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## A TEXTILE FROM İZMİR WITH AN EMBROIDERED LION. REMNANT OF THE ROBE OF SABBATAI ZEVI?

In February 2007 the Jewish Museum in Prague was contacted by Mr. Efe Erginer from the Turkish city of İzmir (historically Smyrna) with a request to assess a textile treasure in his possession, namely a red fabric with an embroidered lion motif placed in a floral wreath.<sup>1</sup> Drawing on the claims of people from among the *Maaminim* (a religious society of followers of Sabbatai Zevi) of İzmir,<sup>2</sup> Mr. Erginer mentioned that this was a fragment of a caftan that actually belonged to Sabbatai Zevi, who wore it during religious services. Mr. Erginer, who is a Muslim and does not belong to the *Maaminim*, informed us via e-mail of how the symbolism on the textile had been interpreted by members of the *Maaminim*. The item was presented to us via a low-definition colour digital picture.

The matter was looked into by two of the Jewish Museum's specialists, Dana Veselská and Alexandr Putík. After analyzing the picture, they came up with a preliminary hypothesis as to when and where the textile was made and regarding the possible circumstances under which it may have come to the Ottoman Empire. Further research enabled the sending of quality digital images of the item by Mr. Erginer, who via e-mail clarified certain details concerning the finding of the item and the traditions connected with the robe, as well as offering his own interpretation of particular aspects.<sup>3</sup> The results of the research carried out by the Jewish Museum's staff can now be presented for discussion by experts.

The main aim of this report is to address the question as to whether the item in question was indeed owned by Sabbatai Zevi. Various issues need to be dealt with to this end. First and foremost, it is necessary to describe the circumstances under which the textile was found and identified. Special attention will be paid to the tradition that is connected with the treasure by the present-day *Maaminim* community in İzmir. As this is a particularly sensitive societal issue, we have been requested by Mr. Erginer not to mention any members of the *Maaminim* by name.<sup>4</sup>

On the basis of a provenance analysis of the fabric and technique applied on the embroidery, we will also be determining the textile's period and place of origin, as well as assessing its function. An analysis of the iconography and symbolism used

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1) The first e-mail from Mr. Erginer is dated 5 February, 2007. Mr. Erginer contacted the Jewish Museum in Prague on the recommendation of Mrs. Daniela Di Castro, the Director of the Museo Ebraico di Roma.

2) For the history of the *Maaminim* (Dönmeh), see Gerschom Scholem, 'The Crypto-Jewish Sect of the Dönmeh (Sabbatians) in Turkey', in: *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays in Jewish Spirituality*, New York 1971, pp. 142–166.

3) The e-mails from Mr. Erginer are dated 3 March, 9 March, 19 July, 21 November, 16 December, 21 December, 27 December, 28 December 2007; 4 January, 7 January, 8 January, 20 January 2008.

4) Members of this society traditionally keep everything to do with their religion and customs strictly secret. Cf. G. Scholem, *op. cit.*, p. 142.



İzmir textile with embroidered lion motif. Photo by Efe Erginer, 2007

on the textile will help us to consider the professional, social and religious standing of the embroider and of the people who commissioned and received the textile. We shall also look at the historical circumstances under which the item may have made its way to the Ottoman Empire from its place of origin. Attention will also be focused on contemporary reports from the period under discussion concerning textiles and other treasures at the court of Sabbatai Zevi in Galipoli (*Migdal Oz*). The chapters dealing with costumes and textiles are by Dana Veselská; the rest of the report and the conclusions are by Alexandr Putík.

#### **THE ORIGIN OF THE TREASURE AND THE TRADITIONS ASSOCIATED WITH IT<sup>5</sup>**

Efe Erginer, a dentist from İzmir, inherited the textile treasure in 2001 from his late mother, Ümmü Gülsüm Varlıoğlu (1914–2001), a former high school science

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5) All the information about the origin of the textile and of the related opinions from among the *Maaminim* comes from Mr. Efe Erginer. We are greatly indebted to Mr. Efe Erginer and his son Mr. Emrah Erginer for their immense help in our research.

teacher.<sup>6</sup> Found in a coffer at his mother's house, its origin or purpose could not be determined as it did not include any description. What was not in doubt, however, was the considerable age of the treasure. Mr. Erginer (born in 1947 in Smyrna) had never seen the item at his mother's house and had never heard anything about it from her or from any of his relatives. Not even his father, who was the second husband of Mrs. Ümmü Gülsüm Varlıoğlu, knew of the existence of the treasure.

Seeking to trace the origin of the textile, Efe Erginer could think of two possible scenarios of how his mother came to acquire it: either it was passed down from her father, Mr. Sabri (Hayri) (d. 1927), an antique dealer in Ankara who moved there in 1924 from the Balkan peninsula after the population exchange between Greece and Turkey, or she received it from her third husband, to whom she was married in 1979–80. Considering that the item was not in their house at the time of his mother's second marriage, Efe Erginer inclined towards the second possibility.

As his mother's third husband (who was no longer alive in 2001) came from an important İzmir family that belonged to the *Maaminim*, Efe Erginer asked his friends from this society to help him identify the item. Having had their interest aroused, the local *Maaminim* went so far as to declare the textile treasure a remnant of Sabbatai Zevi's robe. This claim was later confirmed by *Maaminim* members from Istanbul who had been contacted on this matter. The Erginers' house became a place to visit for the *Maaminim*, who were deeply moved by the sight of the treasure. Among the local academic elites within this society, the discovery provoked a lively interest in their own past and, especially, in the fate of the textile treasure. Efe Erginer was equally interested, even though he was not one of the *Maaminim*.

The interest in this issue, marked by a study of the available literature, however, has one problematic aspect, as far as an expert assessment of the textile treasure is concerned – it is not always possible now to tell which claims and appraisals reflect the authentic tradition as stemming from the community's ancestors and elders, which come from specialist literature, and which are the result of the deductions and considerations of the present-day *Maaminim*.

I consider the testimony from one of Mr. Erginer's İzmir friends who cites his grandmother's recollection of how Sabbatai wore the robe, for example, to reflect an authentic local tradition.<sup>7</sup> It is disputable, however, that the identification of the İzmir treasure as the remnant of the robe worn by Sabbatai Zevi when he received the emissaries of the Chief Rabbi of Lvov in July 1666 stems from an authentic tradition. It is unclear how old the tradition of interpreting the meaning of symbols on robes is.<sup>8</sup> Both these questions will be dealt with in the following chapters.

Of interest is the recorded description of an episode from the afore-mentioned audience with Sabbatai: Sabbatai (dressed in a red robe) promised retaliation for the violence committed against the Jews. According to the tradition of the

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6) E-mail by E. Erginer of 16 December 2007.

7) "For you yesterday I've again asked to one of my *Maaminim* friends in Izmir 'Does this object belong to Sabbtai Zevi?'; He answered me as 'this object belongs to him. And my grandmother told me that he was wearing this robe (this textile was placed at his left shoulder) during his religious ceremonies...'" E-mail from E. Erginer, dated 28 December 2007.

8) The interpretation itself is factually inaccurate.

*Maaminim* cited by Mr. Erginer, he was speaking about retaliation for the Jews murdered in the land of Crimca, by which is probably meant Crimea.<sup>9</sup> However, no exceptional anti-Jewish excesses occurred here before 1666. As is known from other reliable sources, Sabbatai promised revenge on the perpetrators of the massacres committed in 1648 by the Cossack troops under the leadership of Khmelnytsky. It would appear that the historical memory of the *Maaminim* has connected the Khmelnytsky massacres with the much later violence that accompanied the capture of Crimea by Russian troops in 1783.<sup>10</sup>

Mr. Erginer did not manage to get answers to certain questions that I put to the *Maaminim* through his mediation.<sup>11</sup> I did not receive any response, for example, to the question as to whether the *Maaminim* knew that the family of Ümmü Gülsüm Varlıol's third husband were in possession of the robe. The members of this family who would have had most to say about the matter are no longer alive.

The present-day *Maaminim*'s conviction as to the genuineness of the relic may be based either on a knowledge of local family traditions (which, however, they refuse to speak about) or on a recognition of elements of traditional Sabbatian iconography that they are familiar with. If the *Maaminim*'s conviction is based exclusively on an assessment of iconography, it is possible that they may have made an erroneous judgement. The treasure may have had a different origin, but I consider this to be most unlikely.

In order to describe in more detail, verify and date the various traditions of the *Maaminim* that are connected with the robe or robes of Sabbatai Zevi, it will be necessary in the future to conduct further research with use made of oral history and archive searches. The issue of Sabbatian iconography should be also explored in more detail.

### **ANALYSIS OF THE ORIGIN OF THE FABRIC AND OF THE PERIOD AND PLACE THE EMBROIDERY WAS MADE**

At first glance, it would appear to be very easy to determine the age and origin of the textile fragment in question. It should be pointed out in advance, however, that the item was examined and determined only on the basis of photographs, albeit of high quality. Unfortunately, we did not have the textile available for direct viewing, study, detailed measurements or sampling. Our conclusions, therefore, to a certain extent provide qualified assessments. From the photographs we were given, it is clear that the item is an almost square textile fragment with irregular edges and that it has embroidered decoration in brightly coloured yarn and metal

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9) "(He told this because of the revenge of the 300 thousands of Jews were killed at the Crimca)" E-mail by E. Erginer of 9 March 2007.

10) Cf. G. Scholem, *op. cit.*, p.142.

11) The *Maaminim* with whom Erginer was in contact did not know the answer to the question as to how the İzmir textile was related to Sabbatai Zevi's robe, which was reported on by Dr. Gad Nassi Cohen. This is probably a different textile treasure; see Gad Nassi, *Secret Muslim Jews Await Their Messiah: Shabbetai Tzvi*, in: <http://www.sefarad.org/publication/lm/009/nassi.html> (accessed 14/2/2008).





Embroidery from İzmir. Technical drawing by A. Jašková and A. Halíková

thread with a lion motif in a floral frame. The fragment is lined with coarse linen, perhaps hemp. According to the person who owns it, the maximum size of the item is 270 × 330 mm.<sup>12</sup>

The material and technique used in the making of the item appear to be the easiest to determine. The fragment is most probably made of silk atlas of a wine red colour. From the available photographs, it cannot be ascertained whether the hard-to-identify pattern of the fabric was achieved by weaving (damask effect) or by another – e.g., chemical – technique (moiré effect). At present, on the basis of a comparison with photographs of a detail of another fabric depicted in M. Cataldi Gallo's book,<sup>13</sup> we incline towards the view that this is silk damask, probably of European provenance, perhaps from Italy.

12) Height vs. width.

13) Marzia Cataldi Gallo, *Arte e Lusso della Seta a Genova dal '500 al '700*, Torino 2000. Colour photograph for the catalogue item 16 on the unnumbered illustrated section, description on p. 214.



Reconstruction of placement of İzmir textile on a man's garment from the period, based on a design by D. Veselská. Drawing by A. Jašková and A. Halíková

Although the pattern of the fabric is not entirely clear in the photographs, it is possible to reconstruct some of its parts. Similarly patterned damasks appear fairly frequently in comparative literature, but their dating is always indirect, ranging from between 1600 and 1700. Unfortunately, we do not share the optimism of some of our colleagues with regard to the age of these fabrics,<sup>14</sup> or concerning their place of origin; like Cataldi Gallo,<sup>15</sup> we tend towards the view that it is a fabric from the period around or before the middle of the seventeenth century. In any

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14) An overview of the dating of similar textiles is provided in Saskia Durian-Ress's *Textilien Sammlung Bernheimer: Paramente 15.–19. Jahrhundert*, München 1991, catalogue item 61, p. 147. Durian-Ress accepts the dating given by other authorities in the field (Bunt, Markowsky) and considers that her example of damask is from Spain and that it dates from the very beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

event, this is documented by the only preserved and dated damask with a similar pattern in the diverse textile collection of the Jewish Museum in Prague; this was used in the decoration of a synagogue curtain dating from 1702.<sup>16</sup> Considering the state of the fabric, the nature of the fibres used and the manner in which it was executed, we do not assume that the İzmir textile is a modern replica from the period of Historicism, but, on the basis of the afore-mentioned analysis, we tend towards the view that it is a fabric from around the middle of the seventeenth century.

Often through the mediation of Jewish merchants, these and similar silk damasks were distributed from Italy to the whole of Europe, including countries beyond the Alps. Disregarding for a moment all other evidence, then, the textile fragment in question may have originated in a wide area of Europe, particularly in the south, centre and north. Due to the widespread popularity of these fabrics, which were used both for costumes and for liturgical purposes, their makers occasionally encountered competition in relatively distant counties, such as Germany and Poland. The only serious threat to Italian silk makers, however, emerged in the 1670s with the exceptional success of French attempts at silk making, which in the following century led to the transfer of nearly all of Europe's silk production exclusively to the land of the Sun King.

The nature of the embroidery under discussion and the technique used in its making may be another determining element. The embroidery was done in colourful, twisted yarns, probably of silk (with predominant green and creamy hues) and in gold and silver thread using the satin stitch and the long and short stitch. It was executed on other embroidery material (also red) and later sewn on the primary damask. This is clearly visible in the spots where the embroidery is missing (for example, in the upper left part of the item). The edges of the sewn-on parts are covered with strong, twisted metal thread.

Considering the expensive embroidery material and the thread (silk and metal thread) that was employed, as well as the relatively high-quality and precisely formed figure of the animal motif and the floral frame, we assume that this is the work of a professional embroiderer, rather than an amateur. If we acknowledge that the date of the fabric is correct, i.e., that the embroidery is from the seventeenth century, or more specifically from the period around the mid-seventeenth century, then this is not the work of a professional from one of the European court or textile centres. The embroideries produced in these centres were indeed of an

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15) M. Cataldi Gallo, *op. cit.*, colour photographs for catalogue items 20 and 22 in the unnumbered illustrated section; description of the fabric on pp. 215f. According to Gallo, the two comparable fabrics come from Italy (Liguria) and date from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, specifically from 1600–1650.

16) Synagogue curtain Inv. No. 16630 from Prague's High Synagogue, donated by Judah Leib ben Hayyim Basch. Published by L. Kybalová. See Ludmila Kybalová with Michaela Scheibová, Iveta Vondrášková and Marcela Vondrová, 'Catalogue: A Selection of Bohemian and Moravian Synagogues Textile', in: Ludmila Kybalová, E. Kosáková and A. Putík, eds., *Textiles from the Bohemian and Moravian Synagogues from the Collections of the Jewish Museum in Prague*, Prague, JMP 2003, pp. 204f., item 281. Kybalová states that the fabric is "perhaps Italian, perhaps first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century". We consider this date to be a typing error and, considering the dimensions of the material used, its state and authentic use, we believe that Kybalová had in mind the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

exceptional quality. The İzmir embroidery is not of such outstanding quality, as demonstrated, for example, by its current state. Moreover, in terms of its nature and the manner in which it was executed, it refers back to earlier embroideries. This would attest to its provenance in a 'less important' European locality, such as Bohemia, Moravia, Poland or Hungary, or in a more distant area of Europe to the north, south or east. The embroideries of the highest quality from this period came to these regions as treasures for the most part after a certain delay, when the market in the country of origin had become saturated with such items, and it was some time later that they were imitated by local makers in these outlying areas.

Such were probably also the professional points of departure for the maker of the embroidery in question. Unlike more amateur makers, however, he was familiar with the characteristic features of fauna and flora depicted, as well as having a knowledge of the specific technical features of the stitches and materials used; the lion and plants in the wreath are rendered with unusual precision, albeit with a certain archaic style. For a member of an embroiderers' guild, however, the ability to do one's own creative work (i.e., not only embroidery, but also embroidery design) was already a requirement in the guild tests; genuine masters of embroidery were placed on a par with fine artists of the day for their craft.<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, the actual technique of the embroidery of the lion in a floral frame, together with the use of a combination of embroidery materials (silk with metal thread) is typical for the period around and after the middle of the seventeenth century in the 'less important' European localities mentioned above. More intricate zoomorphic and anthropomorphic compositions, which had last been employed to a large extent in the Gothic period, appeared at this time and place. The delicate, linear and ornamental embroidery in metal thread from the Renaissance period was starting to develop into interesting mosaics of various surfaces, which were achieved by using a combination of different stitches and embroidery materials.<sup>18</sup>

The last major point to address here is the purpose of the original textile, of which the fragment in question was a part. It was certainly not a flat textile mate-

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17) In *Výšivky minulých storočí* [Embroideries of the Past Centuries], Bratislava 1984, p. 67, Eva Toránová mentions that according to the articles of the Košice Embroidery Guild from 1692 an embroidery master is required to make an embroidery of a coat of arms, among other things. Although in *Barokní textilie ze sbírek Uměleckoprůmyslového muzea v Praze* [Baroque Textiles from the Collections of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague], Praha 1974, p. 13, Milena Zeminová cites, in this context, a decree of Rudolf II from 1595 on the need for painters to be involved in embroidery workshops; as Zeminová acknowledges, the artistic design of embroideries in the following century was left up to the embroiderer and the need for cooperation with fine artists was no longer considered necessary in this period.

18) For example, E. Toránová, *op. cit.*, on p. 52, presents the motif of a lamb from a Church cover dating from 1656, which is of great interest in terms of technique and design. A number of other examples appear in Mária Varjú-Ember, *Old Textiles (The Treasures of the Hungarian National Museum)*, Budapest 1980 (according to Varjú-Ember, some of these are from Transylvania in South-East Europe) and in M. Zeminová, *op. cit.* In *Polskie tkaniny i hafty XVI–XVIII wieku* [Polish Fabrics and Embroideries in the 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> Centuries], Wrocław 1954, Tadeusz Mankowski brings our attention, among other things, to an embroidery from the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, which is No. 37 in the unnumbered black-and-white illustrated section.



rial, such as a cushion, cover or flag. Considering the irregularity of the edges of the fragment – particularly the two jagged slits at the lower edges – we infer that it was probably part of a garment. The size and shape of the item suggest that it may have been the rear upper part of a man's coat<sup>19</sup> of the kind worn in 1630–70.<sup>20</sup> If it originally was indeed a garment, then it was clearly the back part (uncut); in the period fashion, buttons were not used on the back of men's garments. In view of the nature of the fashion of the day, it could not have been part of a woman's outfit (unless, for example, it is part of a folk costume that we are unaware of).

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There is nothing that follows from our analysis of the origin of the textile or of the way the embroidery was executed that could rule out the possibility that the item dates from the period of the Messianic movement, i.e., in the second half of the 1660s. An item made most probably in Central Europe may have come into the possession of Sabbatai Zevi. For details, see the next chapter, 'The royal court of Sabbatai Zevi in Gallipoli. Visitors and gifts bestowed'.

## ICONOGRAPHY

### *Heraldic description*

The central element of the textile in question is the embroidery, which depicts a lion framed by a wreath. What is striking at first glance is the heraldic nature of the design. The lion figure is depicted in a way that was standard in the traditions of Central European heraldry.<sup>21</sup> The heraldic nature of the depiction is exhibited also by the wreath, which may be classified as a triumphal crown.<sup>22</sup> In European heraldry of the period, such wreaths were usually an adornment, which was not an actual part of the coat of arms. An example of such use is the 1723 banner of the Bohemian Estate of Lords, where the Bohemian lion is surrounded by a laurel wreath.<sup>23</sup> From the design, however, it does not follow that the lion motif on the textile represents an actual coat of arms that was used in accordance with heraldic law, for it may be a sign that merely imitates a coat of arms. When considering the

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19) The assumed shape is documented by a drawing.

20) For more, see Ludmila Kybalová, *Dějiny odívání: barok a rokoko* [The History of Clothing: Baroque and Rococo], Praha 1997, p. 62, pattern design on p. 70. The line of the raised waistband on the textile from İzmir would also correspond to this date. Similarly in Natalie Rothstein, *Four Hundred Years of Fashion*, London 1984, p. 48, Catalogue No. 79.

21) The Central European nature of the depiction of the lion has been confirmed by several heraldic specialists, namely Pavel Sedláček, Danko Čumlivský and Zdirad Čech. The latter has drawn our attention to a 1670 engraving from the collections of a museum in Berne, which depicts a heraldic lion very similar to the one on the textile from İzmir, see Donald L. Galbreath – Léon Jéquier, *Lehrbuch der Heraldik*, München, Battenberg-Verlag 1978. On the basis of his experience, Dr. Čumlivský has also confirmed that the embroidery is from Central Europe. Our thanks to the above experts for providing consultation.

22) Charles Norton Elvin, *A Dictionary of Heraldry. Heraldry Today*, London 1889, reprint: 1994, p. 46; Plate 24, Fig. 34.



Izmir textile, detail of embroidered lion motif. Photo by Efe Erginer, 2007

religious and social affiliations of the person for whom the robe was intended, it is very important to determine the status of the depiction in terms of heraldic law.

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23) See Eva Gregorovičová, ed., *Treasures of the State Central Archives in Prague: the State of Bohemia and Czechoslovakia in Documents 1158–1990: Exhibition Catalogue*, Prague, State Central Archives, 2001, Catalogue No. 42. In later heraldry, triumphal wreaths encircle the escutcheon. This is customary in Napoleonic heraldry, in the state heraldry of certain Latin American and Islamic states and in Italian civic heraldry.

The heraldic lion on the textile is not placed on the shield, but this is not enough to resolve the question of the status of the depiction. The use of a heraldic charge without a shield but with a floral ornament was common, for instance, on standards;<sup>24</sup> the afore-mentioned banner from 1723 is an example of this. A charge without a shield may also appear on the tabards of heralds.

The textile in question depicts a Lion crowned rampant. In accordance with heraldic customs, it is facing dexter. Mention should be made of the heraldic tinctures used: the lion is embroidered with a yellow silk yarn and gold metal thread on a red base. In heraldry, the colour yellow is used to depict gold. The blazon of the coat of arms or sign therefore reads: *Gules, Lion crowned rampant, or*. Claws and the tongue of the blazoned lion are also gold. In heraldry, these parts of the body are usually depicted in red, but this does not apply if the lion is placed on a red field.<sup>25</sup> The embroidered lion on this textile is single-tailed and, in contravention of the customs of Central European heraldry, is depicted without genitalia.

Special attention should be paid to what the lion is standing on, or what it seems to be embedded in. The way it is depicted – which, among other things, creates the impression of perspective – does not correspond to the standard heraldic rules of depiction, which require stylization and flattening. Heraldic animals usually only touch the base. The base here is embroidered in silver thread. It is not easy to interpret this part of the coat of arms, as it cannot be identified with any standard base that is used in heraldry, such as a rock or mound.<sup>26</sup> According to some of the present-day *Maaminim*, it represents the Torah Ark protected by the lion, but this interpretation is not valid.<sup>27</sup> I assume that it is a cloud, albeit one that is not depicted in a standard heraldic way.<sup>28</sup> It should be pointed out that the lower part of the silver base is damaged and that it was originally positioned somewhat higher.

The wreath, or triumphal crown, consists of two parts. The dexter part comprises a flowering laurel sprig; the sprig is gold, the leaves are yellow-green and blue-green. The sinister part of the wreath comprises a palm sprig, which has the same colours. As the embroiderer probably considered the colours he used for these plants to be natural, they may be blazoned with the use of the term ‘proper’. The use of a wreath of laurel and palm sprigs was standard in seventeenth century

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24) Personal communication by Zdirad Čech.

25) “*The Heraldic Lion is always armed and langued gules unless such be the tincture of the field.*” Ch. N. Elvin, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

26) Zdirad Čech, one of the most important experts on Czech and European heraldry, has never encountered this type of base. In his view, it is reminiscent of a rough-hewn stone or the capital of a column.

27) The base does not resemble the Torah Ark in terms of shape or material. The protection of the Ark is not compatible with being trodden upon. Nor can one agree with the view put forward by some of the *Maaminim* that the lion is holding a key to the Ark in its mouth. These opinions are probably current speculations.

28) “*Clouds. Very common bearing in Coat Armour, particularly with devices issuing therefrom.*” Ch. N. Elvin, *op. cit.*, p. 31, Plate 23, Fig. 37. Very frequently Arms are represented as issuing from the clouds. See James Parker, *A Glossary of Terms Used in Heraldry* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. in 1894), in: <http://www.heraldsnet.org/saitou/parker/Jpglossc.htm> (last updated 7/8/2004, accessed 21/1/2008). The depiction of an animal on a cloud is not known in heraldry.

heraldry.<sup>29</sup> The design of the wreath is artistically effective, but the depiction of the laurel is somewhat inaccurate from a purely botanical perspective.

Overall, the coat of arms or sign on the textile may be blazoned as follows: *Gules, on the clouds, argent, crowned Lion rampant, or. All encircled by a triumphal crown, the dexter part comprising a laurel sprig, the sinister part a palm sprig, both proper.*

From a heraldic perspective, the sign in the given form – i.e., with an unusual base, whatever it is meant to depict – cannot be identified with any standard coat of arms that is known. It may be considered a coat of arms only on the purely theoretical assumption that the embroiderer was excessively ‘diligent’ by adding the base. Such an ‘improvement’ to the work, however, would not have been accepted or – in particular – paid by the aristocratic client.

If the gold crowned Lion rampant had only been placed on a red shield (without standing on any base), such a symbol would bear a similarity to the oldest depiction of the coat of arms of Macedonia, dating from the end of the sixteenth century. The lion on this Macedonian symbol, however, is fork tailed (*queue fourchée*).<sup>30</sup> Paradoxically, if we disregard the base, the symbol on the textile under discussion is – in terms of the heraldic blazon, but not of the design – identical to the recently adopted state emblem of Bulgaria (which is also single-tailed)! It should be noted that there was no tradition of heraldry in the Balkan countries belonging to the Ottoman Empire between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. The emblems of individual Balkan counties were artificially created at the end of the sixteenth century by the Spanish admiral of southern Slavic descent, Petar Ohmučević (Don Pedro) as part of attempts to prove the princely origin of his family. These coats of arms were not used in Balkan countries, which were provinces of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>31</sup> The artistic characteristics of the depiction of the lion on the textile from İzmir – originally probably from Central Europe – have nothing in common with the Balkan tradition.<sup>32</sup>

### *The meaning of the symbolism*

Considering the artistic stylization of the symbols on the textile, we shall first assess the symbolism from the perspective of its heraldic meaning. We will also be looking briefly at the meanings of symbols in Jewish and Christian or Antique tra-

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29) Personal communication by Zdirad Čech.

30) See Aleksandar Matkovski, *The Coat of Arms of Macedonia*, Skoplje 1990 (English summary), in: [http://heraldry.mol.com.mk/oldest\\_arms\\_in\\_macedonia.htm](http://heraldry.mol.com.mk/oldest_arms_in_macedonia.htm) (accessed 7/2/2008); Jovan Jonovski, *Macedonian Symbols, the National Flag and the Arms*, in: [http://heraldry.mol.com.mk/macedonian\\_symbols.htm](http://heraldry.mol.com.mk/macedonian_symbols.htm) (accessed 22/1/2008). For the picture, see also Aleksandar Palavestro, *Beogradski grbovnik II i njeovo mesto u ilirskoj heraldici. Simboli slave i moći* [Belgrade Armorial II, and Its Place in Illyrian Heraldry], in: <http://www.ciode.ca/kroz%20istoriju/9-grbovnik.html> (accessed 22/1/2008).

31) A similar coat of arms may theoretically have been embroidered for a patriotic emigrant from the Balkans living in Central Europe, but such a person would not have had any reason to ‘improve’ the form of his coat of arms.

32) Communication by Zdirad Čech.

ditions.<sup>33</sup> In this context, we must be aware of the fact that the same symbols may have different meanings in various religious and cultural milieus. First of all, it should be emphasized that the heraldic, or pseudo-heraldic ornamentation of the textile under discussion does not contain any religious symbols that are widely known or easily recognizable. Although heraldry was established in the milieu of medieval western Christianity, and many coats of arms contain Christian symbolism (in particular, innumerable versions of the cross), there are coats of arms with a universal meaning which are used in several religious and cultural groups. Probably the most important such symbol is the lion. “*The Noblest of all wild beasts, which is made to be the emblem of strength and valour, and is on that account the most frequently borne in Coat-Armour, as a charge, Crest, and Supporters.*”<sup>34</sup> The lion is featured in the emblems of many countries, rulers and aristocrats; the Jewish financier Jacob Bassevi von Treyenberg was also proud to have two of them in his heraldic bearings.<sup>35</sup>

The symbol of a lion, of course, by far predates heraldry, whose beginnings date back to the middle of the twelfth century. The Jewish interpretation of this symbol is based on the Tanakh, particularly on the wording the patriarch Jacob’s blessing to his sons: “*Judah is a lion’s whelp; ... He stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as a lioness; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet until Shiloh comes.*” (Gen 49:9–10). The lion is, in particular, the symbol of the tribe of Judah, King David and the Messiah.<sup>36</sup> In another passage of the Pentateuch, Moses compares the tribe of Dan to a lion: “*And of the Dan he said, Dan is a lion’s whelp: he shall leap from Bashan.*” (Deut 33:22). Both traditions are harmonious in conception, according to which the Messiah will come from the male line of the tribe of Judah or from the female line of the tribe of Dan.<sup>37</sup> The lion is also widely used as a symbol of valour and of the Messiah in other books of the Bible, the Mishnah, the Gemarah, the Midrash and the Kabbalah.<sup>38</sup>

Christianity adopted certain traditions from the Tanakh while adapting their interpretation. The Lion, for example, became identified with Jesus. The most famous instance of this interpretation is in a passage from Revelations: “*See the Lion of the tribe Judah, the Root of David.*” (Rev 5:41). Considering the large amount of various other symbols for Jesus, however, the Lion plays a limited role in Christian soteriological symbolism.

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33) We shall leave aside the question of Islamic symbolism, as it may be ruled out that the textile was intended for a Muslim.

34) Ch. N. Elvin, *op. cit.*, p. 84. See also Milan Buben, *Encyklopedie heraldiky* [Encyclopedia of Heraldry], Praha, Nakladatelství Libri, 1997, pp. 238f.

35) Jakub Hrdlička, *Pražská heraldika. Prague Heraldry. Prager Heraldik*, Prague, Public History [1993], p. 171, Fig. 55.

36) In the predominant Jewish tradition, Shiloh is identified as the Redeemer.

37) Abram Kanof, *Jewish Symbolic Art*, Jerusalem, Gefen Publishing House 1990, p. 26.

38) Ellen Frankel – Betsy Platkin Teutsh, *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols*, Northvale – New Jersey – London, Jason Aranson 1995, pp. 98–100; Ida Huberman, *Living Symbols. Symbols in Jewish Art and Tradition*, Ramat Gan, Massada 1988, pp. 27f., 54, Plates 95 and 102.



With a certain simplification, it may be said in summary that for Christians the lion depicted in heraldry or elsewhere was an emblem of strength, valour, a secular ruler or gallant nobleman and that for Jews it symbolized, apart from strength and valour, in particular the tribe of Judah, the Jewish nation and the Messiah, the son of David.

Now let us return to the textile in question and the afore-mentioned problem of the base on which the lion is standing. If it is a cloud, as I suggest, it may be hypothesized that the entire motif – i.e., the lion on a cloud – symbolizes the Celestial Lion or the Lion of the Exalting Dwelling (*arya de-ve illae*). The origin of this symbol is in the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Hullin 59b,<sup>39</sup> where the Celestial Lion represents the Messiah. The Celestial Lion played a very important role in the history of Sabbataism. In a letter from September 1665 that was addressed to the head of the Egyptian Jews, the *chelebi* Raphael Joseph (many copies of this letter circulated in Europe from October 1665 onwards), Nathan of Ghaza anticipated, among other things, the individual stages of salvation. He has the following to say about Sabbatai's final appearance: "...he will return from the river Sambatyon, mounted on a Celestial Lion; his bridle will be a seven-headed serpent and "fire out of his mouth devoured."<sup>40</sup> Of more importance is the fact that Sabbatai himself was very soon given the title *arya de-ve illae*. In the prayers that were said for Sabbatai in synagogues in Smyrna on the Sabbath of the 11<sup>th</sup> of Tevet 426 (9 December 1665), he was referred to as: "our Lord and our Messiah, the Anointed of the God of Jacob, the Celestial Lion and Celestial Stag, the Messiah of Righteousness, the King of Kings, the sultan Sabbatai Sevi."<sup>41</sup> Moreover, Sabbatai usually signed his name as the Celestial Lion and the Celestial Stag.<sup>42</sup>

In order to confirm the above hypothesis, it is necessary to undertake a detailed study of Sabbatian iconography and symbolism. From the literature, I am aware of only a single depiction of a lion on an item that can be proved to be Sabbatian – i.e., a hammered brass Seder bowl. The lion on this bowl, probably dating from the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is depicted as Lion passant and has nothing in common with its counterpart from İzmir. A deer and a snake also appear on the Seder bowl.<sup>43</sup> The depiction of these three animals was undoubtedly influenced by the afore-mentioned letter from Nathan of Ghaza.

The floral motif of laurel and palm sprigs that is embroidered on the textile in question is one of the variations of the laurel wreath or triumphal crown from the period. The wreath motif is a widely known and recognizable symbol of victory

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39) See G. Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi. The Mystical Messiah*, transl. by R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, Princeton, Princeton University Press 1989, p. 274, Note No. 221; David J. Halperin, 'Sabbatai Zevi, Metatron, and Mehmed: Myths and History in Seventeenth-Century Judaism', in: S. David Breslauer, ed., *The Seductiveness of Jewish Myth: Challenge or Response*, State University of New York Press, Social Science 1997, pp. 271–308, esp. 306.

40) G. Scholem, *op. cit.*, pp. 268–274.

41) *Ibidem*, pp. 424f.

42) *Ibidem*, pp. 601, 916, Plate XII, p. 898.

43) The bowl is in a private collection. See Itzak Einhorn, 'Shalosh Kearot Shabtaiyot' [Three Sabbatian Bowls], *Peamim*, 44 (1990), pp. 72–79, esp. 72–75. Cf. D. J. Halperin, *op. cit.*, p. 306.

and of a victor or ruler. Although the use of a laurel and olive wreath has Antique and hence pagan roots, it was in the end incorporated into Jewish and Christian symbolism, albeit with certain differences. It was also employed in heraldry.

The use of the olive wreath is undoubtedly predominant in the Jewish tradition. The olive tree, which in Judaism is connected with various symbolical meanings, was used during the existence of the Temple to tie wreaths which were employed to garland the sacrificial ox in the Procession of First Fruits on Shavuot.<sup>44</sup> Floral wreaths were worn on many joyful occasions, such as weddings. According to rabbis, crowns – derived from the wreath – will be worn by the Righteous in the Future World.<sup>45</sup> It is of interest that many works on Jewish symbolism completely disregard the laurel. The Jews' detachment from the laurel was probably due to its role in the omnipresent symbolism of the hated Roman Empire. According to some writers, however, the laurel belongs to the Jewish tradition. "*In Judaism it represents not only victory and royalty, but beauty, the bride, and the priesthood.*"<sup>46</sup>

For many years, the Church Fathers had an antipathy towards the laurel wreath as a pagan symbol; Tertullian was the most ardent in his opposition to it. The wreath, or crown, finally became established in this milieu as a symbol of martyrdom and piety – see the crown of thorns and the crown of amaranth for the pious in heaven.<sup>47</sup>

Attention should also be paid briefly to the palm sprig, which forms part of the wreath. The palm is connected with rich symbolism in the Jewish and Christian traditions, where it enjoys special respect. The Tanakh includes date palm among the seven species, which are emblematic of the fertility of Israel. The palm branch (*lulav*) has an important role to play in the liturgy of the festival of Succoth. Palm designs were used in the Temple and later in synagogues. In Judaism, the palm is the symbol of beauty, fertility, compassion and righteousness, but also of victory.<sup>48</sup> Based on biblical tradition, Christians see the symbolic meaning of the palm in basically the same way, apart from one important difference – in a reference made in Revelations 7:9–14, the palm is also symbolic of a martyr's death.

In the period under discussion, Christians and Jews alike would probably have seen the wreath in its basic meaning as a symbol of victory and leadership, which is how it was also interpreted in heraldry.

***The religious affiliations and identities of the embroiderer, the person(s) who placed the order and the recipient of the robe***

On the basis of our hitherto analyses, we can now address the question of the religious affiliation or identity of those who were in some way connected with the tex-

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44) E. Frankel – B. Platkin Teutsch, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

45) A. Kahof, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

46) Cf. Bodoff Lippman, 'Kabbalistic Feminism in Agnon's "Betrothed"', *Judaism: A Quarterly Journal of Jewish Life and Thought* (22/9/1993), see *HighBeam Encyclopedia*, in: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G1-14873611.html?Q=Kabbalistic%20Feminism> (accessed 31/1/2008).

47) A. Kahof, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

48) E. Frankel – B. Platkin Teutsch, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

tile under discussion – namely the embroiderer, the person(s) who ordered the work and, particularly, the person for whom the robe with the embroidery was intended. It is not possible to identify the specific Central European embroiderer who made the item, although it is probably the work of a Christian. There were already Jewish embroiderers in Central Europe in the middle of the seventeenth century and they produced work of high technical and artistic quality, but they had not yet had experience with the embroidery of lion motifs. Lions did not appear on the embroidery of synagogues curtains until several decades later.<sup>49</sup> It was customary for lion motifs to appear on the title pages of books in the Jewish tradition, but their depiction on curtains was prevented on religious grounds.<sup>50</sup>

If we accept the hypothesis that on the textile in question is an embroidered Celestial Lion, which is a specific symbol of the Jewish Messiah, it is easy to determine the religious affiliation and identity of the person who received the robe with heraldic embroidery. As the proposed hypothesis cannot be verified on the basis of other material, we must accept the possibility of other explanations concerning the meaning of the symbolism and should also consider that the textile may have had a different history and may have been associated with other people.

In order to determine the identity and religious affiliation of the person for whom the robe was intended, we shall try to put together his social profile. Certainly, the person in question must have been highly respected and eminent, although there are indications showing that he was not among the elite of the feudal society of the period. Before we look into this matter more closely, consideration should be taken of the geographical area where the person in question lived. The textile was made in Central Europe and is now in the territory of the former Ottoman Empire; considering the lack of specific direct evidence, however, it cannot be said with complete certainty when the item came to this area. We shall therefore consider two possible hypotheses: either the textile was intended for someone living in Central Europe (in which case it would have found its way to the Ottoman Empire at a later date), or it was made for a person based in the Ottoman Empire.

If we assume that the textile was intended for someone in Central Europe, we face various discrepancies. The person in question must have been an important figure in society and also wealthy yet without his own genuine coat of arms. Such a situation would not have been common in Christian Central European feudal society. A person who did not belong to the aristocracy could easily have found himself in trouble with the authorities if in public he had worn symbols that imitated a coat of arms, particularly as pseudo-heraldic ornaments were of a triumphal nature. On the basis of an unauthorized use of similar symbolism, however, one could infer the social – but not the political – pretensions of the person in question. There is not known to have been a political pretender in Central Europe at this time. It is

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49) In the diverse collection of the Jewish Museum in Prague, the first lion motifs to appear on curtains date from the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the start of the 18<sup>th</sup>; see Ludmila Kybalová with Michaela Scheibová, Iveta Vondrášková and Marcela Vondrová, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

50) A halakic analysis of the problem is presented by Ovadia Yosef, *Yalkut Yosef, helek sheni* [Joseph Collection, Vol. II], Jerusalem 750 [1990], pp. 315f. The easing of restrictions is connected with the mystic-Messianic ideology of the day.

possible that the robe was ordered and worn by a wealthy emigrant from the Balkan region who may have demonstrated his national consciousness by using symbols inspired by the heraldic designs of Petar Ohmučević, but this possibility is purely theoretical. Such a person would probably have used the correct heraldic form of the coat of arms.

In Christian Central Europe, a robe of this kind would have been ordered and worn probably only by a wealthy eccentric with megalomaniac tendencies. The hypothetical wearer of such a robe would probably have been a Christian. A Jew who owned such a garment would have found himself in trouble not only with the Christian authorities, but also with his co-religionists, as he would undoubtedly have breached the bans on luxury. Overall, I consider the hypothesis that the robe was made for someone in Central Europe (and found its way to the Ottoman Empire at a later date) to be highly improbable.

Casting doubt on the first hypothesis leads one to conclude that the robe was made in Central Europe for a person based in the Ottoman Empire. It may be ruled out that the robe was an official gift for an Ottoman dignitary. As mentioned earlier, the item was not made in any of the European court centres. The person who embroidered it was not sufficiently skilled to be entrusted with a commission for a country's diplomatic mission. For the above reasons, it may be assumed that the robe was intended for an important private figure.

Heraldry did not play any social role in the Ottoman Empire, where the lack of an authentic coat of arms was of no social importance and the authorities were not troubled by the unauthorized use of symbols. The triumphal and sovereign associations evoked by the robe in question, however, may have given rise to problems to its owner also here. Although eccentrics of various religious affiliations in the Ottoman Empire, too, may be considered as potential owners of the robe, it cannot be ruled out, as it can in Christian Europe, that the robe may have been intended for a person with political pretensions. Although Orthodox Christians longed to be rid of Ottoman domination, there were not many pretenders to the throne within their ranks. One exception was the leader of the anti-Ottoman rising of October 1689, Karpos, who declared himself the King of Kumanovo. During his short reign (in December 1689 he was executed by being impaled)<sup>51</sup> he certainly had other concerns than embroidered symbols and the like. Even considering the period in which the robe in question was made, this man can be ruled out as the person who wore it. We know of no Christian or Muslim pretender in the Ottoman Empire in the 1660s. Among Jews, however, there was such a figure – none other than Sabbatai Zevi. His bold plans were revealed by Nathan of Ghaza in the afore-mentioned letter of September 1665:

*“A year and a few months from today, he [Sabbatai] will take the dominion from the Turkish king without war, for by [the power of] the hymns and praises which he shall utter, all nations shall submit to his rule. He will take*

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51) Jan Rychlík – Miroslav Kouba, *Dějiny Makedonie* [History of Macedonia], Praha, Nakladatelství Lidové noviny 2003, pp. 84f.

*the Turkish king alone to the countries which he will conquer, and all the kings shall be tributary unto him, but only the Turkish king will be his servant...*<sup>52</sup>

Sabbatai took his role as sovereign seriously and on 12 December 1665 appointed subordinate kings from among his relatives and friends. On the last day of 1665 he set sail from Smyrna with a plan to take the Sultan's turban and to become ruler of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>53</sup>

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Given the state of preservation of the available sources, it is not possible to provide clear evidence as to the religious affiliation and identity of the person for whom the robe with the heraldic decoration was intended. Considering the excessively triumphant symbolism on the robe and the pretensions to rule that were associated with this, Sabbatai Zevi may be considered to be the recipient of the robe. Although other possibilities of identifying the wearer of the robe cannot be ruled out, they do not appear to be very likely.

What may be considered a certainty, however, is that the person(s) who ordered the textile and the recipient were of the same religion. If the robe was intended for Sabbatai, the person(s) who ordered it must have been among the Jews of Central Europe. It may have been a wealthy individual or an important Jewish community, but the second possibility seems to be more likely. The inspiration to order the textile may have been the afore-mentioned letter from Nathan of Ghaza, which circulated across Europe from October 1665. The specific form of the adornment of the robe would, then, be the result of an attempt to portray the Celestial Lion that was mentioned in the letter.

### ***The royal court of Sabbatai Zevi in Gallipoli. Visitors and gifts bestowed***

Sabbatai's plan to take power in the Ottoman Empire could not have worked out well. Sabbatai was arrested and imprisoned in Constantinople at the beginning of February 1666. On 19 April, at the behest of the Grand Vizier Ahmed Köprülü, he was transferred to the state prison in Gallipoli (Abydos) on the shore of the Sea of Marmara.<sup>54</sup>

The story of Sabbatai Zevi's imprisonment in Gallipoli – in Hebrew called *Migdal Oz* [Tower of the Strength] – is among the most absurd chapters in Jewish history. On account of bribes given to the warden and to other dignitaries, the Ottoman state prison was transformed into Sabbatai's royal residence. It is not the case, however, that the warden and other dignitaries were acting against the interests of the state, for it is clear that everything that went on there was monitored and the Grand Vizier was regularly kept informed about all major developments.<sup>55</sup> In

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52) G. Scholem, *op. cit.*, pp. 272f.

53) *Ibidem*, pp. 397, 426–432.

54) *Ibidem*, pp. 447–460.



prison, Sabbatai was even able to receive visitors from the Ottoman Empire and other countries, astounding them with the luxury of his chambers. The chronicler Leib ben Ozer (cited by Jacob Emden) described the situation as follows:

*“The walls of the room in which he sat were draped with golden carpets, and the floor was covered with rugs made of gold and silver. It was a princely room. He sat at a table made of silver and covered with gold, and the inkstand on the table was made of gold and jewels. He ate and drank from gold and silver vessels inlaid with jewels. In his right he held a golden staff [...] There were many rooms in the fortress, as in the palace of the Turkish king [...]”*<sup>56</sup>

Of most interest in connection with the topic under discussion is the quotation from Leib ben Ozer’s report which was recorded by Jacob Sasportas: *“And wealthy Jews from Constantinople and other places sent to him in prison royal apparel (bigdei malkhut), mattresses of many kinds, cushions and blankets...”*<sup>57</sup> From this report, it follows that Sabbatai received more magnificent garments and that they came from several areas.

Let us now try to determine where the visitors to Gallipoli came from. According to the account of a local Armenian published by Abraham Galanté, the city was full of pilgrims from Poland, the Crimea, Persia, and Jerusalem, Turkey and the Frankish lands. A parallel Armenian chronicle speaks of pilgrims from Moldavia, Poland, Jaffa, Jerusalem, Anatolia and from the nearby capital.<sup>58</sup> (The absence of pilgrims from Italy was connected with the ongoing wars between the Ottoman Empire and Venice.) Our attention should focus on the pilgrims from the Frankish lands, as well as from Poland. In the Ottoman Empire, inhabitants of Western and Central Europe, in particular, were referred to as Franks.

The reports on the official delegations from Western and Central Europe are incomplete. The activities of the legation dispatched by the Chief Rabbi of Lvov (Lemberg), David ha-Levi, the author of the halakhic treatise *Turei Zahav* [Golden Towers] are the best documented. Unable to undertake the trip due to old age, the Chief Rabbi was represented by his two closest kin – his son R. Isaiah Mokhiah and his stepson R. Aryeh Leib ben Samuel Zevi Hirsch.<sup>59</sup> Both emissaries wrote up a detailed report about their trip, which was cited by several contemporary and later writers. The afore-mentioned Leib ben Ozer had a large part to play in spreading this report and in adding details from other sources.

Information about the next major legation is provided, paradoxically, only by a Christian writer. In his memoirs, David Ancillon, a Calvinist minister in Metz, re-

55) *Ibidem*, p. 669.

56) *Ibidem*, pp. 618f. For the Hebrew original, see Jacob Emden, *Torat Kenaot* [Teaching of Zeal], Lvov 630 / 1870, p. 12.

57) Yaakov Sasportas, *Sefer Tzitzat Novel Tzevi* [Book of the Decaying Deer’s Fringes], ed. Yeshaya Tishbi, Jerusalem, Mosad Bialik, 1954, p. 76.

58) G. Scholem, *op. cit.*, p. 604.

59) *Ibidem*, pp. 600f.

fers to the fact that the Jews of Germany and France had sent an important Prague Jew to bring great gifts to Sabbatai. The Jews of Metz, too, contributed a large sum of money to this end.<sup>60</sup> From this context, it is clear that Ancillon included the Habsburg Monarchy under the term ‘Germany’ and, hence, that this legation represented Jews from throughout the Holy Roman Empire. Unfortunately, he does not give the name of the Prague emissary. Gershom Scholem translated the term “*un fameux Juif*” inaccurately as “*famous rabbi*”.<sup>61</sup> Although it is very likely that the head of the legation was a rabbi, he may also have been a lay leader of the Jewish self-government in Prague.

It can be proved that the legation was not led by the Chief Rabbi of Prague, Simon Spira (1599–1679).<sup>62</sup> A possible emissary from among the important rabbis was Abraham ben Hirsch Porges (1619–1673), who was also Chief Rabbi of Kolín nad Labem, *Landesrabbiner* of Moravia and *dayyan* in Prague.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, Abraham was relatively young, was of an adventurous disposition<sup>64</sup> and came from a family that was accustomed to travelling and diplomatic missions. His brother was the famous Moses ben Israel Naftali Hirsch Porit (c.1600–1670), Messenger of the Holy Land and author of the travel guide *Darkhei Zion* [Journeys to Zion].<sup>65</sup> Abraham’s participation in the legation, however, can be inferred only on the basis of indirect evidence.<sup>66</sup>

60) “*Sabbathai-Seevi [...] passoit pour le Messie et trompa tous les Juifs d’Orient et d’Occident. Les Juifs d’Allemagne et de France députèrent un fameux Juif de Prague pour lui porter de grands présents: ceux de Metz fournirent pour cet effet de grandes sommes d’argent...*” Abraham Cahen, ‘Le Rabbinat de Metz pendant la période française (1567–1871)’, *Revue des Études Juives*, VII (1883), pp. 103–116, 204–226, esp. 226. A. Cahen drew on *Mélange critique de littérature, recueilli des conversations de feu M. Ancillon*, Basle 1698, tom. I.

61) G. Scholem, *op. cit.*, p. 550.

62) Simon Spira was in Prague at the time of the Messianic enthusiasm in the autumn of 1665 and in 1666. He adopted a cautious approach towards the movement and came out against its antinomistic excesses, see G. Scholem, *op. cit.*, pp. 499, 500, 561. Rabbi S. Spira was arrested on 6 August 1666; see Tobias Jakobovits, ‘Die Erlebnisse des Oberrabiners Simon Spira-Wedeles in Prag (1640–1679)’, *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Juden in der Tschechoslovakischen Republik*, IV (1932), pp. 253–296, esp. 274.

63) The Old Jewish Cemetery in Prague, tombstone, N 700; Simon Hock – David Kaufmann, *Die Familien Prags. Nach den Epithaphien des Alten jüdischen Friedhofs in Prag*, Pressburg 1892, p. 264b (9537).

64) In 1660 he caused a momentous scandal in Kolín, when he threw a pig that had strayed into the ghetto down a well in the Christian town. See Josef Vávra, *Dějiny královského města Kolína nad Labem* [History of the Royal Town of Kolín nad Labem], Vol. II., Kolín 1888, p. 197 and Richard Feder, ‘Dějiny Židů v Kolíně / Geschichte der Juden in Kolin’, in: Hugo Gold, ed., *Die Juden und Judengemeinden Böhmens in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*, I, Brünn – Prag 1934, pp. 277–298, esp. 284.

65) See Daniel Polakovič, *Moše ben Jisrael Naftali Porges: Darchej Cijon (1650)* [Moses ben Yisrael Naphtali Porges: Darkhei Zion], MA thesis, Faculty of Philosophy and Arts, Charles University, Institute of Near Eastern and African Studies, Prague 2000, 93+20 pp.

66) In the spring of 1666, Rabbi Abraham Porges was not involved in any way in sorting out the Kolín affair involving Maria Příbram (the rabbi’s name does not appear in the records relating to this case). This suggests that he was not in Bohemia at the time. In contrast to my opinion as expressed in 1997, I have no doubt that Abraham Porges held the office of Rabbi of Kolín also in the 1660s. Abraham, who was permanently based in Prague, carried out his office ‘at a distance’. Cf. Alexandr Putík,

It is probable that the official legation was dispatched by other important Jewish communities in Central Europe, such as Cracow. Due to the deliberate destruction of compromising documents in the period after the collapse of the Messianic enterprise, it is not possible to reliably ascertain all the communities that sent their emissaries.

It may be assumed that the most important and most valuable gifts came from the official homage-rendering delegations, which were amply funded from public collections. Private persons also travelled to Gallipoli and later (after Sabbatai's conversion) to Adrianopole. Ancillon mentions devout pilgrims who came from Germany and Bohemia, overloaded with gifts.<sup>67</sup> There is no doubt that gifts were also brought by pilgrims from Poland and other foreign countries. Under the given circumstances, it is clear that an expensive robe may have been brought from a Central European area. However, there is no direct evidence that this applies to the particular item under discussion.

Specific reports on one of Sabbatai's robes are included in an account of an audience that Sabbatai gave R. Isaiah Mokhiah and R. Aryeh Leib ben Samuel Zevi Hirsch, probably on the 26<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz 5426 (19 July 1666).<sup>68</sup> The source is, once again, Leib ben Ozers.

*“As they entered they bent their knees and prostrated themselves before him. [...] They wanted to tell him of the tribulations and massacres suffered by the Polish Jews, but Sabbatai said ‘You need not tell me. Behold the book Suq ha-<sup>c</sup>Ittim<sup>69</sup> [...] is open here with me all day long.’ He added, ‘Why do you think I am dressed in red<sup>70</sup> and my Torah scroll is draped with red? Because the day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my redeemed is come’ [...] ‘I will make mine arrows drunk with blood’. [Deut. 32:42] He revealed to them many kabbalistic mysteries...”<sup>71</sup>*

According to Sabbatai's own interpretation, the red garment symbolizes retaliation. The afore-mentioned kabbalistic mysteries very probably concerned the nature of the sephirah *Din* (Judgment), also known as *Gevurah* (Power), which expresses restraint and discipline. This sephirah is symbolized by the colours red and gold, and also by blood and fire.<sup>72</sup> The subsequent course of the audience and the fate of Sabbatai's red garment follow from Leib ben Ozers's following account:

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‘Fight for a Conversion in Kolín nad Labem, Bohemia, in the Year 5426/1666. A Contribution on the Subject of Reverberations in Bohemia of Shabbatai Zevi's Messianic Appearance’, *Judaica Bohemica*, XXXIII (1997), pp. 4–32.

67) *De l'Allemagne, de la Bohême, affluaient les croyants, chargés d'offrandes*, see A. Floquet, *Études sur le vie de Bossuet*, tome premier, Paris 1855, p. 281. <http://books.google.com> (accessed 14/2/2008).

68) David Kahana, *Toldot ha-Mekubalim, ha-Shabtaim we-ha-Hasidim, kerech rishon* [The History of Kabbalists, Sabbatians and Hassidim, Vol. I], Odessa 673/1917, p. 94. According to G. Scholem, the audience took place on 22 Tammuz (15 July 1666). See G. Scholem, *op. cit.*, p. 623.

69) The Chronicle of the massacres of 1648–49 by R. Moses of Shebreshin.

70) Literally “in red clothes”, *be-vigdei adom*. See D. Kahana, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

71) G. Scholem, *op. cit.*, pp. 623f.

“Then he inquired after the health of their father, and they answered, ‘Our Lord! Our father is an old man of eighty years, and his hands and feet are very weak...’ [...] Then he took a silk coat,<sup>73</sup> and also took off and valuable woollen garment that he was wearing, and said to R. Arye Leyb, ‘Take this coat and put it on your father, reciting the verse [Ps. 103:5] ‘Thy youth is renewed like the eagle[’s].’ R. Isaiah said, ‘Our Lord! I am his son and as such have precedence’, but Sabbatai answered him in Yiddish, ‘Schweig’, and, taking out a scarf embroidered with gold,<sup>74</sup> told R. Isaiah, ‘Take this and wrap it round your father’s neck on my behalf, and it will be for him unto greatness and honour and glory.’”<sup>75</sup>

The generous gift was undoubtedly a well thought-out gesture to win over both emissaries, whose reports would help to spread belief in the new Messiah throughout Poland. The fact that the robe worn by Sabbatai when he vowed to take revenge on the enemies of the Jews was sent as a gift to Lvov rules out the possibility of its being identical with the robe from İzmir. (Among some of the present-day *Maaminim*, it is believed to be the same item.)

There are no specific reports on the actual form of the red silk robe that Sabbatai gave to David ha-Levi. Considering the recommendation to recite the relevant verse from Psalm 103 when putting on the robe, it may be assumed that this garment was adorned with a depiction (perhaps embroidered) of an eagle.

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The curious situation of a state prison being used as a royal court could not have lasted for ever. Sabbatai soon found himself in conflict with one of his prominent visitors, Rabbi Nehemiah Kohen, who denounced him to the Turkish authorities. The idyll came to an end on the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> of September 1666, when Sabbatai was forced to leave his palace within an hour and was sent to Adrianopole, where the Sultan Murad IV was based at the time.<sup>76</sup> On the 16<sup>th</sup> of September he was brought to a meeting of the Privy Council, which was attended by the Sultan himself, in addition to high-ranking court officials and Muslim clerics. Sabbatai was given two options – execution or conversion to Islam. He chose the second one.<sup>77</sup>

Of interest to us is what happened to the valuable gifts once Sabbatai had gone. Although there are no specific reports about their further fate, it is not difficult to imagine the course of events. The treasures that had amassed there were probably officially confiscated, although many of them were stolen by various dignitaries and guards. It may be assumed that those faithful to Sabbatai managed to redeem at least some of the confiscated and stolen items, which then became relics. One such piece may have been the robe that is now owned by Mr. Erginer.

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72) E. Frankel – B. Platkin Teutsh, *op. cit.*, pp. 146–148.

73) In the Hebrew original *ketonet meshi*. See D. Kahana, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

74) In the Hebrew original *mitpachat metzupa zahav*. *Ibidem*.

75) G. Scholem, *op. cit.*, p. 624.

76) *Ibidem*, pp. 658–673.

77) *Ibidem*, pp. 674–686.

This context brings to mind a specific historical parallel, namely the fate of the robe, tallit and two flags of the messianic harbinger Salomon Molcho, who died a martyr's death at the stake in 1532 in Mantua. These textile treasures were also re-deemed and venerated as relics in Prague's Pinkas Synagogue.<sup>78</sup> Paradoxically, Salomon Molcho's small tallit (*arba kanfot*) was used for Sabbatian propaganda.<sup>79</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

1) The robe is fashioned from wine red silk damask and the fabric was made in the middle of the seventeenth century, probably in Italy. The embroidery was done in yarns and metal thread and is the work of a professional, most likely a Christian, who was active outside the main European court and textile production centres. Considering the technique used, it is probably of Central European provenance, possibly from Bohemia, Moravia, Poland or Hungary. The embroidery may date from the middle of the seventeenth century or from somewhat later. The preserved fragment probably comes from the rear upper part of a man's coat of the kind that was in fashion between 1630 and 1670. On this basis, one may conclude that the robe with the embroidered fabric may have been made at the time of the Messianic activities of Sabbatai Zevi.

2) The red robe is decorated with embroidery of a gold heraldic Lion crowned rampant, framed by a triumphal wreath. The lion is standing on a silver base, which I interpret to be a cloud. Although the way the lion is depicted corresponds to the traditions of Central European heraldry, it is not a coat of arms within the context of heraldic law. There is only a theoretical possibility that it is a considerably unsuccessful depiction of the coat of arms of Macedonia, created by Petar Ohmučević at the end of the sixteenth century.

3) In the sign, use is made primarily of symbolism with a universal meaning. The lion and wreath are traditional symbols in the Christian and Jewish milieus. If the base on which the lion is standing is a cloud, the entire motif may be considered to be a depiction of the Celestial Lion (*arya de-ve illae*), which is among the traditional Jewish Messianic symbols used by the Sabbatian movement. This interpretation, however, is only a hypothesis and cannot be confirmed at present due to the lack of comparative material.

4) The robe was, in all probability, made for a person living in the Ottoman Empire. The wearer of such an expensive garment with pseudo-heraldic decoration must have been an important figure in society and also wealthy but not a member of the official elite of the Ottoman state. The use of extravagant triumphal symbolism suggests pretensions to rule. These circumstances enable the hypothesis that the robe was intended for Sabbatai Zevi, who planned to take power in the Otto-

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78) Vladimír Sadek, 'Étandard et robe de Salomon Molko', *Judaica Bohemiae*, XVI (1980), No. 1, 1980, p. 64; Alexandr Putík – Olga Sixtová, *History of the Jews in Bohemia and Moravia. From the First Settlements until Emancipation*, Exhibition Guide, Prague, The Jewish Museum in Prague 2002, pp. 47f., Fig. 35.

79) The letters and holy names written on the tallit allegedly contained the prophecy that Sabbatai Zevi would become the Messiah in the year 426 (1666); see G. Scholem, *op. cit.*, pp. 563f.



man Empire in 1666 as part of his Messianic mission. It cannot entirely be ruled out, however, that the robe may have been intended for someone else, for example a Christian emigrant from the Balkan region who may have demonstrated his national consciousness by using heraldic symbols. It is also possible that the robe was made for an anonymous eccentric with megalomaniac tendencies. The last two possibilities, however, are only theoretical.

5) Sabbatai Zevi was imprisoned in Gallipoli (*Migdal Oz*) from April to September 1666. On account of bribery, the prison was able to be transformed into his amply equipped Royal Court. It is documented that the donors of royal attire included Jews from Constantinople and 'other places'. The court was visited by both private Jewish pilgrims and official envoys of Jewish communities who payed homage to Sabbatai as the King Messiah. Visitors bearing valuable gifts also came from Poland, France, Germany and the Habsburg lands. One of the major missions representing the Jews of Western and Central Europe was headed by a personage from Prague. It may be hypothesized that the robe under discussion was among these gifts.

6) It is not possible to document what happened to the royal garments after Sabbatai's departure from Gallipoli. Some of the items were probably redeemed by Sabbatai's supporters and later venerated as relics. This may have been the fate of the textile treasure from İzmir.

7) The robe was found in 2001 by Mr. Efe Erginer, a Muslim, among the items left by his late mother. It is regarded as an authentic relic of Sabbatai Zevi by the present-day *Maaminim* of İzmir and by others in Istanbul who, as such, have a religious reverence for the item. Unfortunately, it is not clear how they arrived at this conviction – whether on the basis of a specific knowledge of what happened to the treasure or of an assessment of the iconography used on the textile. If their conviction is based solely on iconography, it is possible that they may have made an error in their assessment.

8) A reliable conclusion as to the purpose and origin of the textile in question may be made only after a detailed documentation and verification of the traditions of the present-day *Maaminim*. It is also necessary to undertake a systematic study of Sabbatian iconography and symbolism.

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Given the current state of research, it is not possible to give a definite answer to the question as to whether the robe with the heraldic lion embroidery actually belonged to Sabbatai Zevi. In our opinion, however, it is possible, even probable, that the robe did belong to this Messianic pretender.

The following scenario for the events of the year 5426 (1665–66) may be taken into consideration. After receiving transcripts of Nathan of Ghaza's letter which reached Europe in October 1665, Jews began intensively preparing for the arrival of the Messiah, for whom they procured valuable gifts. At the beginning of 1666, Jewish representatives of a Central European community placed an order with a local Christian embroiderer for an embroidered fabric with triumphal heraldic sym-

bolism, which they then applied to a precious robe. The embroidery theme was set by the Jews while the artistic design was left to the embroiderer. The robe was subsequently sent to the Messiah's court by a homage-rendering legation in the spring or summer of 1666.