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**Gli ebrei, Venezia e l'Europa tra Otto e Novecento**

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*The Turkish-Sephardi community in Vienna*

1492 was a fateful year for Spain, indeed. That same year, with the final Reconquista, eight centuries of Arab-Muslim rule came to an end, Jews were expelled from the country, and Christopher Columbus embarked on a journey that would culminate in the discovery of the New World.

The presentation “The Turkish-Sephardi community in Vienna” looks into the ramifications of one of three critical historical events that mark the end of the European Middle Ages, that is, the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, who subsequently found refuge in North Africa, in different Italian cities, but mainly in the Ottoman Empire. Those who initially had fled to Portugal eventually left the Iberian Peninsula for the Netherlands and Northern Germany. In the wake of Ottoman conquests, Jews of Sephardic descent, the so-called Sephardim, were able to establish culturally and economically significant communities on the Balkans. Already at the time of the Viennese ghetto on Unterer Werd, numerous relations existed between Viennese and, by now, Turkish Jews. However, only from the time of the peace treaties between the two empires, Habsburg and Ottoman, in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, were Turkish Jews able to benefit from the right of free movement.

Following the establishment of the Turkish-Jewish community in Vienna, it was granted freedom of religious service. From the start, its prayer house was located in Vienna’s second district. In 1887, the striking Sephardic-Turkish synagogue in Moorish architecture was finally inaugurated on Zirkusgasse. With portraits of the Habsburg as well as the Ottoman emperor decorating the entrance hall, the community paid loyal homage to both majesties and both homelands. This jewel of Viennese sacral architecture as well as almost all of this city’s other synagogues and Jewish prayer houses were destroyed in November 1938. Eventually, most of the community members were deported and murdered.

Vienna’s Sephardic Jews were in many ways mediators between East and West, Orient and Occident, Asia and Europe. They carried out this mediating role not only as traders and merchants importing wool and cotton, silk and tobacco, sugar and spices into the West. But in particular, they took on this mediating role in the cultural area as well. They founded the first ever printing press in Constantinople and a Sephardic press in Vienna, which served the entire Balkans and was written in the specific language they had brought with them from Spain, Ladino.

While the presentation “The Turkish-Sephardi community in Vienna” focuses on the Viennese Sephardic community, it will also point to the relationship between the Viennese and the Venice community.