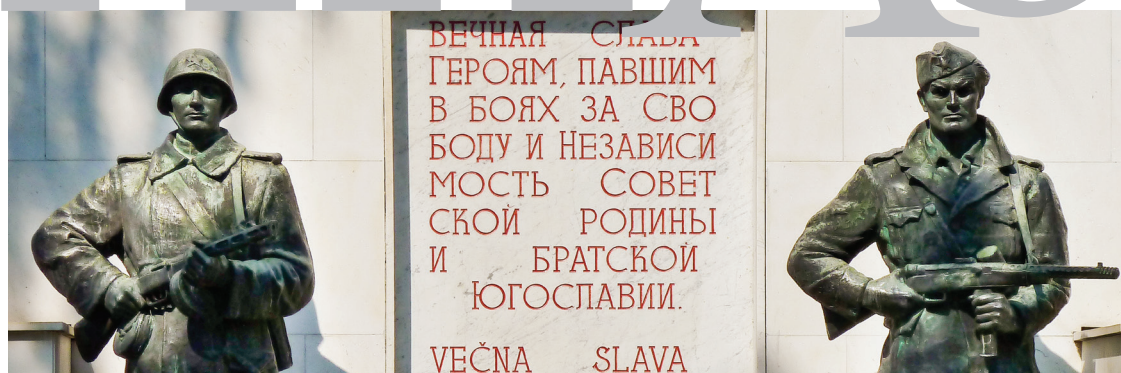


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ACTA HISTORIAE ARTIS SLOVENICA

Visualizing Memory and Making History

Public Monuments in Former Yugoslav Space
in the Twentieth Century

Umetnostnozgodovinski inštitut Franceta Steleta ZRC SAZU
France Stele Institute of Art History ZRC SAZU

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A Monument to Fallen Jewish Soldiers in the Wars Fought between 1912 and 1919 at the Sephardic Cemetery in Belgrade

Vuk Dautović

Jewish inhabitants of the Balkans functioned for centuries as subjects of the Ottoman Empire by participating in the creation of its visual culture, economy and trade, and by constituting the culture of the Empire on an equal footing with other ethnicities, as a visible minority.¹ The first change to the position of Jews who inhabited this wide area of the Balkans was announced in the Tanzimat reforms, which took place in the Ottoman Empire during the 1830s.² Parallel to the reformist movement in the Ottoman Empire, there appeared across the Balkans a number of national revolutions and the idea of the creation and realization of national independent states. These were states in which subjects could enjoy the freedom to practice their own Orthodox Christian faith; its ceremonies and public manifestations of piety related to a celebration of the nation, aside from the enjoyment of civil freedoms. In this kind of environment, the Jewish community in the Balkans, during the nineteenth century, transformed its own visibility and ways of existence, adjusting to turbulent changes in its surroundings. The Sephardi Jews, as a dominant group in the Balkans, became subjects of the new Christian nation states in which they had to fight for their own rights and civil equality all over again, by emphasizing their identity and by searching for frameworks through which they could exercise their own customs and culture.³

If we take into consideration the gradual transfer of cultural models embodied in the shift from the realm of the Balkan-Ottoman civilization to the European civil cultural model, this area becomes more complex.⁴ This shift created a need for different strategies and ways of self-presentation, and also a visual expression of identity that was primarily based on religious diversity, strongly incorporated in what we call the Judeo-Christian civilization, while recognizing its inner antagonisms.

For the Jews who lived within the territory of the Serbian state, this implied liberation from Ottoman rule, through the creation and building of a state embodied in the life of the Principality and, afterwards, in the Kingdom of Serbia, from the changes of dynasty at the beginning of the

¹ Nenad MAKULJEVIĆ, Sephardi Jews and the Visual Culture of the Ottoman Balkans, *El Prezente. Studies in Sephardic Culture*, 4, Beer-Sheva 2010, pp. 199–212.

² For more information on the Tanzimat reforms see: İlber ORTAYLI, *Najduži vek imperije*, Beograd 2004 (İlber ORTAYLI, *Imparatorlugun en uzun yuzyili*, Istanbul 1999).

³ Ženi LEBL, *Do konačnog rešenja. Jevreji u Beogradu 1521–1942*, Beograd 2001, pp. 71–183; Bogumil HRABAK, *Jevreji u Beogradu do sticanja ravnopravnosti (1878)*, Beograd 2009, pp. 225–437; Vuk DAUTOVIĆ, Sefardske štampane ketube na Balkanu. Vizuelna dekoracija kao odraz ideja bračne harmonije i privatno-javnog jevrejskog identiteta, *Zbornik [Muzej primenjene umetnosti] / Journal [Museum of Applied Art]*, n. s. 8, 2012, pp. 65–76.

⁴ Nenad MAKULJEVIĆ, Kulturni modeli i privatni život kod Srba u 19. veku, *Privatni život kod Srba u devetnaestom veku* (ed. Ana Stolić, Nenad Makuljević), Beograd 2006, pp. 17–53.

twentieth century all the way through to the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SCS) and then Yugoslavia. In this sense, the means of preserving identity, customs and religious freedom in the framework of the newly established state models required intricate strategies, not only in the sense of adjustment but also in the sense of actual gestures such as the participation in war as the most obvious proof of loyalty according to the ethical principle of blood spilt for freedom in solidarity.

The Participation of Jews in Wars for the Unification and Liberation of Serbia

Under the Ottomans, Jews were forbidden to join the military, however the series of national revolutions and the increasing need for the military as a force capable of defending the still volatile state by liberating new regions and expanding the state's territory, led to the inclusion of Jews in the ranks of the Serbian military. In 1869 the Principality of Serbia passed a governmental decree authorizing the recruitment of Jews into the Serbian military. This important milestone led to the greatest integration of Jewish subjects who, as soldiers, could prove their loyalty to the state in which they had lived with the prospect of emancipation, in comparison to the Serbian population. When they entered military service, Serbian military authorities met the needs of Jewish soldiers by enabling them to eat meals in accordance with their religious code. War reports from 1877 brought news of Jewish soldiers being decorated with Serbian military honours and medals. Consequently, they gained full equality in a constitutional sense by the so called broad-minded constitution of the Kingdom of Serbia of 1888, which guaranteed complete equality to all state residents without distinctions based on religion or nationality.⁵ The change of dynasty on the Serbian throne did not stand in the way of the further integration of Jews into Serbian society and the King of Serbia himself, Peter I Karađorđević, laid down the cornerstone of the new Sephardic synagogue, Beth Israel, in May 1907, and attended its consecration with members of the government in September 1908.⁶

When in 1912, the proclamation for the mobilization of troops in order to liberate Serbs in the Ottoman Empire came into force, Jews heeded the call in large numbers and prayers were conducted in synagogues for the victory of Serbian forces, while Rabbis Isak Alkalaj in the Sephardic synagogue and Ignjat Šlang in the Ashkenazi synagogue called upon Jews to fulfil their civil duty towards the 'dear fatherland' as the real descendants of the Maccabees.⁷

Archival documents not only testify to the large numbers of Jews that heeded the call, but also of the importance this had for members of the Jewish community; such as in the creation of postcards, with a photograph and the name of a soldier, which are one of the most common forms of memorabilia from this period of European military history (fig. 1). The participation of Jews in the Balkan wars was best summarized by the German diplomat and Officer Karl von Richthofen in a pamphlet entitled *Are Jews soldierly people?*, in which he stated: "This booklet is dedicated to those Serbs of Moses who did by their conduct what it is impossible to confute. Everything stated in it is truthful, confirmed and sealed with blood. For example, the heroic death of Lieutenant Moše

⁵ Ignjat ŠLANG, *Jevreji v Beogradu*, Beograd 1926, pp. 92–106.

⁶ ŠLANG 1926 (n. 5), pp. 104; David ALKALAY, Nova sinagoga «Bet Israel», *Jevrejski almanah za godinu 5686 / 1925–1926* (eds. Leopold Fischer, Mojsije Margel), Vršac 1925, pp. 73–82.

⁷ Zapisi. Srpski Jevreji, *Ilustrovana ratna kronika*, 2, 25. 10. 1912, p. 15; ŠLANG 1926 (n. 5), pp. 106–108.



1. Isak A. De Majo, soldier in the 1912–1913
Balkan War, postcard

Amar in Ferizovići.⁸ The pamphlet afterwards listed Jewish heroes and battles in which they had participated, laying down their lives on the altar to the fatherland.⁹ For example, the participation of Jews in the wars for the liberation of Serbia was documented in the famous Seventh infantry regiment of the Danube division of the second draft, which participated in the battle of Edirne, consisting primarily of the Belgrade Sephards,¹⁰ or by the individual displays of heroes such as Moša J. Pinto, awarded with the Takovo Cross and the medal of St. Sava.¹¹ The participation of Jewish doctors and nurses in military hospitals is also important, such as in the XXII reserve hospital of the Ashkenazi Jews from Belgrade.¹² The end of the Balkan Wars brought with it new attitudes towards Jews, who were initially stigmatized as timid people ill-disposed towards military service, but who emerged after the wars with a reputation for heroic deeds and enthusiasm for military engagement.¹³

During World War I, the participation of Jews continued both as a part of the Serbian military corps and the inner officer command staff.¹⁴ War testimonies such as the evacuation

journal from October 1916 by Officer Moša Mevorah, which is kept in the Jewish Historical Museum in Belgrade, are particularly valuable.¹⁵ The end of the war fortified the syntagma about Jews as 'Serbs of Moses' faith, bringing with it the affection of the ruling house of Karađorđević towards the Zionist idea, which was brought closer by distinguished individuals such as Dr David Albala, but also bringing about the full emancipation and integration of Jews within the Serbian society.¹⁶

⁸ ŠLANG 1926 (n. 5), pp. 112–113.

⁹ ŠLANG 1926 (n. 5), pp. 112–113.

¹⁰ Photograph from the Jewish Historical Museum, Belgrade, reg. no. 5828, k. 4-1-3: *Beogradski jevreji iz dunavske divizije sedmog puka drugog poziva, za vreme večernje molitve uoči napada koji je završen osvajanjem Jedrena, 12. marta 1913.* (Belgrade Jews from the Danube division of the Seventh Regiment second draft, during evening prayer on the eve of an attack that ended in the conquering of Edirne, March 12 1913).

¹¹ *Illustrated 'Balkan'*, 9, 28. 4. 1913.

¹² ŠLANG 1926 (n. 5), p. 108.

¹³ Dušan SLAVIĆ, *Ilustrovana istorija Balkanskog rata 1912.–1913.*, 1, Beograd 1913.

¹⁴ ŠLANG 1926 (n. 5), pp. 114–119.

¹⁵ Jewish Historical Museum, Belgrade, reg. no. 5829, k. 4-1-4: Moše Mevorah, *Dnevnik sa puta evakuacije, od dana 28. oktobra 1916. godine* (Evacuation journal from 28 October 1916), manuscript.

¹⁶ ŠLANG 1926 (n. 5), pp. 120–135.



2. Monument to Jewish soldiers fallen in wars for liberation and unification (1912–1919), Sephardic cemetery, Belgrade

In the aftermath of the wars, a period of memorialization of the fallen began, both within the Jewish community and in the name of the state for which the fallen soldiers had fought. The memory of the deceased, and their contribution to the wars, was primarily shaped through the production of a written testimony *Spomenica poginulih i umrlih Srpskih Jevreja u Balkanskom i Svetskom ratu 1912–1918*.¹⁷ Consequently, the memory gained permanent visualisation in the form of a monument whose building lasted almost a decade from the end of World War I, and which was finally created according to the idea of architect Samuel Sumbul at the Sephardic Jewish cemetery in Belgrade, Ruzveltova (Roosevelt), once Grobljanska (Cemetery) Street.

Erecting the Monument

The initiative for erecting a monument to Jews that had perished in the wars for liberation and unification came about at the beginning of the 1920s (fig. 2). It stemmed from both sectors of the Jewish community, Sephardic and Ashkenazi. For this purpose, a committee was formed at first presided over by Kalman Lebl, the brother of the student Lance Lieutenant Leon Lebl, who bravely fought and died at Kosmaj in 1914 at the age of twenty-two.¹⁸ The committee also included Nisim Benarojo, Aciva

¹⁷ *Spomenica poginulih i umrlih Srpskih Jevreja u Balkanskom i Svetskom ratu 1912.–1918.*, Beograd 1927 (publication by the committee for the construction of the monument to fallen Jewish soldiers).

¹⁸ LEBL 2001 (n. 3), pp. 256–257.



3. Top of the pillar with a two-headed eagle, Serbian coat of arms and Magen David, Sephardic cemetery, Belgrade

and Moša Levi, Ruben Rubenović, Binja Nahum, Šalom Ruso, Mika Mejuhas and others.¹⁹ The committee in charge of constructing the monument first published the abovementioned testimony in 1927, after which the monument itself was unveiled. The casualties of war from the period of 1912 to 1918 were listed in the testimony and, alongside their first names and surnames, photographs were included as well as the casualties' civil and war biographies, place of birth and place of death with the manner in which they died also described. The testimony lists in great detail one hundred and thirty-two soldiers, whose names were also carved into the plaque of the monument. In the foreword, the contribution of Jews was emphasized, as was the importance and the magnitude of their sacrifice during the war. This written presentation ends with the words: *Neka večni i nerazdvojni zagrljaj u smrti sa vašim palim srpskim drugovima, posluži poznijim naraštajima kao simbol trajnog bratstva između dva napaćena naroda na zajedničkoj grudi.*²⁰ The initiative to erect this important monument, whose construction was financed by voluntary

donations, was followed by several exhumations in order to relocate the remains of the fallen soldiers, whenever it was possible, and to bury them in the first soldiers' burial plot at the Jewish cemetery in Belgrade, where the soldiers who had been transferred there since the beginning of the Balkan Wars were also laid to rest. The Jewish press followed the construction of the monument closely, noting that under it lay twenty-three heroes whose graves could be identified.²¹ In this sense, this monument also has an important funerary function, representing a Pantheon of fallen Jewish hero-soldiers. Among the soldiers who were transferred and previously buried in the soldiers' burial plot were the painter Samuilo Elić, Hajim Davičo – descendant of one of the most prominent Jewish families in Belgrade, Moša Amar who died heroically at Ferizovići, merchant Benjamin Rafael, doctor Isak Rego Hercog who was transferred to the soldiers' burial plot in 1921, and clerk Hajnrih Šatner among others.²²

The monument was designed by architect Samuel Sumbul, one of the most distinguished designers of the public facilities created between the two wars, for the needs of the Jewish community in Belgrade. As a Sephardic Jew who was born in Sarajevo and educated in Vienna, Sumbul settled in Belgrade after World War I where he founded a company with the name Architectonic-construction

¹⁹ Otkrivanje spomenika srpskim Jevrejima palim u ratu za oslobođenje 1912–1918, *Židov*, 11/40, 7. 10. 1927, p. 3.

²⁰ *Spomenica* 1927 (n. 17), pp. 3–5: *Let your eternal and inseparable embrace in death with your fallen Serbian companions serve later generations as a symbol of permanent brotherhood between two suffering peoples on common soil.*

²¹ Spomenik poginulim Jevrejima, *Židov*, 11/15–16, 15. 4. 1927, p. 10.

²² *Spomenica* 1927 (n. 17), pp. 25, 50, 77, 81, 97, 140.

company of arch. S. Sumbul and eng. H. Isaković. Apart from architecture, Sumbul was also engaged in painting and he had a small studio beside the painting school of the painter Mladen Josić.²³

Sumbul's most important works, in relation to the Belgrade Jewish community were primarily the Jewish charity Oneg Shabat and Gemilut Hasadim, whose building was constructed in 1923 at 16 Jevrejska (Jewish) Street, and also The Home of the Jewish Religious-School Community, built in 1926, at 71a Kralja Petra Street. By 1927 Sumbul had already designed the monument to fallen soldiers at the Sephardic cemetery in Belgrade. The construction of the monument was entrusted to stonemason Josif Dajč and the solemn unveiling took place on 2 October 1927.²⁴ Several years later, in 1930, Samuel Sumbul designed his own building at 8 Brankova Street.²⁵

The main traits of his architecture are Eclecticism with the emphasized decoration of the facade, which ranges from Classicism and Romanticism on the building of the Association of Jewish Communities of Yugoslavia (The Home of the Jewish Religious-School Community) to a certain variant of Orientalism applied to the facade of the building of the Oneg Shabat and Gemilut Hasadim charity, as an appropriate style originating from Central Europe that expresses visually the identity of the Jewish community.²⁶ This was certainly familiar to Sumbul, bearing in mind his education in Vienna, and, as an idea, it was consistently elaborated in the building of Kapetanović's synagogue Beth Israel in Cara Uroša Street in Belgrade.²⁷ Some elements of the oriental understanding of ornaments, the avoidance of the human image and figure, were applied together with Jewish traditions in the construction of the monument, which visually speaking, and, taking into consideration the military monuments raised in the memorial opus of the Great War, represent an intricate and unique entity. Several years after the construction of the monument in Belgrade, members of the association Kneginja Zorka erected a monument to the fallen soldiers from the period 1914–1918 at the entrance to Niška Banja in 1929, and one of the memorial plaques on this monument contains the Star of David and the names of Jews who lost their lives during the First World War.

The Belgrade monument is positioned to the right of the entrance to the Jewish Sephardic cemetery and it was made of white stone as an architectonic-sculptural composition, from a design by architect Samuel Sumbul, produced in the workshop of the stonemason Josif Dajč, also a member of the Jewish community, whose name is engraved beside Samuel Sumbul on the stone pillars of the fence of the monument itself. The cemetery in which the monument was erected was built simultaneously with the New Belgrade cemetery in 1876. The general concept of the Sephardic cemetery and also the typology of the monument insignia are included in the wider stylistic and artistic flows of the period of the emancipation of the European Jews during the nineteenth century. Apart from the monuments that were transferred from the old Jewish cemeteries, characteristic Sephardic supine sepulchral insignia and vertical Ashkenazi ones, the presence of plastic decoration, continuing the European funerary tradition, with specific Jewish symbols and also sepulchral architecture in various historical styles, visually shapes the space of the Sephardic cemetery. Therefore, the surroundings

²³ Divna ĐURIĆ-ZAMOLO, *Jevreji – graditelji Beograda do 1941. godine*, *Zbornik*, 6, Jevrejski istorijski muzej Beograd, 1992, pp. 233–236.

²⁴ *Otkrivanje spomenika 1927* (n. 19), p. 3; *Spomenik 1927* (n. 21), p. 10.

²⁵ ĐURIĆ-ZAMOLO 1992 (n. 23), p. 236.

²⁶ Rudolf KLEIN, *Oriental-Style Synagogues in Austria-Hungary. Philosophy and Historical Significance*, *Ars Judaica*, 2, 2006, pp. 117–134.

²⁷ Svetlana NEDIĆ, *Sinagoga Bet Jisrael – delo arhitekta Milana Kapetanovića*, *Zbornik*, 8, Jevrejski istorijski muzej Beograd, 2003, pp. 299–308.

of this cemetery as an ambient entity in which the monument to fallen soldiers was erected can be defined as eclectic.²⁸

The Form and Function of the Monument

The monument was built as a complex memorial public entity, a manifestation of the loyalty of the Jewish community to the Serbian national corpus. At the same time, the monument clearly supervenes on other similar monumental demarcations made during the First World War that contain attributes from the military domain, celebrating military merits and victory. Jewish identity was displayed via symbols relating to Jewish tradition, both profane and related to religious concepts that refer to the culture of remembering the dead and the religious practice of annual memorial services, which have both a private and an eschatological character. Within the monument there are ledgers for those who are buried there, so it is a unique funerary entity and a Pantheon of fallen soldiers. Being conceived in this way the monument functions as a complex semantic whole.

Visually, it is formed as a plateau of semicircular shape in the middle of which the form of an obelisk is found, consisting of four pillars ending in a pyramid shape with a two-headed eagle on top (fig. 3). At the base of this construction, a military sabre intersecting a rifle is carved, with a *šajkača* (a Serbian military hat) in the middle, above which there is an inscription stating: ЖРТВЕ ПАЈЛЕ ЗА ОТАЏБИНУ 1912. – 1919.²⁹ On top, among the heads of the pillars, which in intersection form a six-fold Star of David, are Stars of David in relief placed on all four sides. The pyramid structure at the top, the sharpened tower, bears a hexagonal pedestal with the Serbian coat of arms and a crown, cast out of bronze, while on top there is a two-headed eagle with wings spread: one head faces the sky and the other faces the ground. To the left and right there are stone ledges with the names of the fallen soldiers that are buried there positioned in a horseshoe shape (fig. 4). The structure is flanked by figures of sitting lions (*lion sejant*), while the sides of the monument are joined by a stone fence with benches. Behind the pillar there is a massive stone segment of trapezoid shape, which contains five ledges; the pairs on either side have names carved on them and the middle ledge contains an inscription dedicated to the war heroes. Two urns with the Star of David emblazoned in the middle are positioned on the lions' paws and the eternal flame, carved out of stone, burns above them. The front of the monument is separated by a fence made out of short stone pillars, between which there is a massive bronze chain anchored in medallions of the Magen David (Star of David), and, on these pillars, the names of the architect S. Sumbul and the stonemason J. Dajč are engraved. In the corner below the lion figures, there are canon shells carved out of stone exemplifying the militaristic character of the monument.

The first noticeable element in the visual conception of the monument is the clear use of national and military rhetoric, which places it within a wider context as a signifier of the First World War.³⁰ Similar monuments to the fallen heroes of the Balkan and First World Wars, with victorious two-headed eagles, were erected in Mihajlovac, in Negotinska Krajina and Ćuprija. The Belgrade monument stands

²⁸ Mirijam RAJNER, *Jevrejska groblja u Beogradu*, *Zbornik*, 6, Jevrejski istorijski muzej Beograd, 1992, pp. 211–214; Professor Rajner was the first to research and point out the importance of studying the specificities of Jewish funerary culture in Belgrade, primarily through the history and typology of Jewish cemeteries.

²⁹ *Victims fallen for the fatherland 1912–1919*.

³⁰ Olga MANOJLOVIĆ-PINTAR, *Ideološko i političko u spomeničkoj arhitekturi Prvog i Drugog svetskog rata na tlu Srbije*, Beograd 2004 (unpublished doctoral dissertation), pp. 83–138.



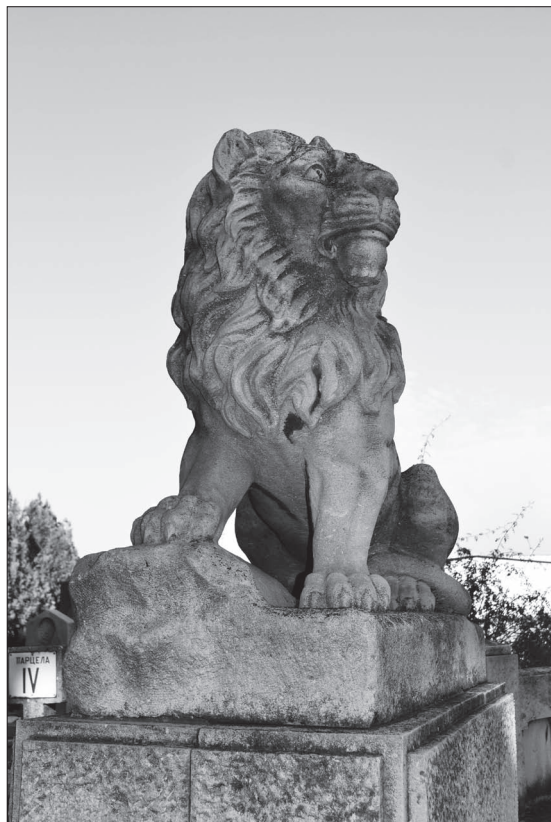
4. Tombs of fallen heroes, Sephardic cemetery, Belgrade



5. Military symbols at the base of the monument, Sephardic cemetery, Belgrade

out through the monumentality of its design: the two-headed eagle with spread wings raises its right head towards the sky, in rejoice at victory, while he bends his left head towards the ground in an act of grief and sorrow for the fallen soldiers, as reported by the *Politika* newspaper a day after the unveiling of the monument.³¹ The stone cannon shells, present in the composition of the Belgrade monument, are a commonplace of such monuments, depicting tools of mass destruction that claimed the lives of many soldiers in World War I, and can also be identified in the abovementioned Čuprija monument, which memorializes military suffering from the period between 1912 and 1918. The military hat *šajkača*, rifle and sabre, code the monument as an entity unifying the officers and soldiers who fought and gave their lives together for the same historical goal (fig. 5). The military narrative consistently ends with a stone gable in the background of the obelisk carrying the names of fallen soldiers, the dates

³¹ Spomenik srpskim ratnicima – Jevrejima, *Politika*, 3. 10. 1927, p. 7.



6. The figure of a lion, detail of the monument, Sephardic cemetery, Belgrade



7. Emblematic figure of the lion, detail of Yahrzeit of Corporal Isak Rafael Amar

of their death, but also the specific names of the places and battles in which they died, creating a precise chronotopic field of memory. The central tablet of this Jewish Pantheon carries a dedication: *Јеврејима палим за правду, слободу и уједињење, у спомен и славу српски Јевреји*,³² and also a translation into Hebrew. Below the aforementioned inscription there is a citation from Petar II Petrović Njegoš's poem *Gorski vijenac* (The Mountain Wreath), stating: *ПОКОЉЕЊЕ ЗА ПЈЕСМУ СТВОРЕНО, ВИЛЕ ЋЕ СЕ ГРАБИТ У ВЈЕКОВЕ, ДА ВАМ ВЈЕНЦЕ ДОСТОЈНЕ САПЛЕТУ, ВАШ ЋЕ ПРИМЕР УЧИТИ ПЈЕВАЧА, КАКО ТРЕБА С БЕСМРТНОШЋУ ЗБОРИТ*.³³

The other element of the monument refers to the expression of Jewish identity. This is achieved primarily through the Stars of David located at various points and the lions flanking the monument. The Star of David as a Jewish symbol is relatively new, appearing only from the sixteenth century. There is neither archaeological nor historical data that would link King David to the hexagram since it first appeared as a Jewish symbol in 1527 on a tombstone in Prague.³⁴ Only during the period of the Zionist movement did this symbol gain greater and deeper meaning within the frames of Jewish identity (fig. 6). The lion, however, an emblem from ancient times, represents the Israel tribe of Judas, one of the twelve ancient Jewish tribes, which begat King David and King Solomon, and ruled

³² *To the Jews who have fallen for justice, liberty and unification, in the memory and glory of Serbian Jews.*

³³ *Generation made for songs, fairies will grab into centuries to entwine you decent wreaths, your example will teach the poet how should one speak with immortality.*

³⁴ Theodore SCHRIRE, *Hebrew Amulets, their Decipherment and Interpretation*, New York 1982, pp. 60, 68.



8. Ner neshama, a vase with burning flame,
detail of the monument, Sephardic cemetery, Belgrade



9. Ner neshama, vessel with flame, detail
of Yahrzeit of Corporal Isak Rafael Amar



10. Yahrzeit of Corporal Isak Rafael Amar
(died on 12th October 1912 at Mlado Nagoričane)

the Kingdom of Judea. In the West, front-facing lions, have the heraldic function of guardians on coats of arms and they appear in numerous objects of Jewish visual culture, in particular on sacral ones, such as synagogue parochets, Torah mantles and shields or Hanukkah lamps intended for family privacy (fig. 7).³⁵ Lions incorporated into stone carved decoration were used within synagogues even in ancient times.³⁶ They are a symbolic image of the lost kingdom but also an important eschatological hint of the coming of the Messiah, who will descend from this tribe and be the descendant of David. By his appearance, the annunciations of the prophets will be fulfilled but also the promise of bodily resurrection, which represents a unique end of history. In this sense, it must be noted that messianic time is embodied in the hope of the resurrection of the dead and lions within funerary entities are a reflexion of this ideology.³⁷

On the monument to fallen soldiers, above the plaques with the engraved names, there are two sculpted stone urns, with Stars of David positioned in between the lions' paws, on top of which burns a flame (fig. 8). It is important for the understanding of the funerary character of the monument to note the practise of *Yahrzeit*, i.e. the annual memorial service for the dead. During the nineteenth century, in the area of Central Europe, printed forms developed in which the days of memorial service were inscribed even several decades in advance because of the Lunisolar Jewish calendar. These forms were visually rich in decoration and they were noticeably displayed in houses as reminders, in an act of private memory related to the practice of lighting a candle or a lamp (*ner neshama*) whose light should burn for twenty-four hours on the day of death, symbolically referring to the verses from *The Book of Proverbs 20:27: The soul of man is a candle of the Lord*.³⁸ In this sense, the display of a lamp as a vessel with a flame is an indispensable emblematic image in the funerary culture of Jews, both in the very tomb decoration and in all the parts that refer to the memory of the deceased, such as the printed memorial sheets - *Yahrzeit* forms (fig. 9). Fire and light are part of a broader concept which equalizes them with the divine presence, expressed in Jewish tradition through *Ner Tamid* i.e. synagogue lamps,³⁹ while European emblems in inside the Christian tradition use the eternal flame with the same prerogatives relating to the divine, while as an emblematic pictogram the flame appears in a number of different contextualized meanings, based primarily on pagan traditions.⁴⁰

The relation between the form of the monument and its symbolic decoration could be identified unequivocally in the design of *Yahrzeit* plaques, but also in main concepts and the form of their decoration. The architectonic frame on a written form, which mimics different forms of funerary and sepulchral architecture, with figures of lions and vessels with flames, and different symbols of sorrow, are exactly those elements that appear in Sumbul's monument. His stay in Vienna and knowledge, not only of the practice, but also the use of these printed plaques could be reflected in the ideological shaping of the monument's form.

³⁵ Milica MIHAILOVIĆ, *Judaica u Jugoslaviji*, Beograd 1990, pp. 12–13, 26–27, 34–37, 60–61, 76–77, 82–83.

³⁶ Cf. Vidosava NEDOMAČKI, *Stara Jevrejska umetnost u Palestini*, Beograd 1964.

³⁷ This ideology originates from the following biblical citations: Isa 9:6-7; Jer 33:15-21,2; Sam 17:12-16; Ps 89:35-37.

³⁸ Daniel SPERBER, *The Jewish Life Cycle, Customs, Lore and Iconography*, New York 2008, pp. 567–587.

³⁹ The origin of this lamp stems back as far as biblical times, such as in God's commandment: *And thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always. In the tabernacle of the congregation without the veil, which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall order it from evening to morning before the LORD: it shall be a statute for ever unto their generations on the behalf of the children of Israel* (Exod. 27:20-21).

⁴⁰ Cf. Cesare RIPA, *Baroque and Rococo Pictorial Imagery. The 1758–1760 Hertel Edition of Ripa's Iconologia with 200 Engraved Illustrations* (ed. Edward A. Maser), Mineola 1991.

Precious is the *Yahrzeit* of Corporal Isak Rafael Amar, who died at Mlado Nagoričane in 1912 (fig. 10). He testifies that the practice of using these printed Austro-Hungarian forms was equally common amongst Sephardic Jews in the Balkans. Amar's *Yahrzeit* contains an act of private memory, reflecting not only the relation of Jewish participants in the war to the remembrance of their fallen comrades, but also their relation towards their own traditions and religion. The text of the *Yahrzeit* states: *Muestro ermano Isak Rafael Amar kayo en la gera de Kumanovo diya de 12 heshvan 5763 TNCBH (tehi nafsho cerura bicror hahajim) Mozotros Kolel de Kumanovo mos ovligamos de azerle a este mansevo yortsayt. Mozotros ermanos del malugrado mansevo soldado baragan ke kayo en la gera kuando vinsieron los Serbos esta sivdad Kumanovo enprezentimos un parohet para el Ka(ha)l Kadosh de Kumanovo porke le aga kada anyo su yortsayt asigun ovligo de muestra Ley Santa por akordo de siempre Avram Refael Amar, Moshe Refael Amar, moradores de Belogrado yagen ale(h)a Elo(h)im.*⁴¹ Amar's name, along with his place of death, was engraved on the monument, while beside his picture in the *testimony* it was stated that he had been a merchant's assistant. By recording the act of the votive presentation of a parochet to the synagogue in Kumanovo, a complex system of gestures that secured the memory of the deceased in this world, but also a place for him in the world to come, was brought to a close.

The Unveiling and Reception of the Monument

The monument to fallen Jewish soldiers was solemnly unveiled on 2 October 1927. At the Sephardic Jewish cemetery at ten in the morning a large number of invitees gathered. Ministers of the royal government were attending: Andrić, Kumanudi, Milosavljević and Obradović, the Emissary of HRH the King, and Emissary of the Military Minister General Vlada Jovanović, also present were members of the diplomatic core, generals, war veterans, politicians and prominent citizens. Many members of the Jewish community were present, including the president of the Jewish Community, the Supreme Rabbi Isak Alkalaj and representatives of the committee for the construction of the monument, along with many representatives of the other Jewish Communities of the Kingdom of SCS. The unveiling of the monument was also attended by the Second Regiment infantry troop with musicians, and also representatives of the Serbian-Jewish choir Association with their flag.⁴²

The ceremony began with an address from the president of the Board, the merchant Nisim Benarojo, to the Chief Rabbi Dr Alkalaj, with a plea to consecrate the monument. After prayers were said and the monument was consecrated by the Chief Rabbi, an honorary salvo from the Second Regiment infantry troop followed. After this, the Chief Rabbi Isak Alkalaj gave a speech addressing those present, symbolically handing over the monument to the guardianship and care of the president of the Jewish Religious-School Community Dr Salomon Alkalaj, who also addressed those in attendance. After his speech, the Serbian-Jewish choir Association sang *Halleluia*h and the military

⁴¹ *Our brother Isak Rafael Amar, died in the battle of Kumanovo, on 12 Heshvan 5763. (Let his soul be tied in the sheaf of the life). We, the community from Kumanovo, make a commitment that we will conduct an annual memorial service, Yahrzeit, to Isak Rafael Amar. We, the brothers of this unlucky brave young soldier, when the Serbs conquered (Kumanovo), presented one parochet to the holy temple of Kumanovo so that we could conduct a Yahrzeit for him every year. According to the obligation of our holy law, in eternal memory, Avram Rafael Amar and Moše Rafael Amar, residents of Belgrade, let God guard him.*

⁴² *Otkrivanje spomenika 1927* (n. 19), p. 3; *Spomenik srpskim ratnicima 1927* (n. 31), p. 7.



11. Monument to Jewish soldiers fallen in wars for liberation and unification (1912–1919), side view, Sephardic cemetery, Belgrade

musicians played: *Hajmo braćo, hajmo sestre* (Come brothers, come sisters).⁴³

Both speakers emphasized the role played by Jews in the wars for the Kingdom of Serbia and also their role in the creation of the Kingdom of SCS, their true Serbian patriotism and loyalty to the nation, with which they shared the good and the bad. The main theme of these speeches saw the emphasis of heroic deeds and lives sacrificed for the fatherland with the purpose of remembering and respecting this special bond and the contribution made to a free civil society, into which Jews had been actively and freely included with their individual rights realized, in a broader European context, only at the beginning of the twentieth century. Therefore, the remembrance of the victims and their contribution to the stability of the current state had the goal of realizing a safe and autonomous place for Jews within the Kingdom in which they resided and for the good of which they traditionally prayed in the public synagogue.

The unveiling of the monument had a different meaning, in a private sense, for family members of the victims. While the ceremony was approached as an important public-political event that had clear programmatic and ideological goals, others, who were present in a personal capacity as bereaved family members, saw in it the image of the grave of those most dear to them, who were never found nor given a final resting place. It was noted that the mother of Avram and Nisim Pelosof arrived at the solemn unveiling and left without two sons, a very old woman who asked in Ladino: *Puedu yo ir ver a mis hijos?*⁴⁴ She then approached the plaque with their names caressing the place where their names were engraved, and spoke to them affectionately, telling them the family news and news from the Belgrade Jewish district *mahala*. Alongside her, there were numerous other relatives of the fallen who approached the monument in an utterly personal manner, in grief and using gestures related to their family and religious traditions, perceiving in it a site of common memory and the resting place of their dear ancestors and compatriots, enclosed by the frame of the Jewish

⁴³ *Otkrivanje spomenika* 1927 (n. 19), p. 3; *Spomenik srpskim ratnicima* 1927 (n. 31), p. 7.

⁴⁴ *Can I see my sons?*

cemetery in which it was located.⁴⁵ The existence of graves at its foundations determined, in a certain way, the location of the monument, as with other military memorials connected with cemeteries within the space of the New Cemetery in Belgrade (fig. 11).⁴⁶

A special aspect of the rhetoric that accompanied the ceremony belonged to emphasising Yugoslav identity, remarking that Jews laid down their lives for the people and stating that: *Brat je mio, ma koje vere bio*.⁴⁷ Their participation and contribution was important for the creation of Yugoslavian identity as a multinational and multiconfessional whole. The period leading up until the beginning of World War II, saw the periodical release in the press of different forms of remembering the role of Jews in the creation of the state in which they lived, which functioned almost as a form of justification, in opposition to anti-Semitic propaganda that became increasingly prevalent in this period.⁴⁸

Concluding Remarks

The monument to fallen Jewish soldiers was erected in the Sephardic cemetery in Belgrade and forms part of a complex strategy of remembering organized by the Jewish community as a way of emphasising a person's contribution to the creation of the state in which they lived and the public celebration of their heroes. The process of memorializing and heroization encompassed forming a board that dealt with gathering resources, materials about the fallen, the relocation and transfer of their remains and also the production of a written testimony as an indispensable complement and programmatic explication of the monumental structure. This process lasted almost a decade after the end of World War I, ending in 1927 with the solemn unveiling of the monument, as well as the press release of the accompanying testimony.

Dedicated to the memory of the military merits of Jews, as the other ethnicity, who unselfishly sacrificed themselves for the Serbian state in military combat, the displayed monument is unique in the context of Jewish history in the Balkan area. Military participation in the wars for the liberation of Serbia in World War I, apart from an appreciation as citizens capable of standing alongside the country in which they lived in war and crisis, brought Jews the respect of the Serbian public, consequently giving birth to the syntagm of Serbs of Moses' faith. Within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, as a specific socio-political creation, Jews visualized and manifested their place and loyalty to the ruling House of Karađorđević through the programmatic building of the monument, its solemn unveiling and the clear contextualization of the importance of the battle for unification via an emphasis of their own place in it.

Outside of the socio-political narrative in which the monument was created, its military and heroic aspects, it is a clear manifestation and visualization of Jewish identity because it highlights ideologically the role of the Jews as such, with their own religion, customs and tradition, and different from the majority of people with whom they fought. The affirmation of Jewish identity through the symbolic use of the Magen David on many sections of the monument, through complex allusions

⁴⁵ *Otkrivanje spomenika 1927* (n. 19), p. 3.

⁴⁶ Bratislava KOSTIĆ, *Novo groblje u Beogradu*, Belgrade 1999, p. 14, compares the topography of military cemeteries and war memorials in the area of the New Cemetery in Belgrade.

⁴⁷ Petar II Petrović Njegoš's proverb: *A brother is dear, no matter to what faith he may adhere*.

⁴⁸ LEBL 2001 (n. 3), p. 285; Beogradski Jevreji na Jedrenu, služili su puku Dunavske divizije drugog poziva, *Politika*, 26. 3. 1933, p. 8.

and the use of the symbolic figures of lions, as well as flaming lamps for the soul, created a permanent commemoration to the deceased. It can be assumed that the notional creator of the monument, architect Samuel Sumbul, was accustomed with the graphic sheets of *Yahrzeit* and that he transferred part of their conception onto the visual and symbolic shaping of the monument, whose inseparable function is also funerary.

The importance of this monument as a place of memory is determined even by secondary details such as the stone benches intended for those who came to stay there for a while, adopting the meaning of mute history, through presence on that very place, a unique sacral space, a place of death and its rituals, but also a space for the heroization of individuals and the glory of war, who established the state itself, building in it their particular Jewish identity shaped by customs, faith and tradition.

Spomenik judovskim vojakom, padlim med letoma 1912 in 1919, na sefardskem pokopališču v Beogradu

Povzetek

Na sefardskem judovskem pokopališču v Beogradu je bil leta 1927 postavljen spomenik judovskim vojakom, ki so sodelovali v balkanskih vojnah in prvi svetovni vojni. S postavitvijo spominskega obeležja je bil izpostavljen prispevek Judov pri ustvarjanju države, v kateri so živeli. V procesu ohranjanja spomina na vojne žrtve in njihovega heroiziranja je bil ustanovljen odbor, ki je poskrbel za zbiranje sredstev in gradiva o padlih osebah, za izkopavanje in prenos njihovih posmrtnih ostankov pa tudi za izdelavo in natis *Spomenice*, ki predstavlja neizogibno dopolnitev in programsko obrazložitev spomeniške celote. Proces, ki je trajal skoraj celo desetletje, se je zaključil s slavnostnim odkritjem spomenika in izidom spremljevalne *Spomenice* leta 1927.

Spomenik iz belega kamna stoji desno od vhoda na judovsko sefardsko pokopališče in je zasnovan kot arhitektonsko-kiparska kompozicija. Monumentalna zamisel arhitekta Samuela Sumbula je bila izvedena v delavnici kamnoseka Josifa Dajča, ki je bil prav tako pripadnik judovske skupnosti in se je skupaj s Sumbulom podpisal na kamnitih stebrih ograje, ki obkroža spomenik. Spomenik je zasnovan v obliki polkrožnega platoja, v središču katerega se dviguje obelisku podobna forma s štirimi stebri in piramidalnim zaključkom. Na vrhu, ki ga krasi srbski grb, stoji dvoglavi orel. Na obeh straneh platoja so polkrožno postavljene kamnite nagrobne plošče z imeni pokopanih vojakov. Celoto flankirata figuri sedečih levov, spomenik pa polkrožno obdaja kamnita ograja s klopmi. Ozadje zapira masiven segment trapezoidne oblike, ki ga sestavlja pet plošč. Oba para stranskih plošč nosita vklesana imena padlih vojakov, osrednja pa vsebuje posvetilo padlim junakom. Nad skrajnima ploščama sta postavljeni kamniti urni s prižganim plamenom. Sprednji del spomenika je od sprehajalne steze ločen z nizkimi stebrički in bakreno verigo.

Poleg svoje socialnopolitične narativnosti in vojaško-spominskega značaja je spomenik služil za vizualizacijo judovske identitete. Doprinos Judov v vojni je bil junaški in trajen, četudi so bili njihova religija, običaji in tradicija drugačni. Judovsko identiteto uveljavljajo in potrjujejo judovski simboli, kot so Davidova zvezda in figure levov pa tudi svetilke s plamenom za duše, ki tvorijo večni spomin na umrle. Skupaj z uradnimi vojaškimi in državnimi simboli konstituira spomeniško celoto.

Spomenik, posvečen spominu na vojaške zasluge Judov, posebne etnične skupine, ki se je v vojaškem smislu nesebično žrtvovala za srbsko državo, je v kontekstu judovske zgodovine v balkanskem prostoru edinstven primer. Z vojaškim sodelovanjem v vojnah za osvoboditev Srbije in v prvi svetovni vojni so se Judje izkazali kot državljani, ki se v primeru vojne ali druge nadloge znajo postaviti na stran države, v kateri živijo. To jim je prineslo spoštovanje srbske javnosti, pozneje pa je nastala še sintagma o Judih kot Srbih Mojzesove vere. Judje so svojo zvestobo vladarski hiši Karađorđevićev vizualizirali in manifestirali ravno s programsko gradnjo in svečanim odkritjem spomenika, v specifični družbenopolitični tvorbi, kot je bila kraljevina Jugoslavija, pa so tudi jasno postavljali v kontekst pomembnost borbe za združitev in pri tem poudarjali svojo lastno vlogo v njej.