



# ROOM 3

## The *calls*

The word *call*, which comes from the Latin term, *callis*, means “street” and is used only in Catalonia in referring to the Jewish quarters of the medieval cities. The *calls* were usually formed in the medieval sections of the cities and therefore, the streets tended to be narrow and tortuous. Not all towns with a Jewish population had a *call*, in which case, the Jews either lived in the same neighborhoods as the Christians or all along the same street which was commonly named the “Street of the Jews.”

The fact that the Jews gathered together in the *call* was due to their own needs as a minority within the society. They needed a community surroundings within a specific space where they could tend to their religious life with their own customs and traditions. A part from their natural tendencies to live together, the Christian society dictated official orders for segregation and prohibitions against the Jewish communities. In 1215 the Fourth Lateran Council decreed the separation of the Jewish and Muslim communities which lived in the Christian cities. However, in Catalonia, in most cases, the orders for segregation were not enforced until many years later.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century the *call* of Girona was a place of coexistence where both Jews and Christians had their homes and workshops. Not all of them lived within the *call*. However, in 1445, the municipal government prohibited the Jews to establish themselves to the west of the *call*, beyond the actual street called La Força, and compelled them to close up doors and win-



**1** The street of Sant Llorenç. Call of Girona; (Patronat Call de Girona) Photo: J.M. Oliveras

dows which gave to the street. The Jewish community found themselves confined to what became known as the “*reduced call*,” which had the alley of Sant Llorenç as its main axis **1**. Continuing with its segregation policies, in 1448 the municipal government ordered “all the Jews, men and women, who lived outside the *call*, to move within the enclosure of the *call*.”

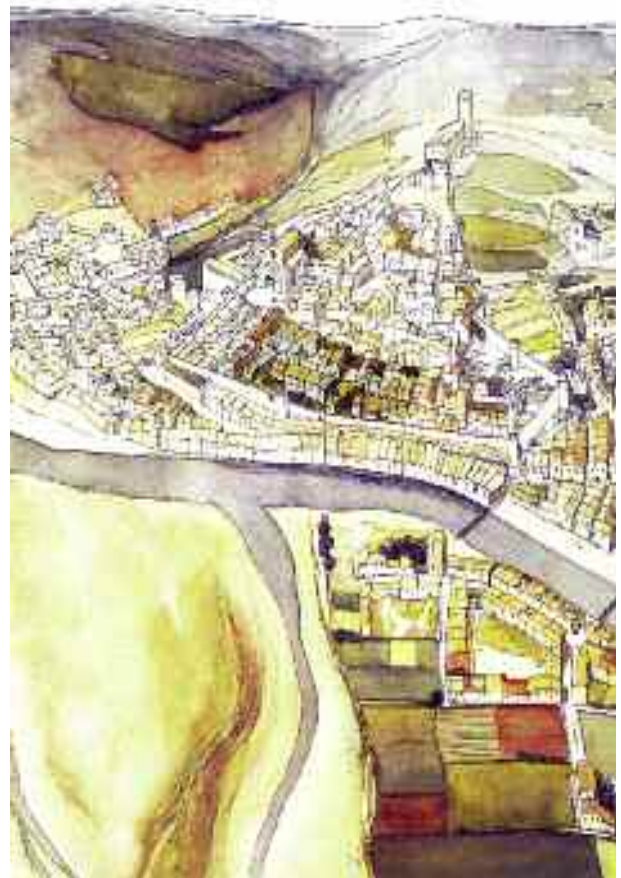
At the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> and during all of the 15<sup>th</sup> century restrictive measures were massively applied against the Jewish population in the

Catalan cities. In Girona the Jews were prohibited from living outside the *call*, having shops or stands in certain areas of the city, or touching certain food items such as bread, fresh cheese, vegetables, fruits and fish. Furthermore, almost everywhere, the Jews had to wear a distinctive symbol sewn to their clothing whenever they mixed with the Christians of the city. In Palma de Mallorca, for example, a 1383 municipal order decreed that all Jews, male and female, wear the round emblem, half red and half yellow, on their chests. In 1445 the Jews of Girona had their turn through an order which ruled that “no Jew over the age of 15 shall leave the *call* or venture into the city without his/her Jewish outfit or without the red circle sewn on the front of his/her clothes in a prominent place”. **2**



**2** Representation of a Jew with cape and circle; *Ordinacions de Girona, 1330; Library of the Lawyers College, Barcelona*

The *calls*, which in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries had been the scenario of an overall, pacific coexistence between the two different societies, became, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, marginal places to where the Jews were confined. Due to the radicalization of the Christian mentalities, the ways of life of the Jews were coming to an end.



**3** Map of Girona in the 14th century with the Jewish Quarter; Canal, J. “*La ciutat de Girona en la meitat del s. XIV*” (1998)

In the present Catalonia some cities still preserve the urban space that occupied the Jewish Quarter well delimited; thanks to the documents and to the archeology, the Catalan Jewries have been able to be studied in a detailed way and some, like that of Girona, have been rehabilitated and retrieved for the city urban memory.