the characteristic of a space for leisure and “indecent” activities, more explicitly labeled as such in Samokovlija's work than in Kuić's. Even though *Bentbaša* was associated with a Muslim religious brotherhood, in memory it had different connotations. Over time it became the space for members of different ethnic groups that would mix and spend leisure time together. Moreover, *Bentbaša* is interesting in the context of Jewish heritage because of the traditional Bosnian *sevdalinka* “When I went to Bentbaša” which has the same melody as the traditional Ladino music.<sup>159</sup> Hopefully, rather than remembering Bentbaša as space for inadequate activities, it should be perceived as a space of freedom and cultural exchange between different ethnicities.

Alongside the depiction of the *kafane* and Bentbaša in works of fiction, we know that Laura Papo wrote her study *La mušer sefardi de Bosna*, in the *kafana* in Vratnik near the Visegrad Gate, as well as in the *kafana* in the Dariva. Nezirović calls those cafés cult places of the Old Sarajevo that no longer exist.<sup>160</sup> Dariva is an alley between Bentbaša and Kozija Čurpija, considering that the only known *kafana* in this area at that time was the so-called Hadži Šabanova kafana, perhaps this is where Laura wrote her study. Therefore, we can imagine that during the day Hadži Šabanova kafana was a quiet place where Laura could write her study.

## Benevolencija

The street where the building of *La Benevolencija* society is located has had the society's name since 1994. (figure 15)<sup>161</sup> The humanitarian organization *La Benevolencija* in 1902 built the object for their offices.<sup>162</sup> This neoclassical building was located in an area that was developing rapidly

<sup>159</sup> David Kamhi, *Sefardska Muzika u kulturi Bosne i Hercegovine* [Separdic music in culture of Bosnia and Herzegovina] (*Forum Bosnae*, 61–62, 2013): 276.

<sup>160</sup> Nezirović, “Sudbina jednog nepoznatog a značajnog pisca”, 30.

<sup>161</sup> Općina Centar Sarajevo, “Ulica La Benevolencije”, YouTube video, 1:14, 10 January 2019, 2020. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OW7DyDmyQVs&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OW7DyDmyQVs&feature=emb_title).

<sup>162</sup> Jakob Finci, *Jevrejski Glas: Vanredno izdanje*, Sarajevo, 2012, 3.

after the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The building is located in the *Marijn Dvor* neighborhood, the administrative center of the city. This neighborhood is perceived as the part of the city with the most visible Austro-Hungarian identity, considering that most architecture was built in this period in neoclassical and Secession styles. Today in this building the Ministry of Internal Affairs is located; it is one of many objects that by law need to be restituted to the Jewish community. The president of the Jewish community claims that they are not expecting the return of all the property but rather a monetary compensation.<sup>163</sup>



Figure 15 Benevolencija building- Today Ministry of Internal affairs

Samokovlija and Baruh were among many recipients of the *La Benevolencija* scholarship<sup>164</sup>. Furthermore, Laura Papo's activity is closely related to *La Benevolencija*, her study *The Sephardic Woman in Bosnia* was dedicated to this organization,<sup>165</sup> and her sister Riki Levi started by dancing

<sup>163</sup> OKanal, "Jevreji u BiH Traže Imovinu Vrijednu Šest Milijardi KM" [Jews in B&H Demand Property Worth Six Billion BAM], YouTube video, 3:39, 22 July 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qex6TQ0CE9s>.

<sup>164</sup> Kamhi, "O Kalmiju Baruhu", 269.

<sup>165</sup> Rikica Ovadija, "Laura Papo – Bohoreta", Jews.ba, Accessed 14 May 2020. <https://www.jews.ba/post/55/Laura-Papo---Bohoreta>.



at the ceremonies of the association.<sup>166</sup> In contemporary media, and on the basis of Kuić's novels, it is written that Riki Levi performed together with her sister Klara who played guitar music composed by Laura Papo. Furthermore, Riki performed in the *Kino Apolo*, which still exists and is only a few hundred meters away from the *La Benevolencija* building, in No. 2 Mis Irbina. (figure 16)



Figure 16 Kino Apolo

## Prva Gimnazija

Along with *La Benevolencija*, another institution that had importance in shaping Jewish writers from the interwar period is *Prva Gimnazija* [First Gymnasium], considering that Isak Samokovlija and Kalmi Baruh attended this school, and Kalmi Baruh even became a professor there.<sup>167</sup> The school is perceived as the oldest secular high school in Sarajevo, opened in 1879.<sup>168</sup> *Prva Gimnazija*

<sup>166</sup> Mirela Sekulić. "U susret Balet Festu Sarajevo: Ko je bila Riki Levi?" [Towards Ballet Fest Sarajevo: Who was Ricky Levy?] Accessed 14 May 2020. <https://www.oslobodjenje.ba/o2/kultura/u-susret-balet-festu-sarajevo-ko-je-bila-riki-levi-491081>.

<sup>167</sup> Fikreta Resić. "Muzej i biblioteka Prve gimnazije". [The Museum and the Library of the First Gymnasium in Sarajevo] *Zbornik Radova – Asocijacija informacijskih stručnjaka, bibliotekara, arhivista i muzeologa* (BAM) no. 02 (2018) 118.

<sup>168</sup> However, even before the Austro-Hungarian period secular schools existed in Bosnia. The Prva Gimnazija is the first classical/European school in Bosnia and Herzegovina. See: Hajrudin Ćurić, *Muslimansko Školstvo u*

is considered as an important place where different ethnicities could study together. In 1940 the number of Jewish students was restricted in *Prva Gimnazija*, like in all other schools in Yugoslavia. Therefore, Kalmi Baruh opened the so-called *Jevrejska Gimnazija* in the Jewish municipality in today's Ćemaluša street.

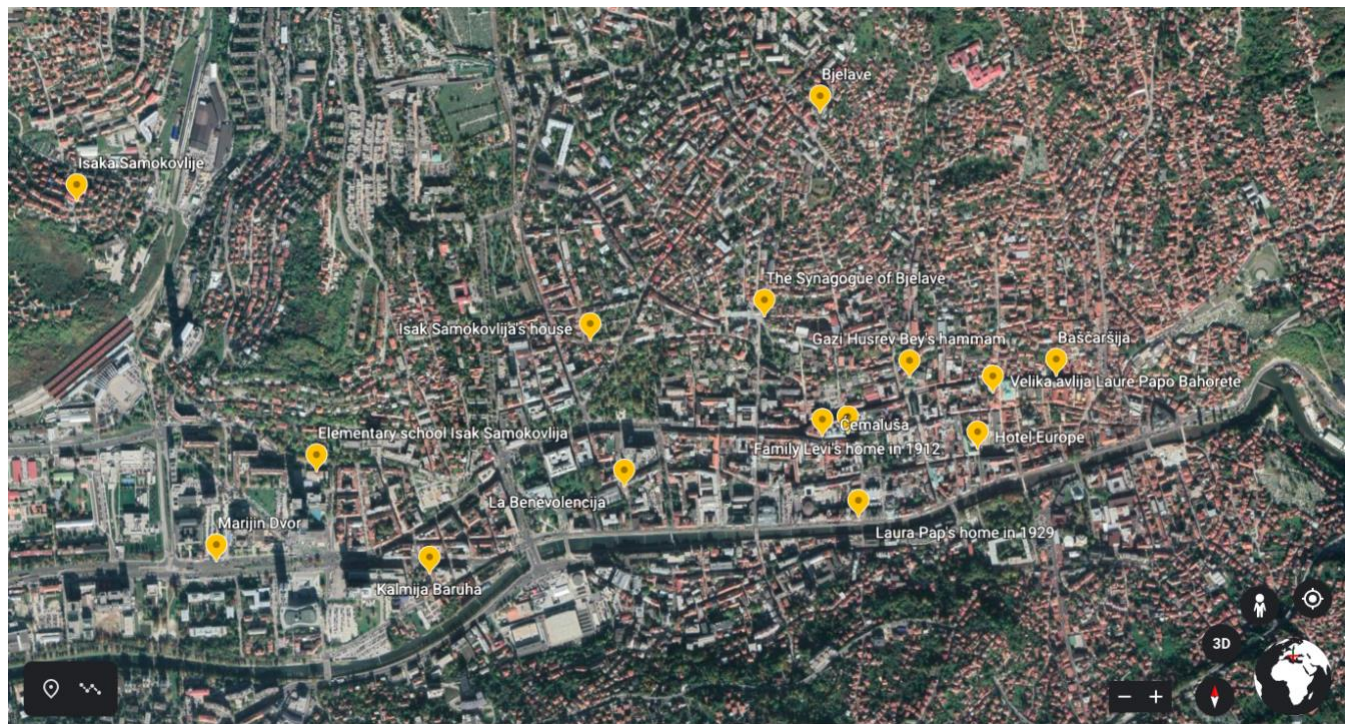


Figure 17 Map of Literary Heritage

*Bosni i Hercegovini do 1918* [Muslim Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina until 1918] (Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1983), 135-136.

## Conclusion

In this thesis, I have provided an overview of the work and influence of three Jewish intellectuals in interwar Sarajevo. Their opus differs from one another, yet they all contributed greatly to the literature and culture of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Laura Papo Bohoreta and Kalmi Baruh worked on the preservation of Sephardic culture. However Baruh was not focused on the revitalization of the Judeo-Spanish language, unlike Bohoreta. Bohoreta wrote many plays, poems, and an ethnographic study *The Sephardic Woman in Bosnia*, which is tremendously important considering it is the only study of its kind. The third author, Isak Samokovlija wrote about the world that disappeared in the Holocaust. For the remembrance and cultural memory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, his work is a constant reminder of the difficult life the Jewish working class had in the Ottoman period, but also in later periods.

I have brought together a study of the Jewish literary heritage of Sarajevo with an analysis of the urban space connected with the activities of Jewish intellectuals. Isak Samokovlija was the most accepted Jewish author in Socialist Yugoslavia, and arguably still is in Bosnia and Herzegovina. His tales are compulsory reading in elementary schools, which is important in teaching children and raising awareness of the existence of the Jewish heritage in Sarajevo. Comparing Papo and Samokovlija, the former was canonized and included in the list of prominent writers already in the '80s, while Papo's work was forgotten for almost four decades.

The first reason for the difference is that Papo's work was not published, whereas Samokovlija published in Serbo-Croatian, therefore his work was easily available to non-Jews. He wrote about working-class Jewry, and such work was acceptable and compatible with the communist agenda. Meanwhile, Papo's work was hidden in an archival collection until the '80s.

However, thanks to the changed political situation at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, i.e. the break-up of Yugoslavia and the creation of five new national states, Papo's manuscript legacy was translated

and published. Furthermore, the work of her niece contributed to the dissemination of her persona. The revitalization of Papo's work also means a new revitalization of the Sephardic culture and the memory of the Sephardic women.

Another development that started popularization of Bohoreta and even inspired the research of her works, was the transformation of memory of Laura Papo Bohoreta through novels of her niece Gordana Kuić. Even if Kuić novels are fiction they have shaped the figure of Laura Papo and her sisters, for the general public. In those novels there is a more secular and more feminist interpretation of Levi sisters.

The last chapter of this thesis mapped out places in Sarajevo that have the potential of being marked up as spaces of the Jewish heritage. I started from visible markers; places named after Jewish writers. The places were assigned randomly, without connecting them to the life of authors. Nevertheless, Jewish authors must have their space in the cultural memory in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It needs to be added that the most burning issue in the politics of Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding the Jewish heritage is the restitution of Jewish property, not street naming policies.

The most visible place of the Jewish heritage in Sarajevo is *Velika Avlija Laure Papo Bohorete* where the Jewish Museum is located. The display of the literary heritage and the Jewish cultural associations takes an important place within the museum exhibition. However, other unmarked places allow space for heritagization, among the House of Isak Samokovlija. The house has the potential to become another important space for the promotion of Jewish literary heritage. Additionally, there is a former Jewish neighborhood of Bjelave, that has historical importance for the Sarajevo Jewry.

Another contribution of this thesis is in investigating the literary heritage connected to Bjelave. The issue with this approach, however, is that any attempt of heritagization would result in

reinventing the Jewish neighborhood for touristic purposes to emphasize the multiethnic image of Sarajevo, which is not something I am proposing or recommending in this study. The three authors were already concerned with the task of historical remembrance and heritage preservation before they became the object of heritage concerns themselves. Marking historical Jewish places in Sarajevo presented in the work of the authors can help us keep the memory of pluralist Sarajevo alive. Jewish heritage in Sarajevo should not be a symbolic addition for promotion of a multicultural city. But, rather a reminder for our own times about the pluralist past that has been damaged during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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