

Freidenberg, »Sredizemnomorskoe istoričeskoe obozrenje.« *Voprosi istorii* 6 (1993): pp. 184-187.

² See, for example, his articles on the affairs of Solomon Ashkenazi or Nur Banu.

³ M. M. Freidenberg, *Dubrovnik i Osmanskaja imperija*, 2nd revised and enlarged ed. Moskva: Nauka, 1989; Jorjo Tadić, *Jevreji u Dubrovniku do polovine XVII stoljeća*. Sarajevo: Benevolentia, 1937.

⁴ J. Tadić, »Le commerce en Dalmatie et à Raguse et la décadence économique de Venise au XVII^e siècle.«, in: *Aspetti e cause della decadenza economica veneziana nel secolo XVII*. Venezia - Roma, 1960: pp. 235-274; B. Krekić, »The role of the Jews in Dubrovnik (13th-16th Centuries).«, in: *Viator, Medieval and Renaissance studies*, 4 (1973): pp. 257-271.

⁵ J. Tadić, »Le commerce«: p 248 et seq. These figures are used by all those who write on Ragusan commerce.

Maren M. Freidenberg, *The Jews in the Balkans*. Moskva-Jeruzalem: Textbooks of the Jewish University, 1996 (5756)

Much has been written about the people whose history was dictated by a rhythm of constant threats of exodus, the nightmares of pogroms and plunder, from the first years of exile following the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. to the traumatic experience of the Holocaust in World War II. An ample literature recounts the segregation of Jews (which originated in Western Christendom and spread along with Christianity through European and Mediterranean cultures), "holy wars" against pagans, forcible conversion, papal bulls, etc. In the general survey of the Jewish history, however the Balkan region has remained rather neglected. Mention of the Jews in the Balkans can be traced only fragmentarily as more systematic studies most frequently deal with the Jewish communities of Ragusa and Thessaloniki.

The diversity of geographical, historical, and cultural features of the Balkan Peninsula is most remarkable. The character of each Jewish community there was shaped in accordance with the region in which they lived. In the westernmost parts of the peninsula, the duchies of Slovenia, the Jews began to settle by the end of the 13th century, but remained there for not more than two hundred years, since around 1500 they were expelled from there. However, those two centuries proved sufficient enough for them to develop lucrative trade relations. In particular, their banking activities reached a state rarely to be found among their neighbors. The Jews settled along the Adriatic coast in groups or individually, and resided there for centuries, until the arrival of Napoleon's army. The Jews who populated the inland parts of the peninsula, Serbian and Bosnian

lands, were to supervise the caravans transporting goods and merchandise from the most distant Balkan centers to European markets.

The differences between the Venetian Republic, the Ottoman Empire, and the Austrian Empire determined the respective life patterns of the Jews driven by fate to these parts. Nevertheless, in spite of all the discrepancies and contradictions, they have always been confronted with the same recurring problem - how to avoid exile, pogrom, and restrictions.

An expert historian, Maren Frejdenberg has systematically traced the past of the Jews who populated urban areas either permanently or temporarily, that is, the ones most commonly engaged in commercial activities. He has investigated the variety of their occupations and crafts, the methods they used in developing trade, the nature of their financial transactions, as well as the organization of their communities and societies. The author sheds particular light on their relations with non-Jewish communities and the authorities (for the Jews have become accustomed to living in gaps between hostile non-Jewish neighbors, fomenting pogrom and robbery, and authorities inclined to banishment, confiscation, the cassation of debts, forcible loans), as well as the ever-open question of how the Jews managed to survive in one and the same place, how they tolerated constant threats of pogrom and harassment, and above all, which mechanisms led governments to the paradox of believing that their violence towards them was legitimate. In addition, the author discusses aspects of Jewish spiritual life in the Balkans toward the end of the Middle Ages: their traditions, teachings, art, and moral values.

Bearing in mind the multinational char-

acter of the Balkan Peninsula, and with the purpose of covering the colorful historical background of the Jews in that part of Europe, Maren Frejdenberg has divided the area, according to its cultural and historical features, into five subregions. The author first deals with the Slovenian subregion comprising the three duchies of Steiermark, Carniola, and Carinthia, where preserved written testimonies point to the presence of the Jews in the early 13th century.

The author conditionally refers to the second subregion populated by Jews as "Venetian". Viewed geographically, however, it spread along the east of the Adriatic Sea (from Istria and Dalmatia to the Republic of Dubrovnik), which was open towards Italy and its influences. Here, the author reports on the settlements, organization, and occupations of the Jews in Kopar, Poreč, Piran, Zadar, Šibenik, and Split. But it is the community in Dubrovnik, considered the most exemplary of the Jewish presence in the Adriatic, to which M. Frejdenberg has dedicated a separate chapter. The Republic of Ragusa, which masterly counterbalanced Venice until the arrival of Napoleon's army, has preserved extensive archival sources concerning Jews who traded with the countries of the Balkan hinterland and western Europe under the Ragusan flag, Jewish financial transactions, Jewish medical practice, the Ragusan Jewish community, the brotherhood of the Schola Haebrorum etc.

The third subregion includes the plains drained by the Danube and its northern tributaries, the Sava, and Drava, which, after 150 years of Austro-Turkish wars, became a possession of the Habsburg Monarchy, whose diligent and omnipresent bureaucracy registered and supervised all Jewish activities.

The fourth subregion lies in the very heart of the peninsula: Serbian and Bosnian

lands. This is the mountainous country intersected by the valleys of the Morava, Drina, and Bosna rivers where adverse communication links spurred the development of traditional guilds in towns built in mining areas or at the crossroads of important trade routes. For centuries these lands belonged to the Ottoman Empire, in which the Jews found their place and a relatively undisturbed life, since the Turks acknowledged confessional and ethnic tolerance.

And finally, the fifth subregion, conditionally called "Bulgaro-Macedonian" by the author, is bordered by the Danube, the Aegean and Black Seas, and lakes Ohrid and Prespa. The valleys of the Danube, Struma, and Vardar represented natural routes along which the Jews concentrated in the principal cities, and forming communities in Sofia and Skopje. Their population in these towns was augmented by the influx of refugees from the west, Thessaloniki being the most favored Jewish destination, something of a Jewish Mediterranean capital. As far as the density of the Jewish population is concerned, no other Balkan city is to be compared with Thessaloniki. Voluminous historical sources pertaining to Thessaloniki challenge the author, who will most likely make it the singular subject of his future research.

Having patiently and conscientiously gathered a vast archive of knowledge with a most extensive bibliography, M. Frejdenberg does not solely recount bare political history. He analyzes and synthesizes his collected data, phenomena, and individuals. Using the methodology of a historian, scientist, and erudite who is familiar with all the tenets of epistemology, he has produced a complete and masterful interpretation of the life of Jews in this part of Europe. The author's historical research is permeated by a strong spirit of humanism, man in his indi-

viduality being the center of all of his interests.

An interesting characteristic of Frejdenberg's is that he interweaves tradition with rigid historical inquiry, which - although dissimilar in nature and method, as well as ultimate goal - he accepts as two counterpoints, different in character, yet aiming at one common ideal: the understanding of humanity and the individual himself.

Mihaela Vekarić

Karl Kaser, *Familie und Verwandtschaft auf dem Balkan*. Wien - Köln - Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 1995

The very introduction of Kaser's extensive monograph brings to the fore a question that could give rise to a most fruitful discussion, and that is the understanding of the notion of the Balkan cultural milieu. The clash of diverse cultures and civilizations in the Balkans and the turbulent historical events it witnessed, wars being an everyday reality, are the elements that contributed to the perception and prejudice of the Balkans as a culturally inferior area from the Western standpoint. Aware that public opinion is void of scientific argumentation, Kaser's design was to lay before his Austro-German readers, to whom the book was primarily intended, the knowledge that being different Balkanwise does not necessarily imply barbarism. In other words, the causes of the most recent Balkan events are to be sought in other factors than those generally accepted.

In the opening chapter Kaser puts forward the foundations of his research and the problems he encountered. His investi-