

# The status of Judeo-Spanish in a diachronic and synchronic perspective

Includes six translated Romances plus sample texts of  
biblical literature and modern press

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Master thesis in Semitic Linguistics with Hebrew (60 credits)  
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May 2016





**Abstract.** The speech of the Sephardic Jews have been defined as both language and dialect, depending always on the standpoint of the analyzer, but is it a language on its own right or is it “just a dialect”? What is, then, the difference between both concepts? In the case Judeo-Spanish could be considered a language, what are the criteria taken into account in the classification? In an attempt to answer these questions I will provide facts on the origin of both terms, their modern and politicized use as well as on the historical vicissitudes of Judeo-Spanish and its speakers. Their literature, both laic and religious, is covered with an emphasis on the most researched and relevant genres, namely: the biblical Sephardic translations, the Romancero and the modern press of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. A descriptive presentation of Judeo-Spanish main grammatical features precedes the last chapter, where both the diagnosis of Judeo-Spanish in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and its prognosis for the 21<sup>st</sup>, are given with the aim of determine its present state.

## **Acknowledgements**

The conception and execution of the present work would have been impossible without the help and support of the persons that were, directly or indirectly, involved in the process. I want to express my gratitude, firstly, to my mentor Lutz E. Edzard for having guided me along this path with his insight and experience. Secondly, to Olav G. Orum, friend and colleague, for his useful advices and encouragement. I'm much obliged to my editor, and also friend, Zdenko Tudor, for his patience and dedication.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to the institutions that assisted me from the beginning of this project until its fulfillment. Among them, The National directorate of employment and welfare for the financial support during my studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the fieldwork in Madrid, and to the librarians of the Tomas Navarro Tomas Library, part of C.S.I.C, for their diligence and engagement.

*A mi abuela,  
porque se la enseñó a mi madre  
y a mi madre,  
porque de ella la aprendí.*

***In memoriam:***

*Gerson and Eliezer Soncino*

*Abraham Usque*

*Yom tov Atias*

*Yacob Abraham Yona*

*Kalmi Baruch*

*Solombra*

*Ramon Menendez Pidal*

# Table of Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>1 Introduction.....</b>   | <b>1</b>  |
| 1.1 Language or dialect?.....  | 2         |
| <b>2 Methodological approach.....</b>  | <b>7</b>  |
| 2.1 Technicalities.....  | 8         |
| <b>3 Judeo-Spanish.....</b>  | <b>11</b> |
| 3.1 Topography of Judeo-Spanish.....   | 12        |
| 3.2 Judeo-Spanish or the Spanish of the Jews?.....   | 16        |
| 3.3 Ladino versus Judeo-Spanish.....   | 17        |
| 3.4 Ladinisation of Judeo-Spanish and vernaculisation of Ladino .....  | 19        |
| 3.5 De Pluribus Unus .....   | 20        |
| <b>4 Judeo-Spanish Literature .....</b>  | <b>23</b> |
| 4.1 The Romancero .....  | 24        |
| 4.2 Western variety. Morocco: The cradle of North African Jewry.....   | 27        |
| 4.3 Two Judeo-Spanish Romances from Morocco.....   | 28        |
| 4.3.1 Translation .....  | 29        |
| 4.3.2 Textual commentary.....  | 30        |
| 4.4 Landarico.....   | 32        |
| 4.4.1 Translation .....  | 32        |
| 4.4.2 Textual commentary.....  | 33        |
| 4.5 Eastern variety: Judeo-Spanish in Turkey and the Balkans.....  | 34        |
| 4.5.1 Greece.....  | 35        |
| 4.5.2 Salonika: “the mother of Israel” .....   | 36        |
| 4.5.3 The collector, editor and minstrel activities of Yacob Abraham Yona .....  | 36        |
| 4.5.4 Livriko de romansas importantes .....  | 38        |
| 4.5.5 Two popular Romances from Salonika: .....  | 41        |
| 4.5.6 Hebrew Translation .....   | 42        |
| 4.5.7 Textual commentary.....  | 43        |
| 4.5.8 Por los palacios de Carlo (Gaiferos) .....   | 45        |
| 4.5.9 Bosnia.....  | 49        |
| 4.5.10 Ballad tradition of the Bosnian Jews: General views and translated sample texts<br>with brief literary commentary ..... | 49        |
| 4.5.11 The ballad collection and editorial endeavors of Kalmi Baruch .....   | 50        |
| 4.5.12 El chuflete .....   | 51        |



|        |                                    |    |
|--------|------------------------------------|----|
| 4.5.13 | Translation: The magic flute ..... | 51 |
| 4.5.14 | Textual commentary.....            | 52 |
| 4.5.15 | La adultera .....                  | 55 |
| 4.5.16 | Translation: The adultress .....   | 56 |
| 4.5.17 | Textual commentary.....            | 57 |

## **5 Biblical literature ..... 59**

|       |  |    |
|-------|--|----|
| 5.1   | <i>The Ladino Bibles: characteristics and relevance</i> .....                                | 59 |
| 5.2   | <i>The Constantinople Pentateuch: The printer and the historical background of the book.</i> | 60 |
| 5.2.1 | Characteristic of the edition .....  | 62 |
| 5.2.2 | Ižo de gato afara raton : Like father like son .....   | 65 |
| 5.2.3 | Final remarks: .....   | 66 |
| 5.2.4 | La Bibbia di Ferrara .....   | 66 |
| 5.2.5 | About the authors.....   | 67 |
| 5.2.6 | Traduttore, Traditori. The language and the translation techniques.....                      | 68 |
| 5.2.7 | Historic and linguistic legacy.....  | 69 |
| 5.2.8 | Sample text .....  | 71 |

## **6 Morphosyntactic and phono lexical analysis of Judeo-Spanish..... 73**

|       |                                       |    |
|-------|---------------------------------------|----|
| 6.1   | <i>Morphosyntactic features</i> ..... | 73 |
| 6.2   | <i>Phonological features</i> .....    | 75 |
| 6.3   | <i>Lexical features</i> .....         | 77 |
| 6.3.1 | Turkisms.....                         | 77 |
| 6.3.2 | Gallicisms .....                      | 78 |
| 6.3.3 | Italianisms.....                      | 78 |

## **7 Judeo-Spanish from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century until today..... 79**

|       |   |    |
|-------|---|----|
| 7.1   | <i>Judeo-Spanish press</i> .....                                      | 79 |
| 7.2   | <i>Judeo-Spanish in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Diagnosis.</i> ..... | 82 |
| 7.3   | <i>The situation today. Language death or survival?</i> .....         | 85 |
| 7.3.1 | Press.....  | 86 |
| 7.3.2 | Instruction.....  | 86 |
| 7.3.3 | Radio and Internet .....  | 87 |
| 7.3.4 | Prognosis.....  | 88 |

## **8 Conclusions..... 91**

## **Appendix ..... 93**

# 1 Introduction

Throughout the complex history of the Jewish diaspora, one element has remained unaltered and that is the reverence for the word<sup>1</sup> whether written, spoken or thought of. Language proficiency has played a decisive role in the survival and adaptation of the exiles into their new milieu. In the new settled lands they learned the local languages, translated into them the sacred texts of Judaism and wrote down their oral traditions producing a rich and variegated literature.

Judaism, like all religious groups, has experienced scissions, apostasies, forced conversions and heresies, all which are clear indicators of divergences between the same groups regarding the worshipping of God. Literature, though, has been always held among them in high esteem. Using the Hebrew alphabet as an identity tool, they translate their sacred texts into the local varieties and to wrote down Semitic and non-Semitic languages as well. The result is the astonishing variety of what specialist call Jewish languages, a group of interrelated, yet independent, "norms" that have served as a vehicle of expression of innumerable communities around the world.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Celui qui apprend de son compagnon un seul chapitre ou une seul regle ou un seul verset ou une seule parole, ou bien meme une seul lettre, doit l'entoure de respect." Ecclesiastes 7:10

<sup>2</sup> See map on p. 15

The common denominator of most of these Jewish languages of the diaspora is the Hebrew-Aramaic ad stratum from which they all derive the liturgical and religious vocabulary. In virtue of the extended use of the Hebrew script and the typological features they share with each other, they could, according to David Bunis, be classified as ‘members of a single, unique language group, each individual member of which diverges from its non-Jewish correlate.’<sup>3</sup>

## 1.1 Language or dialect?

Since the classification of the language that will be discussed in the present work as a language or dialect, depends on the standpoint from which it is analyzed. It seems necessary, then, to answer the following questions: What is a ‘language’ and what is a ‘dialect’ and, how do they differ from each other?

The fact that a speech variety within the same dialect continuum is referred to as a ‘language’ or as a ‘dialect’ does not only depend on grammatical factors but on cultural, historical and socio-political aspects as well. If “A language is a dialect with an army and a navy”<sup>4</sup> then, reversely, a dialect will be a language with written literature and a living speaker community whose members not yet have the political power to standardize their dialect as the norm in the dialect continuum they belong to.<sup>5</sup> In this sense we all speak a dialect of either an extant or extinct language. Geopolitical boundaries, thus, are of no avail when dealing with the pure linguistics aspect of the distinction between dialect and language.

If we understand language as the human ability to acquire and use complex systems of communication and, in addition to its strictly communicative uses, it is also used in cultural contexts, such as signifying group ethnicity, political and social status, as

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<sup>3</sup> David M. Bunis *Judezmo: The Jewish language of the Ottoman Sephardim*, p. 23

<sup>4</sup> א שפראך איז אַ דיאלעקט מיט אַן אַרמיי און פֿלאַט "A language is a dialect with an army and a navy" in *YIVO Bleter* 25.1, 1945, p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> Einar Haugen. *Dialect, language, Nation*, p.927

well as an educational tool for instruction, leisure and entertainment; how could it be different from a dialect which fulfills the same functions?

It seems, then, that every dialect is a language but not every language is a dialect.<sup>6</sup> The acceptance of this ambiguous terminology to describe a dichotomy that cannot be explained in terms of a simple relationship of super ordination for the language and subordination for the dialect, has shaped the common believe that they are two separated entities.<sup>7</sup>

It has been suggested that the language situation of Greece in the classical period, when there existed a group of closely related norms of which none had been standardized, was the model and the stimulus for the use of this distinction as we know it today.<sup>8</sup> These Greek "dialects" were called after the various places where they were spoken. They were written varieties and differed from each other only in the function they had in society.

Each dialect had specialized for certain literary uses. Thus, Ionic was used for history, Doric for the choral lyric and Attic for tragedy. The comparison of these dialects with each other and with their Indo-European correlate, confirms that they are descendants of a common Greek language from a previous period.<sup>9</sup>

This situation changed in the postclassical period when the Greek dialects were eliminated in favor of a unified and generalized norm, the *Koine*, which basically is the dialect of Athens. This case of linguistic divergence and convergence in which one language splits in dialects and the dialects can at some later point, and always with the preponderance of one of them over the rest, become a language, has been the model for all later usage of the two terms.<sup>10</sup>

"In a descriptive, synchronic sense", explains Einar Hauge, "language can refer either to a single linguistic norm, or to a group of related norms. In a historical, diachronic sense language can either be a common language on its way to dissolution, or a common language resulting from unification"

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<sup>6</sup> Einar Haugen. Dialect, language, Nation, p.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p.923

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

Examples of the ambiguity concerning these terms can be found all around the world. In Europe, where the raise of nationalism has always gone hand-to-hand with language policies, the cases of Spain, France, Italy, Germany and Norway are representatives of the planned convergence and unification of a group of dialects into a standard language. In each of these cases one regional norm is elevated to the status of language, generally in detriment of the rest.

Castilian was imposed as the norm in the whole Spain due to political, religious and linguistic reasons. When the Castilian kingdom and that of Aragon were united by the marriage of their monarchs, Christianity became the official religion of the new kingdom. Then, the already prestigious Castilian dialect was chosen over all the rest to function as the language of the empire.

The same is true for the dialects of Paris, Tuscany and the Hochdeutsch or "High German". The distinction in all cases is political and not linguistic. Norway's situation is interesting and typifies the controversial distinctions between dialect and language. If the New Norwegian movement had some momentum was because of Danish, "the language of books" is not an international language but its preponderance in Norwegian daily life is so expanded that there is no possibility for the local varieties to become a threat for the Danish hegemony.<sup>11</sup>

What Norwegians proudly refer to as dialects today are but local accents, none of which is unintelligible for the rest. There are more difference between British English and its American counterpart than between any of these "Norwegian dialects" yet Americans do not say they speak a dialect of English. Latin American Spanish and the standard Iberian Peninsular exhibit more differences than the Norwegian local accents; still, any Latin American Spanish speakers do not say that that they express themselves in a dialect of Spanish.

It seems that when a dialect, for whatever reason it may be, is made into a language; the local accents become "dialects" or, reversely, when a language falls into the category of dialect, the dialect becomes a *patois*. This third element, *le patois*, represents the usage of a norm in its least prestigious moment. Hence, "the distinction dialect-patois", writes E. Haugen, "is not one between two kinds of languages, but between two functions of language."

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<sup>11</sup> Einar Haugen. Dialect, language, Nation, p.928

This may suggest the idea that there is not a common consent when cataloguing a linguistic variety as a language or a dialect. Socio-political and Historical factors are of more weight than the pure linguistics aspects and therefore it is generally accepted the notion that a group speaking a “separate language” is a nation and deserves, thus, a land of their own whereas those whose mother tongue happens to be a “dialect” should content themselves with being a part or sub-group of a whole, hence, regional autonomy is the most they could hope for. This strictly political view has prevailed until nowadays and has even generated armed conflicts. The popular belief is that a dialect is not a language if:

- They have no standard or codified form.
- They are rarely or never used in writing.
- The speakers of the given language do not have a state of their own.
- They lack prestige with respect to some other, often standardized, variety.

As we shall see in the following pages, the speech of the Spanish Jews not only have one but several codified ways of writing their speech and even a type of standardized form, used today by the two only Judeo-Spanish publications in the world: *Aki Yerushalaim* and *El Amanecer*<sup>12</sup> which, despite the many Gallicisms, is intelligible for all. The editorial and printing enterprises of the exiles from the Nederland, Italy, Morocco, the Balkans and Turkey<sup>13</sup> demonstrate that Judeo-Spanish enjoyed a well-deserved esteem among Sephardic circles.

The keen interest, with which Judeo-Spanish was preserved and cherished by these exiles Jews beyond the boundaries of their beloved Sefarad, shows that language is a more powerful identity marker than the place of residence, birth or religion. The prestige associated with their language and the reverence for this treasure of proverbs, folk tales, couplets, riddles and Romances taken from Spain, and very well preserved in North Africa and the Mediterranean Levant, are two of the main reasons of the survival until nowadays of this linguistic relic.

For the reasons above exposed, and in spite of the various technical divergences concerning the distinction language-dialect, Judeo-Spanish, henceforth, J.S. will be treated and referred to as a language on its own right with a past and a future, a peculiar long-lasting literature and, formerly, a great number of speakers whose love for their ancestral heritage have made possible for us today to delight with the best jewels of this treasure.

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<sup>12</sup> See chapter 7 for more on J.S. today

<sup>13</sup> The *Cancionero sin año* from Ambers, *La bibbia di Ferrara*, *The Pentateuch of Cosntantinople* and some Romances from Morroco, Greece and Bosnia exemplify this in chapter 4



## 2 Methodological approach

My first acquaintance with Judeo Spanish was in Israel while on an exchange program between the Oslo University and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Being a native Spanish speaker and a student of Hebrew, Judeo Spanish archaisms and particular pronunciation captivated my attention, and imagination, in such a way that I decided I had to investigate more about this fascinating subject.

Having taken this determination, and with my mentor approval, I embarked on this modest project. Then began the process of collecting information on this old “dialect” that many considered as “language”. The setting of the investigation within a pre-established historical and geographical frame helped me to delimit in time and space the scope of this project. Two geographical zones were delimited: Western and Eastern. The span of time chosen ranges between 1942 until the present day.

The first difficulty I encountered was the scarce bibliography on Judeo-Spanish at the University of Oslo. Internet articles, some of which are only partially reproduced or not available at all, and a few books and magazines on the subject were insufficient to answer the questions of whether Judeo Spanish could be considered a language or a dialect and whether it was dead or alive.

When consulting this situation with my tutor, he advised to search for bibliographical material elsewhere in other European libraries, more specialized on these matters, which our University could contact. The advice was sound, indeed, but I was eager for something more.



On a private trip to Madrid I had the chance to visit the Hebrew and Aramaic department at the Complutense University where I met Don Luis Vega, Professor of biblical Hebrew at the same institution. After having informed Don Luis of my interest in J.S. and the unfortunate circumstance of not having access to the information, he sent me with a recommendation letter to the Library Tomas Navarro Tomas, part of the C.S.I.C, Centro Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas, where I finally found the material that needed to be used in this paper.

On a second visit to Madrid, this time as part of a fieldwork sponsored by the University of Oslo, I completed the selection of the biblical literature; the Romances sample texts and the Judeo Spanish press. My intention with this literature sampling is to demonstrate that Judeo Spanish is both a language and a dialect. In order to do so I will, after having defined both concepts, provide examples of the ample Sephardic literary production from the time after the 1492 expulsion to the present Century.

In chapter 3, therefore, a general topography of Judeo Spanish is given and, following that, a discussion of the position of Judeo-Spanish in respect to Ladino. Chapter 4 deals with Judeo Spanish- Literature and in it 6 romances are presented, translated and literary commented. Chapter 5 presents the historical background and main characteristics of the edition and printing of the Pentateuch of Constantinople and the Bible of Ferrara.

The following chapter, an exploration on Judeo-Spanish synchronicity, analyses its main grammatical features and provides abundant examples regarding the morpho syntactic, phonetic and lexical features of Judeo-Spanish. The Romances, the biblical literature and the modern press were chosen in virtue of their relevance in Sephardic life and the important legacy that each of these genre has left behind. The last chapter discusses the question of language death and survival and offers a prognosis for the language of the Sephardim and its maintenance during the 21<sup>th</sup> Century.

## **2.1 Technicalities**

The ballads sample texts are presented following the division of Eastern and western variety. I have chosen four Carolingian ballads, two from the North African tradition and two in the case of the Oriental one. This choice is based on the fact that the ballads from the Carolingian cycle, being a traditional genre, have preserved themes and folk motifs that are now absent in other Europeans traditions. In each ballad I provide the

main folkloric motifs according to the Seth S. Thompson's Motif-index of folk-literature: a classification of narrative elements in folktales, ballads, myths, fables, medieval romances, exempla, fabliaux, jest-books, and local legends In the ballads literary commentary, I discuss some of the salient features of both geographical zones, and establish parallelisms with other European traditions

All Romances were translated by me, which I have done following a mirror like technique, as if it was a calque translation. I have not followed any phonetic norm in the presentation of the ballads, neither in chapter six when the phonological features are analyzed. The ballads are presented in their original form and following the writing norm of each sub-region.

Regarding the Biblical literature, I offer a sample text of the Ferrara Bible and the text from the frontispiece of the Constantinople Pentateuch for which I provide an English translation. The Bosnian texts are selected for their thematic and the non-Hispanic ambience that surrounds them.

The possible mistakes and faults that may be found in this work are entirely my responsibility.



### 3 Judeo-Spanish

The language of the Sephardic Jews, depending on who is referring to it, adopts many names. Among them Ladino, Haketia, Judezmo, Muestro Spanyol and J.S. Although Ladino is generally accepted as the word for word translation of religious texts, scholars like Henry Besso, David Altabe, David Barocas use the term when referring to the spoken language and maintain that Judezmo should be used in the religious context of Judaism but not as a name for a language. David Gold and Max Weinreich call it Judezmo<sup>14</sup> and according to David Bunis this name is the one used in the majors sixteen Sephardi communities during the 19th and 20th Century. Ladino, he thinks, should be limited to the written language of the religious texts.<sup>15</sup>

Muestro Espanyol is the most recurrent term that native speakers use in reference to their language while J.S. is the neutral word used by scholars like M. Wagner, J. Nehama, Haim Vidal Sephiha, A. Malinowski and S. G. Armistead. Others claim that this pseudoscientific term should be restricted for popular use. According to the Encyclopedia Judaica<sup>16</sup> “the widespread idea that the term Ladino is only applicable to the sacred

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<sup>14</sup> Many informants reported in the researchers conducted by Rita Mendez Chumaceiro, Arlene Malinovski and Tracy Harry that they had never heard the name Ladino or Judezmo until they migration to America or Israel.

<sup>15</sup> Tracy K. Harris. International journal of the sociology of language. Sociology of Judezmo, the language of the Eastern Sephardim. Editor’s note.

<sup>16</sup> Second Edition, Volume 12

language of Bible translations and prayers, whereas as the other names are reserved solely for the spoken language, seems hardly tenable.”

David M. Bunis, however, argues that the different designations by which speakers have referred to their language have changed according to the historical events and the point of reference that is taken. Before the expulsion, he explains, Jews considered their Romance vernacular to be a variant of their Christian neighbor’s speech; hence the name Cristiano came to be synonym of any Latin variety of the Iberian Peninsula. After the expulsion, those who settled in the Ottoman Empire began to call their language Espanyol as a reference to their Spanish Origins. By the 18<sup>th</sup> Century the designation of the language was again based on a religious standpoint and the term Judezmo (meaning the language of Judaism) was adopted. A variety of this, Yahudice, was used by non-Jews and Ottoman authorities. The terms *djudyo* and *djidyo*, meaning Jewish and parallel to the name Yiddish, were in vogue by the 19<sup>th</sup> Century in Eastern Sephardic communities.<sup>17</sup>

Despite all these valid and different opinions, in this paper the terms Judeo-Spanish, henceforward J.S., and Ladino will be used respectively when referring to the vernacular language in general and the word-for-word translations. A clearer distinction concerning this terminology will be provided subchapter 3.3.

### **3.1 Topography of Judeo-Spanish**

Three events in the year of 1492 brought about tremendous consequences for the geopolitical, religious and linguistic development of the Spanish nation. The first was the fall of Granada in January which represented the final stage of the Reconquista and put an end to 300 years of Moorish rule in the Iberian peninsula and 700 in Granada; the second was the discovering of America by Christopher Columbus in October, an episode that would not only expand overseas the power and influence of the Castilian kingdom but also

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<sup>17</sup> Judezmo: The Jewish language of the Ottoman Sephardim, p. 23

its language and culture. The third was the royal signing in March of the Expulsion edict by which all Jews of the Castilian-Aragon kingdom had but three months and three options: to convert, go into exile or die by execution.<sup>18</sup> The Castilian Monarchy, after annexing Granada to their expanding kingdom, was ready to become the bastion of Catholic Christianity in Iberia and the newly discovered American territories.

Portugal and Morocco<sup>19</sup> were the first destination of some of the exiled Jews. Others, following an invitation of Sultan Bayazit the II<sup>20</sup>, settled within in the domains of the former Ottoman Empire<sup>21</sup> where they successfully integrated in the new environment and kept alive the language of their homeland.

Since Ottoman authorities did not have until then any policy of language and cultural assimilation for its subjects within the system of *millet*, monotheist religious minorities such as Jewish and orthodox Greeks and Armenians had the right to work, practice their religion and use their language.<sup>22</sup> This allowed the Sephardim to organize themselves around the same religious and communal institutions they had inherited from the Iberian Peninsula and maintain their language and the use of the Hebrew alphabet.<sup>23</sup>

The oriental Jewish population, composed mainly of Greek speaking Romaniotes Jews and some Ashkenazi, became predominantly Sephardic after the arrival of the exiles. Many of which continued with the same professions, trades and occupations they had back in the Iberian Peninsula<sup>24</sup>: Physicians, lawyers, merchants, craftsmen, publishers and printers. The latter are reputed for having introduced this technological wonder in the Ottoman Empire<sup>25</sup>. Thanks to the printing endeavors of the Sephardim of Constantinople,

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<sup>18</sup> Haim Vidal Sephiha. *Le Judeo-Espagnol*, p. 15

<sup>19</sup> The geographical vicinity with the Iberian Peninsula and the previous knowledge that there existed in the north of Africa ancient Jewish communities gave hope to the forty thousand Spanish Jews that fled in 1492 when the edict took effect. The newly arrived were welcomed to settle and organize their communal life in the same manner they were accustomed to, something which later was adopted by most of the Jewish communities of Morocco either Sephardic or not.

<sup>20</sup> The sultan, on hearing a courtesan praising the politic prudence of Fernando de Aragon, is believed to have said: *How do you want me to consider wise a man who impoverish his kingdom and enriches mine?* Paloma Diaz-Mas, *Los Sefardies historia, lengua y cultura*, p. 64.

<sup>21</sup> La Sublime Porte, name by which the Ottoman Empire was known, assembled people from very distinct cultural, linguistic and religious background in a peculiar political and administrative system that allowed each group to maintain its identity.

<sup>22</sup> Haim Vidal Sephiha. *Le Judeo-Espagnol*, p. 21

<sup>23</sup> Paloma Diaz-Mas, *Los Sefardies historia, lengua y cultura*, p. 59

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, p. 60-61

<sup>25</sup> On December 13<sup>th</sup>, during the years of 1493-1504? David and Samuel Ibn Nahmias, are reputed to have printed for the first time a book in the Ottoman empire. Sephardic Jews kept the monopoly of the press until

Izmir, Salonika, Sarajevo and other cities within the empire, the Hispanic legacy of their forefathers in Iberia was not forgotten while transplanting their life in the Balkans. Salonika, the metropolis of Oriental Jewry, had a similar situation with its bankers, industrials, printers, street vendors and stevedores. All of which maintained the Castilian speech despite the geographical distance and the alien linguistic milieu.

By 16th Century, Sarajevo had already a thriving Jewish community whose exiles did not arrive directly from Spain but from other Ottoman cities, mainly Salonika. Here, Jews families, being less in number (700 families) than their brethren in Istanbul, Izmir and Salonika; considered and referred to themselves as Spaniards, and as Spanish, the language that during four Centuries have been in used for both the domestic intimacy and public life.

In some Italian cities, Amsterdam and London, Castilian continued being in use and revered as a liturgy language hence their profuse printing activity. Those who settled and established the communities of Venetia, Roma, Ancon, Padua, Pisa, Florence and Ferrara engaged in trading, medicine and excelled in the printing of books in Castilian<sup>26</sup>, out of which the Ferrara bible is the best-known example. Unfortunately one Century later Italian had already supplanted the daily use of Castilian which remnants can be seen only in the liturgy.

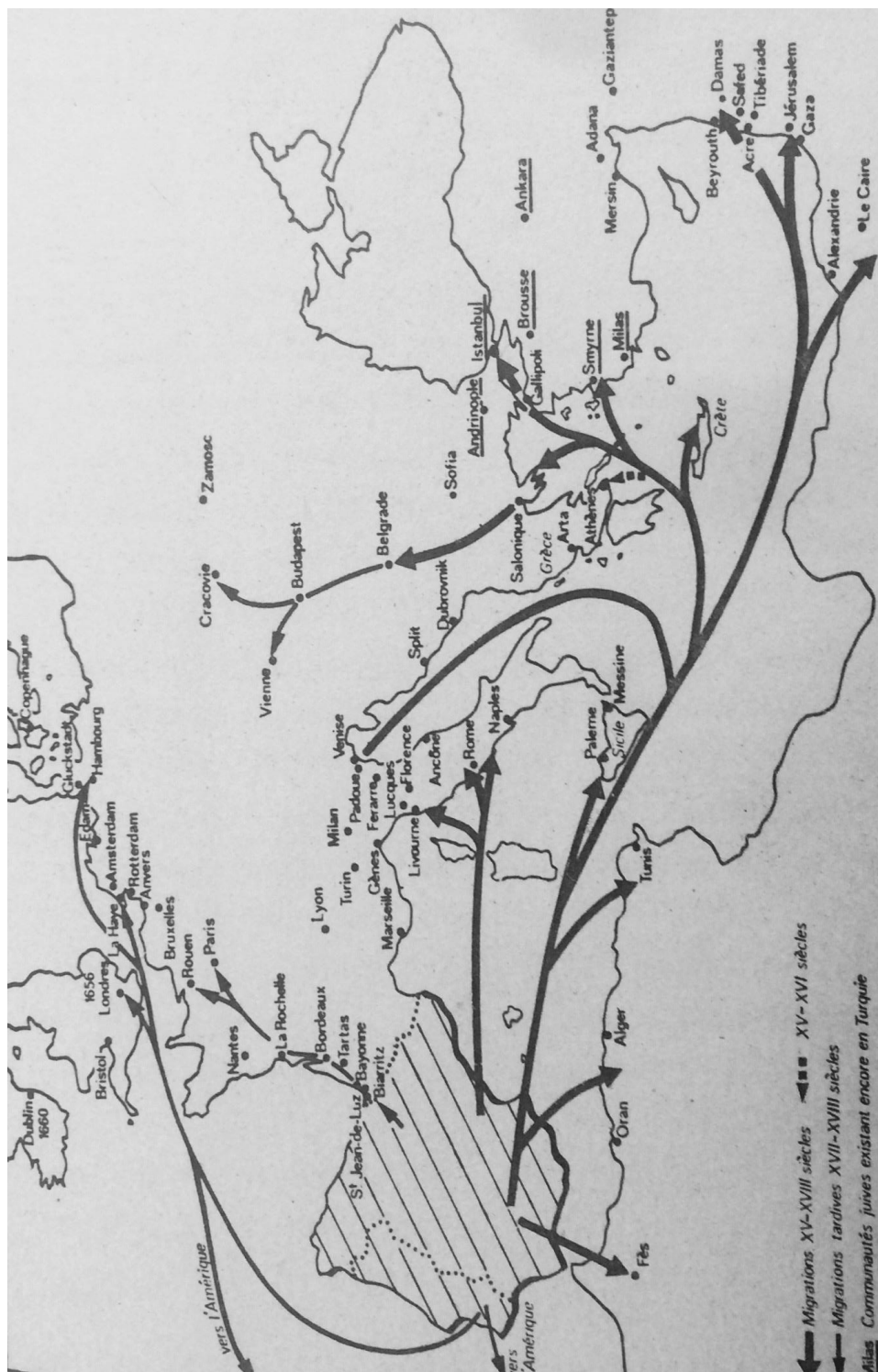
In the Netherlands, the cities of Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht, Leiden, Antwerp and Amsterdam settled many Portuguese Jews who centered their activities mainly in banking and trade. The next two following Centuries a great number of Marranos, thanks to which the linguistic and cultural nexus with the Peninsula was never interrupted, fled to the Netherlands bringing the latest news and trends. As in the case of Italy, in the Netherlands many books in Castilian, and using the Latin characters were printed. The survival of Castilian in these communities was due to the editorial prestige associated with it and not because it was a mother tongue. Most of the exiles in the Netherlands came from Portugal and orally maintained their speech although for the printing of books Castilian had always the preference.<sup>27</sup>

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1727 when it was abolished the ban on printing in Turkish. Paloma Diaz-Mas, Los Sefardies historia, lengua y cultura, p.62

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p.56

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, p.57



Map of M.L.Lambert, according to M.H.Bainart  
 (Extract from Encyclopedia Judaica, t. 14, pp. 1165-1166)



## 3.2 Judeo-Spanish or the Spanish of the Jews?

During the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century there co-existed in Spain three main communication channels for Jews: Hebrew and Aramaic as Liturgical languages and sources from which several translations were issued. A type of Vernacular Castilian, common to all three religions, and Ladino, the calque language, into which the mentioned translations were versed.<sup>28</sup>

The analysis of documents and literary works suggests that the Spanish of the Jews was not different from that of the Christian population except for some dialectal traits mainly determined by religious motivations e.g. the use of *el Dio* for God instead of Spanish *Dios* as an incompatible plural with their strict monotheism, the use of Arabic *Alhad* to designate the Christian Sunday, the use of Hebrew and Aramaic words to describe some particularities of the religious life and the use of Arabic loans<sup>29</sup>

This view is, nevertheless, challenged by Bunis when he affirms that “even before the Sephardim began referring to their Hispano-Jewish vernacular by distinctive names alluding to the Jewishness of its speakers, the language was distinct from varieties of Ibero-Romance used by non-Jews in Iberia” and he argues that the vocabulary, expressions, turns of phrase and metaphors they used; distinguished them from their neighbors since they reflect the unique beliefs, practices and habits of Judaism.<sup>30</sup>

Haim Vidal Sephiha is of the opinion that the omission of these Christian terms and their substitution for Arabic or Hebrew words is not a criterion to determine whether their language was different or specifically Jewish.<sup>31</sup> If there existed a Judeo-language in Iberia before 1492, that is Ladino.<sup>32</sup> The function this language had as both a liturgical and a pedagogical tool, its calqued syntax from Hebrew and the archaizing lexical features that it exhibits, suffice to declare Ladino as the sole Judeo-Spanish in Medieval Spain.

This cryptic characteristic of Ladino, due to its Semitic syntax, is the only feature that distinguishes it from the vernacular varieties in Spain. The fact that Jews interspersed their dialects with words and expressions of Hebrew and Aramaic origin in their daily

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<sup>28</sup> Haim Vidal Sephiha, *Le judeo –Espagnol*, p.52

<sup>29</sup> Paloma Diaz-Mas. *Los Sefardies, historia, lengua y cultura*, p. 97

<sup>30</sup> David Bunis. *Judezmo: the Jewish language of the Ottoman Sephardim*, p.24

<sup>31</sup> Haim Vidal Sephiha, *Le judeo –Espagnol*, p.54

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

speech does not necessarily mean that Jews in Spain spoke a different language than their neighbors.<sup>33</sup>

### 3.3 Ladino versus Judeo-Spanish

The general tendency in the study of J.S. linguistics has been that of analyzing it as a rigid monolith that includes a written and oral form: Ladino, a semi-sacred calque language, as the written form and J.S., the language of the Oriental Sephardim, as the vernacular one. Since the two modalities of Judeo-Spanish can be written and every language is first oral before being codified into writing, this distinction/division i.e. written J.S. versus oral J.S. is not clear and therefore should be revised.<sup>34</sup>

The word ladino is derived from the Spanish Latino and was used during the middle Ages in Spain to refer to someone of Semitic ancestry that could speak Romance or any of the other local varieties of Vulgar Latin.<sup>35</sup> Although in Israel nowadays the word is employed as if it was synonymous with J.S., Ladino is in fact a Hagiolanguage, a sacred language into which the liturgical texts were translated literally, word for word and respecting the Hebrew Syntax in order to be read as a guide notes by pious people, students of the Torah and synagogue singers. It is an artificial language that initially was developed for pedagogical purposes since most of the Sephardic Jews could not speak Hebrew.<sup>36</sup>

An analysis of the linguistic situation in Spain before 1492 could help us clarify the terminological confusion regarding this distinction. H. V. Sephiha proposes a model based on the literary and historical liaison between a trinomial comprised by what he

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p.56

<sup>34</sup> Haim Vidal Sephiha. Le judeo –Espagnol. p. 52

<sup>35</sup> Paloma Dias Mas. Los Sefardies, Historia lengua y cultura, p. 101

<sup>36</sup> “Les Enfants juifs etaient si naturellement Hispanophones que les rabbins devaient recourir a leur langue pour traduire les textes liturgiques et biblique hebreux et Arameen. Ils le faisaient litteralement, mot a mot, faissant correspondre fidelement a un mot Hebrew ou Arameen determine a un mot Espagnole determine et toujours le meme, a moins que ne s’y opposassent de considerations exegetiques.” Haim Vidal Sephiha. Le judeo –Espagnol. p. 52

defines as *Langue source (L1)*, *langue traduisante (Lt)* and *langue de arrivee (L2)*. The first element in this triad is the Hebrew or Aramean source from where the religious texts were translated. The second, the language of the translation, i.e. the vernacular common to all three religions, is the channel between L1 and L2. The latter, recipient of the translations from L1, is a pedagogical language designed by rabbis to help the students grasp the meaning of the Hebrew terms since they had lost proficiency in this language.<sup>37</sup>

Ladino, L2, is the result of a word for word translation process that runs from L1, the source, into L2 with the peculiar characteristic of blending Lt's lexical features with the syntax of L1. Plainly said, Ladino is Hebrew clad in Spanish clothes. Hebrew and Aramaic being the mannequins and Spanish the robe.<sup>38</sup> A chart comprising the main traits of this triad will suffice to understand their subtle interdependence and the need for a more rigid, and less the confusing, terminology.<sup>39</sup>

| <b>L1</b>             | <b>LT</b>          | <b>L2</b>                    |
|-----------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|
| Previous to Lt and L2 | Previous to L2     | Posterior to L1 and Lt       |
| Fixed                 | Non fixed          | Macroscopically fixed        |
| Invariable            | Very variable      | Minimally variable           |
| Sacred                | Profane            | Semi Sacred.                 |
| Prestigious           | Vulgar             | Prestigious but less than L1 |
| Semitic               | Roman              | Semitic-Roman                |
| Mannequin             | Tailor             | Robe                         |
| One synchrony         | Multiple synchrony | M. Synchrony. Fixed Syntax   |

The following conclusion can be draught from this:

- There existed only one type of J.S. before 1492 in the Iberian Peninsula and that is Ladino, an artificial, pedagogical and non-oral language use for didactical purposes.
- It is only after 1620 that a distinctive vernacular form of J.S aroused in northern Africa and the Mediterranean levanter.
- All literary works that antecede this date cannot be considered to be J.S. but Ladino.

<sup>37</sup> Haim Vidal Sephiha, *Le Judeo-Spagnol*, p.52

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p.81

When comparing Ladino to J.S., the speakers of the latter saw in the former a model of purity and excellence. The prestige that Jewish observance of the tradition attributed to this language is due to its ancient, venerable and sacred character. It was precisely this ‘purity’ which made J.S. speakers believe in the alleged superiority of Ladino over J.S. and assign the negative qualities to the vernacular variety, classifying it as: impure, ignoble mixture and jargon when comparing both varieties.<sup>40</sup>

### **3.4 Ladinisation of Judeo-Spanish and vernacularisation of Ladino**

As stated above, there existed in the Iberian Peninsula, before 1492 and until 1862; only one Judeo-language, Ladino, the recipient of literal and pedagogical translations of biblical and religious texts from Hebrew and Aramaic into Castilian. This Artificial language, by force of repetition and the invariability of its form and character, acquired a second function as the language of the liturgy and though it became nearer to the vernacular varieties in the peninsula it never lost its most salient feature i.e. its Semitic syntax. For if Ladino had lost this most singular trait, would have ceased to exist.<sup>41</sup>

Nevertheless, this did not exempt Ladino from the pervasive influence of Castilian. Two movements in this sense can be distinguished. The first being the Ladinisation of Castilian and the second the Vernacularisation of Ladino. The former can be observed both before and after 1492 whereas the later only after 1620. The impact of Ladino on the vernacular varieties of peninsular Spanish finds its best expression through the Ladino Bibles<sup>42</sup> and other editions later made in Netherland and France and Spain attest it.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Haim Vidal Sephiha, *Le Judeo-Spagnol*, p.77

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, p. 64

<sup>42</sup> I shall refer only to the Pentateuch of Constantinople and the Bible of Ferrara in the chapter dealing with J.S. biblical literature.

<sup>43</sup> Haim Vidal Sephiha, *Le judeo Espagnol*, p.62-64

### 3.5 De Pluribus Unus

The lack of contact due to the expulsion between the Sephardim, their land and mother tongue, brought about a linguistic rupture that allowed the conservation of rustic and popular forms already rejected by the Castilian norm. This, added to the varied social and regional background of the expelled Sephardim, made it possible for independent *koines*<sup>44</sup> to develop in which the use of Castilian forms is widespread although not restrictive since they exhibit features from other Peninsular languages as Catalan, Leonese and Aragonese.

This *koine(s)* that developed among the Ottoman Sephardim by the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, explains Bunis, and became the standard form within the Empire; was the result of an amalgamation of linguistic elements taken from various sources. Among them, the already mentioned influences of Castilian, Portuguese, Aragonese plus that of Catalan, on one hand; and the direct effect of internal changes and loans from extra Hispanic sources on the other.<sup>45</sup>

Oriental J.S., according to Bunis, “evolved into a single, independent, self-contained system, characterized by some phonological, morphological, lexical and semantic features shared by all of its regional varieties” He further compares the unity out of plurality achieved by J.S. to the complex and diverse, not always intelligible, peninsular varieties.<sup>46</sup>

Already in Ottoman times, the utility of J.S. as a common channel of communication was known to Sephardic merchants who in their trips used it to make contact with other Sephardim and, through them, with the local non-Jewish population. Yahudice i.e. J.S., the language of the principal Jewish group of the Empire, also had another interesting function, that of inter communal language among Yiddish, Judeo-Arabic and Jewish Neo-Aramaic speakers.<sup>47</sup>

Apart from this usage as *lingua franca*, Bunis notices, also among merchants, a more restrictive and secretive code developed.<sup>48</sup> Words from Hebrew and Aramaic origins

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<sup>44</sup> Paloma Diaz-Mas. Los Sefardies, historia, lengua y cultura, p. 98

<sup>45</sup> David Bunis. Judezmo: The language of the Ottoman Sephardim, p. 30

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, p. 31

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p. 32

were interspersed with those of common use in order not to be understood by gentiles who knew their language. A salesman could avoid an indiscretion by warning, when conversing in front non-Jews, with a phrase like this:

*No diburees, que yodea lashon!* Don't speak, he knows the language!

Or to alert another vendor of the intention of a potential thief, he could say:

*Los enaim en la yadaim!* Your eyes on his hands!

The same stratagem was used when discussing prices in front of gentiles. The sellers would count in Hebrew instead of J.S. to avoid undesired attention to their transactions.

The communities of the Ottoman Empire retained the archaic Hispanic features and, contrary to those of Amsterdam and Italy,<sup>49</sup> incorporated words and expressions of the languages they came in contact during their diaspora e.g. Turkish, French and Italian. The resulting language, a vernacular J.S could have been the perfect candidate for a Mediterranean *lingua franca*.<sup>50</sup>

This mutual intelligibility among J.S. speakers despite the varied external linguistic influences of their new places of residence is exemplified in the fact that books printed in Istanbul or Amsterdam could be perfectly read and understood in Tanger or Salonika. African, Minor Asian and European Sephardic Jews found in the preservation of Spanish a powerful tool that has bounded them together in a macro-linguistic community for more than 500 years.

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<sup>49</sup> The Ladino Literature from Amsterdam and Italy reflects the tendency to favor Castilian over other Hispanic dialects. The example of the Ferrara Bible is the most representative in Italy of this resistance of Castilian to the pervasive influence of Italian. See chapter

<sup>50</sup> Haim Vidal Sephiha, *Le Judeo-Spagnol*, p. 90



## 4 Judeo-Spanish Literature

Sephardic Jews are fond of old Hispanic literature, preferably in the Castilian language, since it reminds them of their own antique origins and prestigious lineage. From their beloved Sefarad they took with them old Castilian Romances, wedding songs, proverbs, and short stories and guarded them with such zeal and deference that today it is possible to have an idea of the grandiose and colorful worlds in which the Sephardim have lived by what they left written.<sup>51</sup>

The preservation of such literary treasure is of paramount importance for the study of Spanish literature from medieval times to the renaissance. After the 1492 expulsion and subsequent settlement in distinctive linguistic areas, the Spanish of the Jews was isolated in its own milieu and disconnected from the peninsular evolution. The medieval Hispanic epic and lyric traditions were preserved intact in the heart and everyday life of the Sephardim. The fact that these Romances, which depict the mores and arts, poetic aspirations, joys and fears of mankind in Medieval and Renaissance times, have been preserved with such a degree of fidelity; and written in an archaic stage of Castilian, represents a tremendous opportunity for the historic, linguistic and literary study of Spanish and European culture in general.

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<sup>51</sup> Genres as theater and novels are also popular and several translations from French, Russian and German literature masterworks were done.



## 4.1 The Romancero

“The romanticist, especially the Germans, were the first to call attention to the unique poetic value and importance of the Spanish Romancero since they saw in it the living remnants of the Spanish folk epic (...)”<sup>52</sup>

Romances are, according to Moshe Attias,<sup>53</sup> original poetic creations that could be dated between the tenth and twelfth Century and have their origins in the Iberian Peninsula. They are the expression of the idiosyncrasy and values of their creators and also of a period of national effervescence and increasing identity quest.

Menendez Pelayo sustains that these Epic-Lyric poems have their origin in the ruling class and were later adopted by the military aristocracy that made use of them to awaken the young warrior’s spirit and to cheer-up the knights that fought against the invading Moors.<sup>54</sup> By the time it became an authentic form of folk poetry, the Spanish aristocracy was already enamored with Provençal and Italian Poetry and looked upon Romances with scorn; a fact that contributed to its preservation among the masses.

Both Castile and Asturias are held as cradle of the Romance. The former for being the place where all legendary heroes came from and where Romances were sung to exalt their glory, life events and prowess in battle; the latter for its reputed resistance against the Moorish invaders and its pride of never being subjected to theirs rule. Not surprisingly was Asturias the place from where the Reconquista began.<sup>55</sup> Whether they originated due to the political isolation of the kingdom of Asturias, free from all external linguistic influences, or thanks to the poetic inspiration of Castilians bards; the fact is that this heroic poetry became national in character and later transcended the limits of its provincialism to embrace a wider scope of interest.<sup>56</sup>

The popularity of the Romancero resides precisely in the broad horizon of human feelings and emotions it refers to and the variegated assembly of situations and personages that it portrays. Having lost its initial military and aristocratic character, jugglers found new themes to reach all audiences and included those concerning with love, jealousy, unfaithfulness and betrayal with which they very well pleased the nobility as well as the

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<sup>52</sup> Kalmi Baruch. J.S. Ballads of the Bosnian Jews. p. 39

<sup>53</sup> Romancero Sefaradi. Moshe Attias. Jerusalem, 1961, p. 346-347

<sup>54</sup> Ibid

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p. 346

<sup>56</sup> Ibid

Aristocracy and the common people. This was the poetry of the warrior cast, a heir of the Visigoth traditions, which in the process of becoming folk poetry had to reinvent itself by shifting from themes and subjects concerning with the Aristocracy and military elite to more humans and universals topics.<sup>57</sup>

Romances are an invaluable source of history and folklore. They conform the historic memory and the heroic imagery of a people who, through poetry first and later on the battlefield, sang for freedom and redemption. Feudal costumes, religious ideas and the whole *modus vivendi* of a bygone era along with the complicated interdependence of human relationship within society are faithfully represented in this Epic-Liric poetry.

Honor, vengeance, nostalgia, love, pleasure and other human passions, are among the main themes that, first through oral tradition and later in paper, permeate this poetic form of expression. Its archaic character and capacity of constant renewal made it possible for these Romances to survive time and oblivion thanks to their reinterpretation and improvement by generations of poets and singers.

The geopolitical scenario of medieval Iberia, its mores and artistic aesthetic are well recorded in these ballads which constitute poetic, as well as historic, vestiges of a period spanning from the middle ages to the renaissance<sup>58</sup>. Hence the relevance and historic value of the Romancero, not only for Spanish and western literature but also for European history and folklore.

J.S. Romances have preserved their original purity and archaism despite time and adverse geographical and linguistic conditions in a manner that have no parallel in the Iberian Peninsula and nowhere else in the Spanish speaking world.<sup>59</sup> Sephardic Jews throughout the different communities of the diaspora have kept alive, both orally and printed, an ancient tradition rooted in Medieval Epic in which Old Spanish, Carolingian Latin-Germanic and Balkan themes and common folkloric motifs seem to mingle ad arbitrium.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p. 345-346

<sup>58</sup> Paul Benichou. Romancero Judeo Español de Marruecos. 1968, p.10

<sup>59</sup> Ramon Menendez Pidal in Paul Benichou's Romancero de Marruecos, p.

The relationship of Hispanic balladry to medieval epic is evidenced through a comparative approach of different, yet connected, balladry traditions of Europe. The first parallels between the Hispanic and Germanic narratives were proposed by Ramon Menendez Pidal with whom Armistead agrees *a propos* this literary connection but differs from regarding the date and ways by which the Germanic influence entered the Romancero.<sup>60</sup>

Menendez Pidal identified the relationship of the Ballad *Gaiferos y Melisenda* to the 9<sup>th</sup> Century Germano-Latin epic of *Waltharius* and its Germanic vernacular derivatives attested in Anglo-Saxon, Old Norse, and Middle High German versions.<sup>61</sup> The further identification of the folk hero Gaiferos with Gualter de l'Hum (of the Huns) in *La chanson de Roland* indicates that the ballad was brought to Spain via the missing French link rather than introduced in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century by the Visigoth invaders.<sup>62</sup>

Traditionalism, Kalmi Baruch has said,<sup>63</sup> is one of the main characteristics of Spanish Folk poetry. Both the oral written tradition display a continuity of historical events and wide arrangement of personages that are reinterpreted and adapted to the needs of the moment. The last Gothic king, Rodrigo; the folk hero The Cid, Charlemagne's daughter Amalasuintha and other figures from the Carolingian cycle and medieval chivalric novels, along with heroes from Classical antiquity, appear constantly in the imagery of the Romancero.

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<sup>60</sup> Folk Literature of the Sephardic Jews. Volume V. J.S. ballads from oral tradition IV. Carolingian Ballads: Gaiferos. Samuel G Armistead, Joseph H Silverman and Israel J. Katz.2006, p.1

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p.2

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Spanish ballads of the Bosnian Jews. Kalmi Baruch, p.37

## 4.2 Western variety. Morocco: The cradle of North African Jewry

“Listening to versions of Romances received from Moroccan cities, it seems possible for us to hear the very voice of those Spaniards who lived in times of the Catholic kings, as if Tanger, Tetuan, Larache, Alcazar o Xaen were old Castilian cities (sumidas por ensalmo) at the bottom of the sea, from where we could listen to the song of its former inhabitants; therein enchanted by the fairies of tradition during four Centuries”.<sup>64</sup>

The fact that Moroccan Romances are less known than their Oriental counterpart, although more numerous and much better preserved, called the attention of the Spanish scholar Ramon Menendez Pidal who considered them to be relevant due to their richness and poetic value. The Moroccan tradition includes various historic, Carolingian and novelesque Romances many of which are not found or remembered in the Iberian Peninsula or other modern Spanish versions.

Moroccan balladry is characterized by its archaic style and tone but also by the contaminations, additions and truncated or altered endings of texts that are found in any tradition. The penetration of oral and modern version from the Peninsula (especially from Andalucía and Cataluña) along with the preservation of the old ones; could explain the archaic, and at the same time modern, feature of the Moroccan J.S. Romances. This duality evidences the constant relationship of Morocco and Spain after the 1492 expulsion as well as during the colonization of North Africa by European powers.<sup>65</sup>

Not long ago, the knowledge of these poems was considered an essential prerequisite of being a Sephardic Jew and an aura of nobility was associated to their memorization and preservation. Today, due to the Europeization of North Africa and later the political, religious and literature emancipation of Maghrebian Jewry, Romances have lost their original prestige. Being no longer a distinguished form of art, it is almost impossible to find nowadays somebody who can sing them or remember them.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Ramon Menendez Pidal. Poesia popular y poesia tradicional.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid,

<sup>66</sup> Ibid,

### 4.3 Two Judeo-Spanish Romances from Morocco

#### Gerineldo<sup>67</sup>

- !Quien tuviera tal fortuna para ganar lo perdido  
Como tuvo Gerineldo mañanita de domingo!  
Limpiando paños de seda para dar al rey vestido,  
Mirandole esta la infanta desde su alto castillo.
- 5 -Gerineldo, Gerineldo, mi caballero pulido,  
Quien te me diera esta noche tres horas a mi servicio!  
-Como soy vuestro criado, señora burlais conmigo.  
-Yo no Burlo, Gerineldo, que de veras te lo digo.  
-A que hora vendre, señora, a que hora dare al Castillo?
- 10 -A eso de la medianoche, cuando el rey esta dormido.  
Media noche ya es pasada Gerineldo no ha venido  
-Mal haya tu, Gerineldo, mi caballero Pulido.-  
Ella en estas palabras, a su puerta han combatido.  
Quine ese o cua es ese que a mi puerta a combatido?
- 15 -Senora, soy Gerineldo, que vengo a lo prometido,  
Con zapatitos de lona para no ser consentido.-  
Tirole escalera e oro, por ella habia subido.  
Que de besos y de abrazos el sueno les ha vencido.  
Ellos en el dulce sueno, y el buen rey que ha consentido.
- 20 Encontro escalera puesta, por ella subio al castillo.  
Encontro a los dos durmiendo, como mujer y marido.  
-Que hare de mi, mezquino? Y que hare de mi, paisano?  
Si mato yo a Gerineldo, mi reino sera perdido.  
Si mato yo a la infanta, vivre con un suspiro.
- 25 Mas vale que mire y calle y no se lo diga a nadie  
Como la mujer que tapa las faltas de su marido.-  
Puso la espada entremedias pa' que sirva de testigo.  
Con el frio de la espada, la infanta se ha consentido.  
-Levantate, Gerineldo, que los dos estamos perdidos,
- 30 Que la espada de mi padre, nos la puso por testigo.  
-¿Por donde me voy ahora, para no ser consentido?  
-Vete por esos jardines a cojer rosas y lirios.  
Cada escalon que abajaba, cada suspiro que daba.  
En el ultimo Escalon, con el buen rey se encontrara.
- 35 -¿Donde vas tu, Gerineldo, .....  
-Por esos jardines a cojer rosas y lirios.  
-No es verdad eso, Gerineldo, que con la infanta has dormido.-  
Y otro dia en la mañana las ricas bodas se armaran .

<sup>67</sup> From Florilegio de romances sefardies de la Diaspora, p.74

### 4.3.1 Translation

Who could be so lucky to gain what has been lost as Gerineldo did one Sunday morning! While cleaning silk cloths for the king, the Princess is watching him from her lofty castle. // (5) Gerineldo, Gerineldo, my refined gentleman, how could I have you tonight three hours at my service! Since I'm your servant, my lady, you make fun of me. I do not make fun of you, Gerineldo, I really mean what I tell you. At what time could I, my lady, come to the castle? // (10) Around midnight, when the king has fallen asleep. It is already over Midnight, Gerineldo has not arrived. Cursed be you, Gerineldo, my refined gentleman. While she was in these thoughts, someone knocked on her door. Who is that or what is that, that on my door has knocked? // (15) My Lady, is me Gerineldo who came for what he was promised, with tarpaulin shoes to be unnoticed. She threw down a golden laden (and) he climbed up with it. After so many kisses and embraces, they fell asleep. While they were sleeping, the good king woke up. // (20) He found the ladder and with it climbed to the castle. He found them sleeping as if they were wife and husband. What will I do, oh poor me? If I kill Gerineldo, I will lose my kingdom. If I kill the princess, I will live with her sigh. // (25) It will be better not to tell anybody what I have seen, as the woman who conceals her husband's faults. He put the sword between them as a witness. The princess awoke with the coldness of the sword. Wake-up, Gerineldo, we are in trouble, // (30) since my father placed his sword between us as a witness. Which way can I go unnoticed now? Go through the garden, to gather roses and lily flowers. When descending, in each echelon he sighed. In the last echelon, the good king he found. // (35) Where are you going, Gerineldo, .....? I'm going to the garden to gather roses and lily flowers. That is not true, Gerineldo, with the princess you have slept. The next day in the morning they got married.

### 4.3.2 Textual commentary

**Folkloric motifs** (v-5 and 6) T55.1. *Princess declares her love for lowly hero.*  
(V- 38) T160. *Consummation of marriage.*

The romance of Gerineldo is well known in Marruecos, Spain and the Balkans. Versions from Tetuan, Oran, Asturias and Andalucía not only show the fidelity of the Moroccan tradition to its Iberian counterpart but also the wide popularity of this Romance throughout Spain<sup>68</sup>. In the Orient, where the existing versions are abbreviated and fragmentary<sup>69</sup>, Gerineldo's adventures were not fully recorded. The North African versions and those from Asturias are very similar regarding the main motifs<sup>70</sup> of the poem. In both of them details are given about when, how, and avoiding who, will Gerineldo meet the princess and the fact that at the end they marry is stated.

In the Balkan version present in Moshe Attias' *Romancero sefaradi* there is no princess, no royal wedding and a kingless castle, as a background of the action, is the only echo of nobility. Here, the lovers do not wake up (con el frio de la espada) left by the king and Gerineldo does not escape through the garden (a cojer rosas y lirios) instead the final is open, abrupt and suggestive. The accuracy with which the Sephardic Moroccan tradition has preserved their balladry heritage can be explained through the archaism of its foundation and the constant renewal of its content with modern Peninsular imports, especially from Andalucía<sup>71</sup>. Compare the archaic language and lack of details in Moshe Attias Bilingual Salonican version with the one given above:

- Gerineldo, Gerineldo, el mi tesoro molido,  
que bueno era con vos durmiera tres horas en un castillo.  
-Durmilda, señor, durmilda, tres horas en un castillo,  
4 y en medio de la noche batio puertas del castillo.  
-¿Quién es este perro malo y este bebedor de vino,  
qu a lastres horas de noche Batio puertas del castillo?  
-No so ningun perro malo, ningun bebedor de vino,  
8 que so el buen Gerineldo, el tu tesoro molido.

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<sup>68</sup> Oro Anahory Librowicz. *Florilegio de romances sefardies de la diaspora* (una colección malagueña) Madrid. 1980, p. 75. For more versions of Gerineldo in Spain see Mayra Goyri/Ramon Menendez Pidal. *Romancero tradicional de las lenguas Hispánicas* (Español-Portugues-Catalan y Sefardi) Madrid. 1926.

<sup>69</sup> See the version in Moshe Attias, *Refranero Sefaradi*, p. 96

<sup>70</sup> *Princess declares her love for lowly hero* (Verses 5-6 from our example); *Princess marries lowly man* (The abrupt ending in our example, v-38) See S. Thompson's *Motif-index of folk-literature*.

<sup>71</sup> Paul Benichou. *romancero Judeo Espanol de Marruecos*, p. 84.

This poem, which appears in Benichou's collection as a Carolingian Romance, is based on a medieval legend which tells of Eginards secret love affair with the daughter of Charlemagne and how both were pardoned by the compassionate king<sup>72</sup>. The theme of the hesitant king (v- 22) who measures the consequences of punishment before administrating it and eventually resolves to pardon (v- 27) I is common to all versions in the western variety which differ only by the ending. One of the versions given in Beniccho has Gerineldo as the lover of the Queen and the other as that of the king's daughter but in neither he marries his beloved. In the first instance, with the turning of the princess in queen, the passage of the king placing the sword between the two lovers "Pa que sirva de testigo" is omitted to safeguard the integrity of the forgiving king; in the second, Gerineldo refuses the royal offer alleging a sworn oath he has made of not marrying the girl with whom he has already slept:

ג'נירלדו, ג'נירלדו,  
 אוצרי בן חסודות,  
 מה טוב לו צמר ישנתי  
 בטירה שלש שעות  
 לינה, אדוני, תלין  
 בטירה שלש שעות  
 בחצות אותו הלילה  
 פתח הטירה ידפק  
 מי הוא כלב רע זה, מי  
 סרבה יין כה לשתות  
 בשעה שלש בלילה  
 פתח הטירה ידפק  
 אין אנכי כלב רע  
 יין לא ארבה לשתות  
 זה אנכי, ג'נירלדו  
 אוצור בן חמדות.

-Juramento tengo hecho en el libro de la estrella  
 Moca que ha sido mi dama de no casarme con ella  
 (v-39-40. Benichou)

The version of Gerineldo that appears in Menedez Pelayos Antologia de poetas liricos Castellanos (46) was selected due to its analogy, explains the author, with other Romances in which Gerineldo is the protagonist. Although it seems contaminated with another ballad and the narrative structure is quite different, the general idea is the same: Gerineldo slept with the princess and ought to be punished. The ballads denouement, as in our Marrocan text but not so abrupt, is also a happy marriage. Here are the final verses with which the princess intercedes on Gerineldo behalf and begs her father to let Gerineldo be her husband instead of being killed for treason:

“Merced os pido, el rey,—mercedes os pido yo,  
 que me dedes por marido—al que matais por traydor,  
 si no quereis que yo muera—antes que el que es mi señor.”

<sup>72</sup> Idem, p.85



## 4.4 Landarico<sup>73</sup>

El rey por mucho madrugar a donde la reina iba.  
La reina topo en cabellos peinandose sus trenzadas,  
Espejo de oro en la su mano dandole gracias a *Dios* padre.  
Dado gracias a Dios padre que tan linda la criado  
5 El rey por jugar con ella con vara de oro le daba.  
-Tate,tate, tu, Tarquino, mi pulido enamorado.  
Tres hijo tengo contigo y el del rey fueron los cuatro.  
Si el del rey come a la mesa, los tuyos van a mi lado;  
Si el de rey come galinas, los tuyo pavo cebado;  
10 si el del rey cabalga en mula, los tuyos van a caballo;  
si el del rey viste de seda, los tuyos seda y brocado.  
Volvio la cara la reina, y al buen rey hallo a su lado  
Perdon, perdon, mi señor rey, por eso que os he hablado,  
no se si estaba loca, o el sezo tenia volado.

### 4.4.1 Translation

Early in the morning went the king to see the queen. Combing her hair he found her, combing her braids, a golden mirror in her hand she held (and) to Godfather gave thanks. She thanks him for He has so beautifully created her. // (5) The king, to joke with her struck her with a golden stick. “Be still Tarquino, my fine lover. Three sons I have by you and one by the king, which makes four. If the king’s son eat at the table, yours are by my side; If the king’s son eats chicken, yours eat fattened turkey; // (10) if the king ‘son rides a mule, yours ride horses, if the king’s son is dressed in silk, yours in brocade. She turned around and found the good king beside her. Pardon, pardon, my lord the king, for what I have said, I don’t know whether I went crazy or my mind was in the air.

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<sup>73</sup> Oro Anahory Librowicz Florilegio de romances sefardies de la Diaspora (una colección malagueña) p.61

#### 4.4.2 Textual commentary

**Folkloric motifs** (v-6) T230. *Faithlessness in marriage.*  
(v-7) T640. *Illegitimate children.*

Landarico is well known by western and oriental Sephardim, although is not so popular in the Iberian Peninsula. According to Menendez Pelayo its immediate source is the *Gesta rerum francorum* where appears the story of the Merovingian King Chilperico and Fredegunda, his wife.<sup>74</sup> The historical fact of the Frankish king's assassination acquires a romantic dimension when the queen's lover, Landaricus, is ordered to kill the monarch after his return from hunting since the queen, unwillingly, had betrayed herself by exposing to the king her love affair with the servant. The queen's indiscretion is given differently treatment in the two Moroccan versions here presented. In the one from Oran, the queen is decapitated (v-15-16. Benichou) while the one from Tetuan offers an open ending without specifying the consequences of the adultery.

Kalmi Baruch's Bosnian version of the Romance is similar to the North African renditions, except for some details like the (golden) stick with which the king hits the queen and the subsequent soliloquy where she explains how many children she has with each man and how she favors the children begotten with Landarico, her lover, over those with the king (v-7-11) Baruch; Benichou. The contraposition of legitimate versus bastard progeny is poetically achieved by establishing a parallel regarding the treatment given to one or another:

-Dos hijicos de ti tengo y dos del rey, que son cuatro.  
Los del rey van a la guerra y los tuyos a mi lado.  
Los del rey benean mula los tuyos mula y caballo.  
Los del rey duermen en pluma y los tuyos a mi lado.  
(Baruch)

-Tres hijos tuvi contigo y uno del rey que son cuatro,  
Si el del rey vestia seda, los tuyos seda y brocado;  
Si el del rey come gallina, los tuyos gallina y pavo;  
Si el del rey bebe vino, los tuyos vino y claro.  
(Benichou)

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<sup>74</sup>Paul Benichou. *Romancero Judeo-Español de Marruecos*, p.104

In both the western and the oriental versions the queen's illegitimate sons are always given an extra share of attention or care. The description of this relationship with their mother is expressed in the superior quality of treatment, clothes and food that each bastard son is entitled to. Notice that in the Moroccan versions the contrast of three children out of marriage against a single one with the king emphasizes the queen's favoritism for Landarico. The presence of Charlemagne, as the king or emperor, is recurrent in the Romancero. Other medieval folk heroes like Amadis de Gaulle and Roland are also depicted and characterized within the amalgam of historic, classic or fictitious high ranked personages present in Hispanic balladry.

#### **4.5 Eastern variety: Judeo-Spanish in Turkey and the Balkans**

For almost 500 years has J.S. existed in Turkey surviving against all odds in a linguistic environments alien to its nature and form. The miracle of such a survival can be attributed to both the perseverance of its speakers to preserve the language in which their folklore and culture was expressed and the tolerance of the Turkish authorities towards the different religious practices and language preferences of their subjects.<sup>75</sup>

The system of Millet gave non-Muslim communities total freedom to pursue their practices and traditions concerning law, religion, language and education on the condition of a special payment or tax. This situation gradually changed in 1839 when the Turkish sultan Abdulmecid, in an attempt to enhance national unity and promote allegiance to the Ottoman regime, proclaimed what came to be known as the Tanzimat reforms.<sup>76</sup>

All Turkish subjects were given equal rights as citizens and the education system and language policy were restructured. Non-Muslim children were allowed to attend state secondary schools in 1867, an initiative taken by the Ottoman ministry of education in order to universalize the use of Turkish.<sup>77</sup> Despite all efforts deployed by the Ottoman Empire, these measures would not take effect until the establishment of Turkish republic

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<sup>75</sup> Arlene Malinowski. Judeo-Spanish in Turkey, p.9-10

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, p.10

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, p.11

in 1923 under the leadership of Mustafá Kemal a.k.a Atatürk when an efficient language reform took place. The following year, under the law of “*unification of instruction*”, Turkish language was decreed to be the only language of instruction in all primary schools.<sup>78</sup>

Then came along the language revolution of 1928 aiming for “simplification and turkicization” of Ottoman Turkish which was not understood by the populace since it’s many long words and expressions from Arabic and Persian. Some months later came the adoption of the Latin alphabet for the writing of the Turkish language as part of the new government strategy to modernize it. In 1932, Ataturk founded the Turkish linguistic society with the noble objectives of “ Bringing out the genuine beauty of the Turkish language and elevating it to the high and rank it deserves among the world languages”.<sup>79</sup>

Unlike the failed previous attempts of the Tanzimat period to achieve national unity, the measures taken by the government of Atatürk were implemented by law and as a part of a national program of unification and modernization. The zeal and effectiveness, with which the republican government of Ataturk carried out these measures, brought about irreversible changes in Turkey concerning minority language maintenance, use and attitude.<sup>80</sup>

#### 4.5.1 Greece

The Jewish population in Greece was the biggest in mainland Europe by the 15<sup>th</sup> Century. Sephardic Jews who arrived after 1492, following their expulsion from Spain, and the Romaniotes<sup>81</sup> or Greeks Jews, an ancient and distinct minority that settled in Greece 2000 years ago, were the two characteristic Jewish groups of Salonika. The latter originally spoke Yevanic, a dialect of Greek, until Ladino was adopted as the *lingua franca* of most of all Jewish communities in Greece.

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid,p.12

<sup>79</sup> Ibid,p.11-12

<sup>80</sup> Ibid,p.12

<sup>81</sup> The name is derived from Romaioi, the old name of the inhabitants of Byzantium.

#### **4.5.2 Salonika: “the mother of Israel”**

The city of Salonika became the favorite destination for the Jews and *marranos* who settled in the Balkans. Whether Jews were welcomed because of their wealth, their technological and intellectual knowledge or due to a demographic strategy used by the Ottomans to prevent ethnics Greeks from controlling the city is not of historical relevance as the fact that by 1556 Jews made more than 50 per cent of the populace in the city. Their presence was felt in all economic niches: Merchants, scholars, journalists, tailors, fishermen, and lemonade sellers were some of the occupations of these immigrants during this period of Ottoman rule in the Balkans.

The interesting phenomenon of transplanting a whole way of life along with an own language and culture from the Iberian Peninsula to the Balkans permitted the exiles to reconstruct their lives as it had been before the expulsion. The first who arrived not only built their houses following the architectural style of their residences in Spain but also were employed in the same occupations and trades they practiced before and preserved the same social structure they were accustomed to. The whole folkloric content of a variegated and rich Spanish culture with its habits, life conceptions, stories, proverbs, fairy tales and Romances, which at that time were popular in Spain and Portugal, was poured into a new environment<sup>82</sup> and managed to survived.

In Salonika, we learn from Moshe Attias<sup>83</sup>, the purity of the language of the ancestors did not lose its luster and nobility since the Sephardim that brought it from Spain cherished it with love and pride. J.S. was for them a mother tongue as it was the language of literature and the liturgy. The profuse literary and printing enterprises in this language in Salonika demonstrate how deeply rooted it was in their minds and everyday life.

#### **4.5.3 The collector, editor and minstrel activities of Yacob Abraham Yona**

The printing in Roman letters of Yacob Abraham Yonas J.S. ballads chapbook gave the reader, non-familiarized with Hebrew characters, the possibility of accessing these relics from the J.S. Romance tradition in Salonika. Yonas endeavors as editor and collector called the attention of the renowned Spanish philologist Ramon Menendez Pidal,

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<sup>82</sup> Moshe Attias. *Romancero Sefaradi*. Jerusalem, 1961, p.332.

<sup>83</sup> Idem, p.331-332.

whose fascination for the rarity and authenticity of these texts is manifested when he compares them to the venerable 16<sup>th</sup> Cancionero de Amberes.<sup>84</sup>

Yacob collected and edited, wrote and sang poems about the daily life of Salonika Jewry and those belonging to the classical repertoire of Hispanic ballads brought to the Balkans by Spanish speaking Jews. The poetic prowess of this oriental minstrel was almost unknown outside Salonika due to the ephemeral nature of his publications, consisting mainly of pamphlets that he sold himself for bargain price to make a living. His occupation as Combidador<sup>85</sup> allowed him to penetrate all social strata of the vibrant Salonican Jewry<sup>86</sup> that he knew very well how to entertain as well as preserve their common heritage. For his contemporaries he must have seem the embodiment of a bygone era and the bearer of an ancient tradition that all could relate to.

As a ballad collector and editor, Yona is characterized by his fidelity to oral tradition “with surprising and laudable exactitude”, in the words of Armistead. Thanks to his efforts in this field, intact and original evidence of Salonikan J.S. balladry have been preserved for the delight of all of us. The greatest achievement of this man, gifted with a poetic soul, as Moshe attias describes him, is to have preserved in a pristine form an original collection of Salonikan Sephardic balladry at a moment in which the Romancero was experiencing a generic decline due to the increasing pressure of Western influence on the lives, languages and culture of Oriental Jewry.<sup>87</sup>

“The importance of Yonas activities as a collector, editor and publisher” writes Armistead “hinges upon his conservatism rather than upon any original innovative creativity. As a figure who seems to have purveyed his ballad not only in written but in also oral form, Yona suggests some final, superannuated representative of medieval minstrelsy, just as his ballads themselves evoke the themes and protagonist of the Castilian epic: Urraca and the Cid, Ronceveux, Gayferos-Waltharius, Charlemagne”

Only twenty years after Yonas death, eastern Sephardic culture, language and Hispanic heritage was given a mortal blow by the Nazi invasion of the Balkans. Within

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<sup>84</sup> The J.S. ballad chapbook of Yacob Abraham Yona, p.346. Refers to the romance songbook without year, as it is known in scholar circles. It was printed in Antwerp without specification on the year, hence its name.

<sup>85</sup> In Salonika the Combidador or Inviter was an important figure in the community’s social life since (s)he had the task of inviting the neighbors to circumcisions, weddings and other celebrations. A list with the Sephardic families and addresses, the events invitations, a pencil, and a great memory and imagination were needed for the correct performance of such a task. Yacob announced his invitation often singing Complas of his own invention and other in vogue, something that pleased very much his fellow citizens.

<sup>86</sup> Idem, p.7

<sup>87</sup> Idem, p.14

three months, most of Salonika Jews were deported and later exterminated; bringing, as a consequence, an abrupt and brutal end to 500 years of Hispanic culture in the region.

#### **4.5.4 Livriko de romansas importantes**

This ballad chapbook of Y.A.Yona, printed in Sofia in 1908, contains 12 “important” Romances, one better than the other, according to the author’s opinion. The third and fifth Romance in this collection: *Por los palacios de Carlo* and *Salir kere el mez de Mayyo* will be presented respectively as the second example of Salonika balladry and the first regarding the Bosnian sub tradition, where it has been preserved with the name “El chuflete” (The magic flute).

The final lines of the frontispiece reveal both the populist character of these ephemeral publications and the ironic humor of Y.A. Yona who, despite his precarious economic situation, knew how to delight his fellow countrymen. The Rashi script used in both ballads gives an idea of how rooted was the notion of defining identity through language.

A transliteration in Latin characters and its English translation will be given in order to facilitate the legibility of this type of script.

# ליב'ריקו

די

## רומאנסאס אימפורטאנטים

### סינייורים.

איסעס דיטע צרושורע קי ייו צום פרזינטו קונטייני  
אונאס קואנטאס רומאנסאס אימפורטאנטים.

- 1 — פרימירו לה קאנטינה די מטה רבנו פיס קואנדו סא-  
לימוס לוס צודיוס די אילטו;
- 2 — דוץ רומאנסאס אונע מיזור די אוטרה פור קאנטארסין  
אין אונאס אוראס די אליגריאס;

צום רונג סינייורים די טומאר קאדה אונג אונג גמרה,  
סיידו נין קוססה מונטה פארה אי טודס מי אהמלייה צו לו  
רינגראסייחרה, אי היל דייו דימאנדאס די צואיסטרו קוראסון  
צום קומפלירה.

שנת וילרבו ימי יעקב יונה למות ויקרא!!!



#### 4.5.4.1 Transliteration.

Senyores, // Esta dita brosurá ke yyo vos prezento kontyene / unas kuantas romansas íimportantes. // 1 -Primero la kantiga de Mošeh rabenu kuando sa-/limos los gudyos de Aífto; //2- Doge romansas una mežor de otra por kantarsen / en unas oras de alegrias; // Vos rogo senyores de tomar kada uno una gemarah, /syendo non kosta munga para í toda mi familyya vo lo / rengrasyyara, í el Dyvo demandas de vu'estro korason / vos kumplira. //

#### 4.5.4.2 English Translation.

(Ladies and) Gentlemen, this brochure that I present to you contains several important Romances. Firstly the chant of Moses our lord when we the Jews left Egypt; secondly twelve Romances, one better than the other, that could be sung in leisure times. I beg you all to get hold of a *gemarah* since it does not cost too much and my whole family for this will thank you; and God will grant all your sincere desires.

#### 4.5.5 Two popular Romances from Salonika:

**Esta noche mis caballeros**<sup>88</sup>  
(Meliselda)

Esta noche mis caballeros  
Durmi con una doncella,  
Que en los dias de mi dias  
No topi otra como ella.  
5 Meliselda tiene por nombre,  
Meliselda galana y bella.  
A la abajada d'un rio  
Y a la subida d'un varo,  
Encontri con Meliselda,  
10 La hija del emperante,  
Que venia de los banos,  
de los banos de la mare,  
de lavarse y entrenzarse,  
y de mudarse una camisa.  
15 Ansi traia su cuerpo  
como la nieve sin pisare;  
las sus caras coreladas  
como la leche y la sangre;  
los sus cabellicos rubios  
20 parecen sirma de labrare;  
la su frente reluciente  
parece espejo de mirares;  
la su cejica enarcada,  
arcos ya son de tirares;  
25 la su nariz enpendolada,  
pendolica de notares;  
los sus mushos corelados,  
merjanicos de filares;  
los sus dientes chiquiticos,  
perla d'enfilares.

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<sup>88</sup> Moshe attias, Romancero Sefaradi, p. 82

#### 4.5.6 Hebrew Translation

**Esta noche mis caballeros**

(Meliselda)

אבירי הלילה לנתי  
עם עלמה יפה־פיה  
כל ימי חלדי כמוה  
לא מצתי עוד אחד  
מליזדה, יפת־תאר  
מליזדה, כף שמה  
במורד, לשפת הנחל  
ובמצלה נהר  
אז נפגשתי עם מליזדה  
זו בתו של הקיסר  
אשר שבה מן המים  
ממרחצאות הימ  
רחוצה ומסרקת  
החליפה כתנתה  
את גופה אם כן הביאה  
שָׁלַג צח ללא מרמס  
לחיייה הכלילות  
כמוהו הלב ודם  
שערותיה זהבות  
כחוטי פז לרקמה  
מתנוצץ קורן המצח  
כמראה להשקפה  
גבותיה קשותות  
הן כקשת דרוכה  
אף לה חד ומחשב  
כצפרן כתבה  
שפתותיה חכלילות  
אלמגים להשחלה  
שני פה זעירות  
פנינים לחריזה

## 4.5.7 Textual commentary

**Folkloric motifs** (v-3,4) F575.1. Remarkably beautiful woman.  
(v-16,18) Z65.1. Red as blood, white as now.  
(v- ) F574.1.1. Resplendent beauty.

The ballad of Meliselda has survived in the Eastern J.S. tradition in fragmentary texts, most of which have lost the famous sequence of similes and metaphors concerning the description of Meliselda's beauty and later been contaminated with the ballad of El conde soltero. The version in Attias Romancero, which is the one we present here, and the one in the Menendez Pidal Catalogue are the only two that have preserved these enigmatic verses which constitute the essence of the poem<sup>89</sup>.

The name Meliselda appears in some version as Melisenda; mi Lizelda (Yona, p.100), Belisera (Benichou, p.69) It derives from the Old French Belissent which is the name of Charlemagne's daughter<sup>90</sup> in several chansons de geste. The Spanish form in M-is, nevertheless, nearer to the Germanic etymon: Amalasuinthā (the strength of the Amali) and intermediates form as Malasintha.<sup>91</sup>

Meliseldas oldest reference, a 17th Century Dutch translation by the protestant minister Thomas Coenen, is considered the earliest known extensive text of a J.S. ballad. Conen's translation of the ballad is apparently the one that the false Messiah Shabbethai Zevi<sup>92</sup> sang in mystical rapture at a religious congregation in Izmir, on December, 1665. This was the Dutch rendition of the Romance that later was translated back into Spanish by Menendez Pidal<sup>93</sup>:

Oppklimende op een bergh, en nederdalende in een valeye, ontmoette ick  
Melisselde de Dochter van den Keyser, dewelcke quam uyt de banye, van haer te

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<sup>89</sup> Samuel G. Armistead. Folk literature of the Sephardic Jews . Volume V, p.307-308

<sup>90</sup> The Frankish emperor Charlemagne, whose wives and mistresses had all Germanic names, never had a daughter named like this. Theodoric, the great Germanic Emperor, did have a descendant by this name but there is no evidence that she ever became a character in Germanic or in Romance epic. See Samuel G. Armistead. Folk literature of the Sephardic Jews, Volume V, p.138-139

<sup>91</sup> Yona, p.101-102

<sup>92</sup> Gershom Scholem gives an account of this event in his books *The mystical Messiah* and *Kabbalah. From the latter, the following passage gives an idea of the eccentric personality of the self-proclaimed Messiah:* "Then he went up to the ark, took a holy scroll in his arms, and sang an ancient Castilian song about Meliselda , the emperor's daughter; into this song, known as his favorite throughout his life, he read many Kabbalistic mysteries. After explaining them to the congregation, he ceremonially proclaimed himself the "anointed of the God of Jacob", "The redeemer of Israel"

<sup>93</sup> Samuel G. Armistead, FLSJ, V, p.321-322

wasschen; haer aengesichte was blinckende als een deegen, haer oogh-leden als een stalen boege, haer lippen als coraelen, haer vleesch als melck.<sup>94</sup>

The river/varo, vado<sup>95</sup> opposition in verses 6-7, or river/valley in other texts; represent, according to Armistead: “one of the most frequent synonymic pair in parallelistic lyric couplets”. Conen’s Dutch translation offers instead Bergh/valeye which seems to be more faithful to whatever source this Romance may have. The same pair is also found in numerous *Chansons de geste*.<sup>96</sup>

The ballad’s sensuality and eroticism are first expressed in verses 11 to 14 that serve as a preamble to the subsequent metaphoric enumeration of Meliselda’s attributes. In both Attias and in Menendez Pidal’s translation, the sensual image of Meliselda braiding/washing her hair is made explicit. The Dutch texts, on the other hand, reads: “van haer te wasschen” which, according to Armistead, would mean “from washing herself” rather than her hair. The unusual arrangement of similes and metaphors present in verses 15 to 30 are not unique of this ballad. The poems *La bella en misa* and the wedding song *Dice la nuestra novia* have similar descriptions associated with female beauty: Hair=Silver thread (Turkish, Sirma); eyebrows=Steel bow; nose=writing pen; lips=corals (Turkish Mercan from Arabic Marjan); teeth=pearls.

Concerning the elaborate imagery and the rich accumulation of Oriental metaphors of the poem, Menendez Pidal has pointed the Arabic influence of similes such as that of comparing a woman’s face to a shining sword and eyebrows with steel arches (v-21 to 24), present in other Eastern Sephardic Romances<sup>97</sup>. In our text the sword is substituted by a mirror but the same idea of radiance is conveyed.

The lack of a narrative structure in the Ballad of Meliselda makes it impossible to determine which putative medieval ancestor the poem may have had. Menendez Pidal hoped that an old French *Chanson de geste* could have been that ancestor but this connection has not yet been found. Probably, the absent narrative structure never existed and the ballad was then what is today, according to Armistead, anything more than a descriptive evocation of feminine beauty.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> From Vain expectations of the Jews, manifested in the person of Shabbethai Zevi, their latest supposed Messiah, Thomas Coenen, Amsterdam, 1669

<sup>95</sup> In the tercentenary edition of the diccionario de la Lengua Española the following description is given: “Vado ( del Latin,Vadus) Lugar de un río con fondo firme, llano y poco profundo, por donde se puede pasar andando, cabalgando o en algún vehículo”

<sup>96</sup> Armistead, FLSJ, p.323-324

<sup>97</sup> Idem, p.314

<sup>98</sup> Armistead, FLSJ, p.327

#### 4.5.8 Por los palacios de Carlo (Gaiferos)<sup>99</sup>

The Pan Hispanic and Pan European parallels of the Romance of Gaiferos are discussed at length by Samuel G. Armistead and Joseph H. Silverman in their remarkable books: The J.S. Chapbook of Yacob Avram Yona (p.87) and in F.L.S.J., V. Judeo Spanish Ballads from oral tradition .IV Carolingian ballads (3): Gaiferos (p.9-151). This text is seemingly a distant and fragmented congener of the Ballad *Asentado esentado esta Gaiferos (Primavera 173)*, of which the Oriental tradition has preserved but the initial scene. The ballad seems to depict the folkloric motif of the hero initiation which generally includes a hazardous trip, the accomplishment, against all odds, of an almost impossible task and the triumphant return. I shall limit myself to provide the transliteration into Latin characters and the Modern Hebrew translation of this Salonika version rendered in the old and venerable Rashi script.

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<sup>99</sup> From The J.S.C.B. of Jacob Abraham Yona, p.440-441

### רומאנסה 3

פור לוס סאלאסייוס די קארלו, נון פאסאן כי נון גונאר,  
אי נון פאסאן כי נון גונאר, נון גונאן פלאטה ני חורו, סי נון  
זיאס אי סיצדאדים:  
אי כי נון זיאס אי סיצדאדים, גאנו קאיירו אה גאפיירו, סוס  
זיאס אי סוס סיצדאדים:  
אי סוס זיאס אי כוס סיצדאדים, גאנו גאייפירו אה קאיירו,  
אי אלה סו מוזיר ריאלי:  
אי אה לה סו מוזיר ריאלי, מאס זאלייה אה פידרירלה,  
פידרירלה קי נון גאנארי:  
אי פידרירלה קי נון גאנארי, סוצרינו איל מי סוצרינו, אי איל מי  
סוצרינו קארונאלי:  
אי איל מי קוברינו קארונאלי, יו צוכ קריאיניקיסו, איל דיז סי  
איזו באראגאני:  
אי איל דיז סי איזו באראגאני, איל סי דיזו בארציקה רושה,  
אי אין טו פואירפו פואירסה גראנדי:  
אי אין טו פואירפו פואירסה גראנדי, יו צום די אה זלאנקסה  
ניייה, פור מוזיר אי פור אינאלי:  
אי פור מוזיר אי פור אינאלי, פואיטיש און אומברי קוזארו,  
צו לה דישאטיש ייצארי:  
אי צו לה דישאטיש ייצארי, און דיאה אין לה מילסה,  
אין איל צירגיל די צואיסטרו פאדרי:

#### 4.5.8.1 Transliteration

Por los palacios de Carlo  
no pasan si non jugar;  
no jugan plata ni oro,  
si non villas y ci dades.  
5 Gano Carlos a Gayfero  
sus villa y sus ciðdades,  
gano Gayfero a Carlo  
a la sua esposa reales.  
(Más s´acontenta de peðrerla,  
10 - peðrerla que no ganares).  
-En que sos el mi suðrino,  
el mi suðrino carnale,  
yo te creí chiquitico  
el Dió te hizo un barragane;  
15 el te dio barbica roja  
y en tu puerpo ðuerza hay dare;  
yo te dí a Juliana  
por mujer y por eguale,  
como tu ðuestes coðradro  
20 te la dejastes llevare.  
Maldición t´echo suðrino,  
si no la irás a bušcare.  
por lo caminos que ías  
no topes ni vino ni pane,  
25 no topes nidero en bolsa  
para el camino gastare.  
La topó a Juliana  
mañana de Sanĵiguale.

The Romance of Gaiferos in Latin characters,  
as it appears in Moshe Attia's Romancero Sefaradi, p.105



#### 4.5.8.2 Hebrew Translation

בְּאַרְמְנוֹתָיו שֶׁל קַרְלוֹ  
בַּל יַעֲכַר בְּלִי מִשְׁחָק:  
לֹא בָּעַד זָהָב וְכֶסֶף  
אֲלֹא עֵיר וְחוּלֵלָה.  
זָחַב קַרְלוֹ מִגִּיפּוֹרוֹ  
בְּעָרָיו וְחוּלֵלוֹתָיו  
זָכָה גִּיפּוֹרוֹ מִקַּרְלוֹ  
בְּאַשְׁתּוֹ הָאֲצִילָה  
הוּא יִבְחַר לְהִפְסִידָהּ  
אֲךְ הִפְסִיד לֹא זָכָה  
אֲךְ כִּי שְׂאֲרֵי הַגֶּךְ  
שְׂאֲרֵי יְקָרְעֵלֶכֶב  
הֵן טַפְחָתֵי יְלָדוֹתָהּ  
אֲזָרָה אֶל בְּגָבוֹרָהּ  
עֲטָרָה זָקוֹן צָחֵב  
אוֹן נָתַן בְּגוֹפּוֹ  
תָּתִי לָהּ אֶת גִּוְלֵינָהּ  
לְאִשָּׁה יִלְרָעָה  
הִתְנַהֲגָתָּ כְּמוֹג לֵב  
לְקַחוּהָ מִיָּדָהּ  
שְׂאֲרֵי אֶמְלֵלָהּ  
אִם לֹא תִפֶּן לְבִקְשָׁהּ  
נְתִיבוֹת תִּלְךְ בְּחַנּוּהָ  
פֶת וַיִּין בַּל תִּמְצָא  
בַּל תִּמְצָא בְּכִיס מִטְבָּע  
לְהוֹצִיא בְּדַרְכָּהּ  
הוּא מְצָא אֶת גִּוְלֵינָהּ  
בְּצַפְרָא שֶׁל סִנְחוּאֵן.

Hebrew translation of the Romance of Gaiferos ,  
as it appears in Moshe Attia's Romancero Sefaradi, p.105

#### 4.5.9 Bosnia

By the end of the middle ages both the Iberian and the Balkan Peninsula were the scenario of Orientalized European societies in which Jewish, Christian and Moslem members harmoniously lived<sup>100</sup>. Under Ottoman rule in Bosnia, Jews were granted full autonomy in matters regarding trade, education, and religion even before the Tanzimat reform edict in 1856 when all subjects of the Empire were given full legal equality. In this ambience of relative tolerance the community prospered and flourished, turning Bosnia into the largest European center of Sephardic Jewry outside Spain.

#### 4.5.10 Ballad tradition of the Bosnian Jews: General views and translated sample texts with brief literary commentary

Bosnian Sephardic balladry was barely known among western scholars until Moshe Attias called the attention on Kalmi Baruch's linguistic treatise: *Spanske romanse bosanskih Jevreja* (1933) in his *Romancero Sefaradi* (1956). Baruch's collection includes eighteen J.S. ballads and an insightful essay on the Bosnian Sephardic tradition which publication in Serbo-Croatian rendered it almost inaccessible for Hispanists and students of folk literature. The same happened to the twenty-one marvelous Romances printed during 1939-1940 by the Sarajevo based newspaper: *Jevrejski Glas*.

Other published and unedited sources include Leo Wiener's "Songs of the Spanish Jews in the Balkan Peninsula" (1903) and Angel Pulido's "Intereses nacionales: Españoles sin patria y la raza Sefardi" (1905) where the Bosnian ballads *Virgilio* and *Escojiendo novia* were published. Romances collected by Manuel Manrique de Lara's Balkan itinerary in 1911, and now part of the Menendez Pidal archive, have been gradually printed; among them: *La dama y el pastor*, *El idolatra* and *La fuerza de la sangre*. The memorial publication in 1966 of "Spomenica: 400 godina od dolaska Jevreja u Bosnu i Hercegovinu" included four ballads from Baruch's collection: *Vuelta del marido*, *Vuelta del hijo maldecido*, *Landarico* and *Encuentro del padre*.

Bosnian balladry is distinguished by its novelesque character and by the ubiquitous and ambivalent presence of archaic and modern features. It has preserved legendary

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<sup>100</sup> J.S. Ballads from Bosnia. University of Pennsylvania press. 1971, p. 3

themes but, surprisingly, not the most thematically archaic categories of the Romancero i.e. Spanish Epic ballads and those from the Carolingian cycle. Subjects concerning Spanish history and biblical matter are altogether absent. This particularity of the Bosnian tradition, explains Armistead, is “a curious case in which an outlying fringe region is less conservative than the cultural center, for Salonika, of all Eastern communities, has best preserved the ancient epic, Carolingian and historical themes of Spain’s medieval Romancero”.<sup>101</sup>

#### **4.5.11 The ballad collection and editorial endeavors of Kalmi Baruch**

Kalmi Baruch, born in Sarajevo 1917, wrote several articles on J.S. Sephardic balladry and intensively participated in the cultural and literary life of its community. In his renowned 1933 essay: *Spanske Romanse Bosanskih Jevreja* (Spanish Ballads of the Bosnian Jews) the only systematic survey of the Bosnian Sephardic ballad tradition that had appeared in print, Baruch shows the connection between the surviving Romances of the Bosnian Sephardim and the traditional Romancero of the Iberian Peninsula, discussed the preservation of Hispanic Ballads in Bosnia and the creative and innovative power of this community.<sup>102</sup>

Baruch's scholar activities and kind generosity have benefitted Western colleagues (Max Leopold Wagner and Cynthia Crews, among others) as well as the members of his community by awaking in them a sense of awe and reverence concerning the balladry tradition inherited by their ancestors. The publishing in Serbo-Croatian, J.S. and French of his literary researches reinforced the already existing ties between Spanish literature and the Hispano Sephardic cultural and linguistic heritage.<sup>103</sup> His activities as editor of the Sarajevo newspaper *Jevrejske Glas* (the Jewish voice) were directed mainly to save from oblivion these surviving Romances of the Bosnian Jews which he considered as an integral part of the peoples soul, history and tradition.

During the year of 1939, the editors of the *Jevrejski Glas* launched a campaign to collect, edit and publish the material that their readers progressively send them. Their reader's response and engagement along with the editor's seriousness and cultural pride

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<sup>101</sup> Samuel G. Armistead, Joseph H. Silverman. *J.S. Ballads from Bosnia*, p.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid*, p. 33-34

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid*.

proved that ballads were still cherished and alive within Bosnian Sephardic circles. Their effort was of significant importance for the future and historic memory of a community that were to suffer the Nazi occupation and holocaust. As they wisely stated in their 1939 campaign, still not knowing about their coming disgrace and imminent destruction: “Life passes by. All things exist only in a given time and place.”

Following, two famous ballads from the Bosnian Jews as they were printed in the 1933 Kalmi Baruch’s tractate: “Spanske Romanse Bosanskih Jevreja”.

#### **4.5.12 El chuflete**

- Salir kere el mez de mart, entrar kere el mez de april,  
 Kuando el rej de Alemanja a Francija se kišo ir  
 Kon si jeva đente munča, kavajeros mas de mil.  
 Djo el čuflet\* a uno de sus mosos, no lo supo sanergir.
- 5 Lo tomo el rej en su boka, lo enpeso a sanergir,  
 La barka ke esta en fortuna, el porto la izo venir.  
 La parida ke esta pariendo, sin dolor la izo parir  
 La kreatura ke esta en kama, sin tetar la izo dormir.  
 La puerta k esta serada, sin jave la izo avrir.
- 10 El novjo ke a la novja ama, a su kaza la izo venir.  
 -O, bien aga tal čuflet (i) los dublones ke di por ti!  
 Sien dublones mas me kosta de la feridas de Budim

#### **4.5.13 Translation: The magic flute**

- The month of March wants to depart, and April wants to come in.  
 When the king of Germany for France decided to leave.  
 With him (travel) many people, Knights more than a thousand.  
 He gave the horn to one his lads, he could not play it.
- (5) The king placed it on his mouth and 5 began to play.  
 The boat at the oceans mercy,  
 The woman who births a child, without pain he made her delivers.  
 The baby that goes to sleep, without breast he made it sleep.  
 The door that is locked, without key, was open
- (10) The boyfriend who loves his girlfriend, to his house he made her come  
 -Oh, good deeds may this horn perform and the money I paid for it!  
 Hundred dublones more I paid from the fairs of Paris.

#### 4.5.14 Textual commentary

**Folkloric motifs** (v-4) D1231. Magic flute; D1224. Magic pipe (musical)  
(v-6 to 10) D1275.1. Magic music; D1275. Magic melody

This old and authentic ballad, rare even among Sephardim circles, is only found in the Eastern J.S. domain. Four original texts which represent the Salonikan and Bosnian traditions are the only versions available. Attias rendition, although similar to Yonas, supplements it by revealing the price of the wondrous flute: “Cien doblas y mas le costa de las ferias de Paris”. (v.11-12) and about Count Alemares disappointment and frustration for having bought an expensive instrument that he could not play (v. 12-19)<sup>104</sup>

The Bosnian texts, one present in Baruch's essay Spanish Ballads of the Bosnian Jews and the other in the newspaper Jevreski Glas, differ with the Salonikan versions in some details. Here the Count Alemare is the king of Germany and instead of Amadis the Gaule, as in Attias (v.26) and Yona (v. 11) the king is the only one who manages to play the flute: “Lo tomo el rej en su boka, lo enpeso a sanrgir” J.G. (v. 5) The beneficial results of playing the magical instrument slightly vary in the four version: ships are brought to port, pregnant women painlessly give birth, children fall sleep without their mothers breast and closed doors open without need for keys.

The ballads initial reference to the months of March and April<sup>105</sup> J.G. (v. 1-2) suggest that the trip to France of the German king (or Count) was apparently conducted in spring time. The occurrence of this season as the background of the Romance does not necessarily indicate a peaceful and elated ambience. Wars, a recurrent theme in medieval poetry, were often fought in springtime.<sup>106</sup> Could this and the more than one thousand knights that were accompanying the king: “Con si jeva dente munca, kavajeros mas de mil” J.G. (v.3) means that they were on their way to war? Or could it be a poetic reminiscence of an historical fact i.e. the westward migration of Germanic people during the 5th Century into the territories of present day France and Spain?

Magical instrument's and their thaumaturgy with its miraculous side effects are a common theme in Pan Hispanic and Pan European balladry. The same motif of a marvelous flute, pipe, harp or voice is found in several Hispanic Romances and ballads

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<sup>104</sup> Folk literature of the Sephardic Jews. Vol I. The J.S. ballads chapbook of Yacob Abraham Yona, p. 354

<sup>105</sup> In Yona and Attias this first verse appears in reverse order i.e. the month of May before the month of April. Concerning this illogical incipit, Armistead has observed that In balladry, where the impossible is feasible, time is not necessarily subjected to chronology.

<sup>106</sup> The chapbook of Abraham Yona, p. 358

from other linguistic groups. Following are some examples from Spanish, Italian, Greek and Germanic Ballads<sup>107</sup> that share the same idea.

The beautiful and wide spread Romance of Conde Olinos (or Niño) tells the story of a boy whose love chanting made all the birds stop and listen, the traveler stops walking and sailors come back to port:

Conde Niño por amores es niño y paso a la mar  
Va a dar agua a su caballo la mañana de San Juan.  
Mientras el caballo bebe el canta dulce cantar;  
Todas las aves del cielo se paraban a escuchar,  
Caminante que camina olvida su caminar,  
Navegante que navega la nave vuelve hacia alla.

The Catalans origin of the Italian ballad *Il poter del canto* links the Iberian and the Italian Peninsula. It tells the story of three brothers in prison who win freedom by chanting a song whose magic power has a similar outcome to that of Count Olinos:

Marinai che navigavano cessano di navigare;  
falciatori che falciavano cessano di falciare;  
zappatori che zappavano cessano di zappare;  
la sirena che cantava cessa di cantare.

A girl's sorrowful singing from a crystal tower in this Greek Ballad also uses the motif of a Magic song that brings boats to harbor. In Modern Greek Balladry, remarks Armistead, singing plays an important role:

Μιά κόρη πικροτραγουδάει από κρουσταλλένιον πύργο  
κι' άγέρας πήρε τή φωνή, κι' ό άνεμος τό τραγούδι,  
καί σέρνει το και πάει το άνάμεσα πελάγου.  
κι' όσα καράβια τ' άκουσαν, όλ' άραξαν και δένουν...

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<sup>107</sup> See El chuflete in The chapbook of Jakob Abraham Yona. Armistead. Folk Literature of the Sephardic Jews, p. 359-365.

A girl was singing a bitter song from atop a crystal tower.  
The air seized the voice and the wind took the song  
and they drew it along and went out to sea  
and as many ships as heard it, all anchored and made fast.

Glasgerions (also Glenkindie) wonderful way of playing the harp made him the best harper of the king that ever harped on a string. According to the English Ballads verses, his dexterity seems beyond the craft of the best of musicians and rather enters into the realm of a powerful magician:

He´d harpit a fish out o saut water,  
Or water out o a stane,  
Or milk out o a maidens breast,  
That bairn had never nane.

In Scandinavia inspired harp players can also achieve magical results, such as recovering lovers from Trolls, captivating birds on their branch, promoting both the growing of oaks and birch trees and the horns of cattle. In the Danish *Harpen kraft*, the main character, out of grief, plays a song with the following results:

Villemand tog Harpen i Hænde,  
Han gaar for Strømmen at stande.  
Han legte alt saa liste,  
Der rørtes ikke Fugl paa Kviste.  
Han slog Harpen saa saare,  
Det hørtes over alle de Gaarde.  
Barken spark ud af Egetrae,  
Og Hornet af de bøvende Fæ.

The above-presented examples may serve to illustrate the Pan Hispanic, Pan Germanic and Pan Balkanic character of the Romancero and its parallelism within European folk traditions. The next ballad contains motifs and elements that are also present in the zones and folkloric domains with which Sephardic Jews were acquainted.

#### 4.5.15 La adultera

- Burđula, la mi Burđula ¿Ken bate tan de manjana?  
-El mosiko del panadero; levadura mos demanda.  
Levadura mos demanda; arina no hay en kaza  
Marido, el mi marido, alivantisi de manjana.
- 5 Ke el ganado de la manjana no lo aj entre la semana.  
El marido por la puerta; el namorado por la ventana.  
En medjo de el kamino, laz javes se olvido.  
Torno el marido en kaza: -Mužer, avrima la puerta.  
Ke los pjes tengo en la njevi, la kavesa en la jelada.
- 10 -Komo ke te avra, mi alma, komo ke te avra, mi bjen?  
Al ižo tengo en la alda, al malfadado en la kama.  
¿Onde ke te skonda, mi alma? ¿Onde e te skonda, mi bjen?  
A la Kaša di la pimjenta: el močačo sadurnava  
-Mužer, la mi mužer, ¿ken sarnuda en esta kaša?
- 15 -El gatiko de la vizina; ratonikos mos afara  
-Mužer , la mi mužer, dami las javes de la kaša  
Dami las javes de la kaša por ver como los afara.  
-El dia de la kolada , Pardi las javes de la kaša.  
-Anda onde la vizina; ke voz empreste la sujas
- 20 - No ozo, el mi marido, ke'sta el vezino en kaza.  
Ke el vezino sta en kaza i despues si le aravja.  
Tomo la balta en su mano, izo la kaša en kvatro pedasos  
-Vizinas, las mi vizinas, las d abašo i las d'ariva,  
Veni, vireš gato kon barva i mostačikos retorsidos.
- 25 -Ken tjene mužer ermoza, ke la miri bjen gvardar,  
Ki vjene el gato i si la jeva i el kedara sin nada



#### 4.5.16 Translation: The adultress

Burđula, Oh my Burđula. Who is it so early?

- It's the baker son; he is asking for yeast.

Yeast he wants from us; flour we do not  
have at home.

Husband, Oh, my husband; wake up early.

(5) For one can earn in a morning what you do not earn in a week.

The husband get outs the door and the lover came in by the window.

Half way already gone, the keys he forgot.

Returns the husband to the house: Woman, Open the door.

For the feet I have in the snow, frozen is my head.

(10) How can I open for you, my soul? How, My beloved?

The child I have on my lap, the malfadado on the bed.

Where can I hide you, my soul? Where can i hide you my beloved?

Inside de pepper box : the lad sneezed.

- Woman, Oh, woman. Who is sneezing in this box?

(15) - It is the neighbor's cat; he is hunting mice for us.

- Woman, Oh, woman, give me the keys of that box.

- Give me the keys of the box to see how he hunts them.

- I lost the keys of this box on washing day.

- Go and ask the neighbor to lend you hers.

(20) - I do not dare, for her husband is at home.

- Her husband is at home and he will be angry.

He took an ax (and) broke the box in four pieces.

- Neighbors, Oh my neighbors, those who live up and down,

Come and see a bearded cat with fancy moustaches.

(25) He who has a beautiful wife, should take care of her

Or the cat comes to take her and he may remain with nothing.

#### 4.5.17 Textual commentary

- Folkloric motifs** (v-6) T230. Faithlessness in marriage.  
(v-9) K1212. Lover left standing in snow while mistress is with another.  
(v-13 to v-15) K1515. The animal in the chest; K1500. Deception connected with adultery

The Romance *La adultera* (The adulteress) is well known in the Eastern Sephardic domain where it has survived in a more complete form than in Morocco in the Iberian Peninsula. Most of the Eastern versions exhibit features that do not appear elsewhere and seem to represent a prototypic form of the narrative from which the other sub traditions have based their renditions. The Adulteress' Pan Hispanic distribution and Pan European elements and motifs give an idea of the relevant position of the Sephardic Romancero within archaic balladry traditions areas.<sup>108</sup>

In both the peninsular Castilian and Portuguese linguistic domains the ballad have undergone drastic abbreviations or contamination with other texts<sup>109</sup> whereas in the Catalan tradition the first part of the poem appears quite complete but ends abruptly since here the husband reacts immediately and frustrates his wife's plan.

In the Eastern tradition, where the versions seem to be closer to the original source, there are also some elements that are absent in other geographic variants of the ballad: The sneezing of the "cat" (v-13), the lost keys (v-18), the violent opening of the box (v-22)<sup>110</sup>, the wife's death (which do not occur in our text) and the final pronouncement against the neglect of wives. The recurrent motif of the lover/ husband's exposure to rain or snow is present in both Eastern and Western traditions as well as in extra Hispanic balladry. The French song *Voilà la recompense!* is based on the same idea:

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<sup>108</sup> Armistead Samuel G. and Joseph H. Silvermann Folk Literature of the Sephardic Jews. Vol I. The J.S. ballad chapbooks of Yacob Abraham Yona, p. 198

<sup>109</sup> The Portuguese ballad of *Frei Joao*, also known in Brazil, has contaminated the text of *La adultera* with the similar story of a wife who sends her husband out hunting so that she can be with her lover, the priest.

<sup>110</sup> These three verses embody two different folkloric motifs, namely: *The animal in the chest and deception connected with adultery.*

-Je vais a la fenetre; bell', me l'ouvrez vous?  
Je suis couvert de neige, dans l'eau jusqu'aux genoux.  
Voila la recompense que je recois de vous!<sup>111</sup>

The wife's death denouement, which appears, either implied or explicit, in Western and Eastern texts, is omitted and substituted by the moral of the story (v-25-26) in this version from "Jevreski Glas". Punishment by death, confirms Armistead, is a *sine qua non* as a conclusion for Hispanic ballads concerned with female adultery. Death as the disciplinary action taken against adultery appears only in four Eastern versions and one Portuguese which represent two independent attempts by both the Western and the Eastern variants to reconcile the ballad's ending with the traditional ethics of Hispanic balladry.

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<sup>111</sup> Armistead Samuel G. and Joseph H. Silvermann Folk Literature of the Sephardic Jews. Vol I. The J.S. ballad chapbooks of Yacob Abraham Yona, p. 216-218

## 5 Biblical literature

### 5.1 The Ladino Bibles: characteristics and relevance

Paloma Dias Mas considers the biblical literature to be the most Jewish aspect of the Sephardic letters. Sephardic bibles represent the medieval tradition. They exhibit an archaic lexical features and the Hebrew-calqued morphosyntax typical of the Ladino bible translations. This type of literature, she thinks, is a Jewish genre on its own right.<sup>112</sup> The fact that it is directly related to the folk ideas or *Volkegedanke* upon which the Jewish faith is based, is of great importance since from it sources, Ladino first and J.S. later, much have been taken.

The oldest of these translations is the one made by Eliezer Soncino in 1547. The didactical innovation was the fact that it contained, in one and the same page, the Hebrew text, a J.S. translation in Rashi script and a Neo-Greek rendition, also transliterated into the Hebrew alphabet.<sup>113</sup> The relevance of this text for the study of J.S. history and language and the pedagogical aspect of its polyglot approach, have compelled me to include a discussion about the author and the historical climate in which the project was conceived and executed. The same is valid regarding the Bible of Ferrara which is discussed in 5.2.4

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<sup>112</sup> Paloma Dias Mas. Los Sefardies. Historia, lengua y cultura, p.133-134

<sup>113</sup> Ibid

Although considered by many as the *magna opera* of Sephardic religious literature, *The Meam Loez* will not be included in this chapter on biblical literature in J.S. Literature on the pious work of rabbi Yaakob Ben Meir Kuli and his successors is available "Le Meam-Loez", Encyclopédie Populaire du Sephardisme Levantin, Thessalonique, s.n. 1945 and in Pilar Romeu : Las llaves del Meam loez: Edición crítica, concordada y analítica de los Índices del Meam loez de la Torá. Barcelona. 2000.

## 5.2 The Constantinople Pentateuch: The printer and the historical background of the book.

In the city of Constantinople by the year of 1547, the Italian born, Eliezer (Albert) Soncino printed a polyglot bible, commonly referred to as the Constantinople Pentateuch (P.C). The book main characteristic is that it contained, parallel to the Hebrew text, Greek and J.S. (Ladino) translation. Biblical scholars and translation specialists have studied this trilingual rarity since the last decades of the 19th Century until today. While many aspects of what have been investigated needs revision, further research on the matter is mandatory<sup>114</sup>. A new critical edition of C.P. would be of much use both for scholars and the general public.

The prominent Ashkenazi family and “dynasty of printers” of the Soncinos, of which Eliezer was member, moved in 1530 from the Italian town they had taken their family name from to Constantinople. His father, Gershom Soncino, “The nestor of the Hebrew printers”<sup>115</sup> and his grandfather, Israel Nathan ben Samuel had been successfully involved in the printing business back in Italy.<sup>116</sup>

By the time the C.P. was completed, Eliezer Soncino had already worked in book production for more than thirty years. There are reason to believe that Eliezer had health

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<sup>114</sup> Julia G. Krivoruchko. The Constantinople Pentateuch within the Context of Septuagint Studies, p.255-258

<sup>115</sup> Aharon Freiman “Die soncinaten drucke in Saloniki und Constantinople 1526-1547 (1905)

<sup>116</sup> Gershom had published, under the penn name Hieronymus, many Christian books, including those with anti-Jewish content, during the years of 1490-1531. Israel Nathan first printed the tractate Berakhot in 1484 and *Iqarin* in 1505

problems at that time and that he knew that the printing of the book was going to be his best and last, a sort of magna opera and swan song.<sup>117</sup>

The placement of the C.P. within Greek Jewish Biblical translation can be only determined when the sources of the Greek text that was used in the translation are identified. Eliezer Soncino did not mention them nor did he make any distinction between the classical status of the former and the colloquial popularity of the latter. The only subtle indications concerning these matters are encoded in the brief colophon of the book where at least the main didactic function of the text is specified. The subtlety of the details and the self-explanatory biblical references are, in the case of the C.P., the only possible tools to try to understand what other intentions and motivations had the mastermind behind this project.<sup>118</sup> Hereby we reproduce the original Hebrew lines of the title page as they appear in Jerusalem copies of the C.P.:

השבח למחוייב המציאות אשר העיר אותנו להדפיס ספר כלו מחמדים חמשה  
חומשי תורה כתובים בכתב אשורי עם הפטרת וחמש מגלות וכדי להועיל לנערי  
בני ישראל ולשונם תמהר לדבר צחות ראינו להדפיס בו תרגום המקרא בלשון יוני  
ולשון לעז שתי הלשונות מורגנות בבני עמינו גלות החל הזה שועי יחודה וישראל  
השוכנים בארצות תוגרמה. ולהיות כל בר ישראל מחוייב להשלים פרשיותיו עם  
הצבור שנים מקרא ואחד תרגום ראינו להדפיס בו גם כן תרגום אונקלוס ופרוש  
רש"י ע"ה. והאל יעזרנו חיל בהדפסת הספר הזה ויזכנו להדפיס ספרים רבים  
להרביץ תורה בישראל: והיתה התחלת הספר הזה בראש חדש תמוז שנת הש"ז  
ליצירה פה קושטנדינה בבית צעיר המחוקקים אליעזר בכ"ר גרשום שונצין ז"ל.

Praise be to the Provider of Benefit that enlightened us to print the book, “altogether lovely” (Cant 5:16), five parts of the Torah written in Assyrian script with *hafatarot* and five *megilloth* and in order to aid the young of the house of Israel, “and their tongue shall be ready to speak plainly” (Isa 32:4), we decided to print in it the translation of Mikra into the the Geek tongue and the foreign tongue, two tongues widespread among the sons of our people, “the captivity of his host” (Obad 1:20), Noblemen of Yehuda and Israel dwelling in the country of Togarma. And since every son of Israel must complete his weekly readings with the congregation twice in Mikra and once in Targum, we decided

<sup>117</sup> Julia G. Krivoruchko. The Constantinople Pentateuch within the Context of Septuagint Studies, p.266

<sup>118</sup> Julia G. Krivoruchko. The Constantinople Pentateuch within the Context of Septuagint Studies, p.262

also to print in it Targum Onkelos and the commentary of Rashi, peace be upon/with him. And let God give us strength to print this book and grant us to print many more books to spread Torah among (the people of) Israel. And the commencement of this book was at the beginning of the month Tammuz in the year 5307 of the creation, here in Constantinople in the house of the youngest of printers, Eliezer, son of honorable R. Gershom Soncino, of blessed memory.

### 5.2.1 Characteristic of the edition

The non-inclusion of poems, acrostics or rhymed prose in the colophon and the absence of the characteristic flamboyant and pompous style of the epoch, unusual for Constantinople prints, make this title page worth of analysis. Right after the habitual blessings and gratitude, we are informed that the book contains five parts of the Torah, printed in Assyrian script, with additional *haftaroth* and *megilloth*. The choice of Assyrian letters was based on the wide spectrum of readers and possible buyers to which the C.P. was addressed. Square letters were, thus, the font utilized since they were universally known by all Jews and, hence, the most fitted to this enterprise. Concerning the printing of the announced additional texts, J. Krivoruchko proposes two possibilities: either were these texts printed, bounded apart and conceived to independently circulate or they were actually never printed at all. Whether the project was unfinished due to technical, economical or the editor's personal circumstances are, although the latter seems more plausible, still debated.<sup>119</sup>

Remarkably there are no references concerning the translation technique or from which language and into which the text was translated, neither about the fact that two languages with so despair status and history appear printed on the same page; apart from the brief and ambiguous: “*Shetei ha lishonot ha mureglot bbenei ha amminu*” which could have even offended some of his conservative co-religionist to whom the sole idea of translating a sacred text from its original language to a colloquial and mundane one, was a total disgrace.<sup>120</sup>

To Eliezer Soncino, more an entrepreneur and intellectual than a theologian or a moralist, all these considerations must have seemed superfluous. Being a practical man and an accomplished marketer, the editor of the C.P. saw fitted not to burden his readers

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<sup>119</sup> *ibid.*, p.263-265

<sup>120</sup> *ibid.*, p.267-268

with the customary excuses of the epochs regarding the translation and printing of sacred texts.<sup>121</sup> The announcement of the Greek text first and the Ladino one after also corresponds with a market strategy based upon religious, historical and economical facts.

Mentioning the Greek text first<sup>122</sup>, not only would have calmed down his opponents who were against vernacular printings, but also was a way to emphasize the historical priority of the Romaniote Jewry within Judaism. Ottoman taxation documents of 1547 show that the later were in a better economic situation than their Sephardic brethren and would have made, therefore, better buyers<sup>123</sup>; something that Eliezer Soncino was surely aware of.

Although the book's internal disposition is not consistent with the advertising, since Greek was printed in the outer part of the page and it gives the impression of being less important or in a subservient position in relation to Ladino; there are reasons to believe that in 1547 Constantinople many Greek or Ladino speaking Jews, the majority of whom was a refugee or a son of a refugee, could have appreciated anyhow the printing of such a book.<sup>124</sup>

The fact that there is no mention about the authorship of the book is even more surprising than the omission of the source of both translations, if one considers that at that time even minor authors would have claimed credit for their works. The printing of such valuable books not only gave status to those who authored them but also to the publishing house.<sup>125</sup>

Printing a book was an opportunity for the publisher and the editor, in many cases one and the same person, to exult editorial perspicacity and expertise. Minor details that could confirm the authenticity of the text, its purity in regards to corrected errors and its antique provenance were given to the reader as a guarantee seal that the book he was

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<sup>121</sup> Julia G. Krivoruchko. *The Constantinople Pentateuch within the Context of Septuagint Studies*, p.268

<sup>122</sup> Talmudic sages have commented on the adequacy, and therefore their preference, of the Greek language for conveying the Divine message.

<sup>123</sup> Julia G. Krivoruchko. *The Constantinople Pentateuch within the Context of Septuagint Studies*, p.267

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 269

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 270



buying had not only gone through rigorous proofreading but also been taken from the darkness to the light; from oblivion to immortality.<sup>126</sup>

In the case of the C.P. any mention of the sort are made, nor does it reveal the support of any pertinent rabbinic reference or includes wishes of good health to the Sultan and acknowledgments to Ottoman authorities, as it was customary at that time. Although printers were not obliged to add a colophon to their final work, it is very surprising that Eliezer Soncino, taking into account his editorial practices and background, did not include any of these important details.<sup>127</sup>

One could think of the silence regarding the Greek and Ladino translation, which seem authorless and not traceable to any putative source or manuscript that could authenticate their coming to be, along with the absence of textual commentary as unusual deficiencies in book editing<sup>128</sup> but, in that case, it would be logical to ask why Eliezer Soncino's reputed edition skills and acumen have been here artificially concealed?

The intellectual elite of the empire, of which Eliezer S. was a prominent member, had realized that translating ancient texts into a living language gave the students the possibility to develop their wit and imagination. Something that established translations could not provide. Printing in a popular version (Laaz haam) or in a common version (Laaz haolam) was, in 16<sup>th</sup> Constantinople, not only a disgrace, in the opinion of the rabbinic establishment, but also a social event often accompanied by public debates for and against the author(s). Anonymity, thus, was both a way of safeguarding the author's integrity and of delivering to the populace a final product that they could use as a guide for their studies.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Julia G. Krivoruchko. The Constantinople Pentateuch within the Context of Septuagint Studies, p.271

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Julia G. Krivoruchko. The Constantinople Pentateuch within the Context of Septuagint Studies, p.272-274

## 5.2.2 Ižo de gato afara raton : Like father like son

The didactic intention of the printer of C.P. is specifically expressed in the front page by the words: *lahoil lnaarei bnei Israel velashonim tamhar ledaber tsahout*. This particular line reveals the strictly educational purpose of the book, as well as the perception that Gershom and Eliezer Soncino had on the important social role-played by the printers. Already in 1501, while still a teenager, Gershom composed a manual for the understanding of Hebrew terms.<sup>130</sup> Nine years later he published a multilingual edition of Psalms in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. Taking into consideration that at a time in which, according to J. Krivoruchko, the knowledge of a language was perceived quite mechanically as knowledge of individual words in their precise context rather than an analytical or productive ability; Gershom Soncinos engagement in the production of didactic aids to provide the readers with an instructive tool that conveys the exact meaning of every word,<sup>131</sup> is laudable.

The technical difficulties of printing in three different scripts, against the rabbinic advice and in a vernacular translation, to serve the interest of the community; were shared by both father and son whose main interest and *raison d'être* of their printing endeavours was to educate the masses. Hereby we reproduce the introductory lines to G.Soncino multilingual edition of psalms:

*Deinceps psalorum codicem hebraice, graece, et latine...excusum expetato, a divo Hieronymo de verbo ad verbum secundum veritatem hebraicam traductum, additis nonnullis nostris glossis, loca plurima a scriptoribus indoctis corrupta a parientibus. Adde et lector candidissime, hic psalorum codex poterit tibi ad linguam hebraicam, graecam et lantinam pro dictionario succurrere.*

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<sup>130</sup> Introductio perbrevis ad Hebraicam Lingua. Gershom Soncino (1501)

<sup>131</sup> Julia G. Krivoruchko, The Constantinople Pentateuch within the Context of Septuagint Studies p. 274-275

### 5.2.3 Final remarks:

J. Krivoruchko is of the opinion that the C.P. is not a reworking of another edition but an edition on its own right and that rather than have been sponsored by Ottoman authorities; it seems that to have been printed as an internal demand of the Jewish community in Constantinople. The *haftarot* and the *meguillot*, she further explains, must have been printed and distributed apart. About the editorial work it can be stated that it was minimal and either considered unnecessary or conveniently omitted. The Ladino and Greek text can be placed in the category of “Laazim” or popular version that although used mainly orally, could be rendered in writing depending on the social need.

While “Further investigations on the origins of the C.P. are still required, it would be also of use”, according to J.K.,”to compare the Rashi version of C.P. to the edition in Lisbon or the earlier Franco-Ashkenazi of Rome and Bologna in order to assess the background and identity of the polyglot editor”. To conclude she proposes that a philological comparison between the Ladino and the Greek translation could be done since it will be more than useful for students of Rabbinics to assess the liaison of both translations on other levels of exegesis.

### 5.2.4 La Bibbia di Ferrara

The Ferrara Bible owes its name to the Italian city in which it was first printed between the years of 1551 and 1553. The book is of paramount interest for the religious history of the whole Europe and particularly for countries like Spain, Italy and the Netherlands<sup>132</sup> in which large Jewish communities had flourished and thrived before abruptly declining.

For Spain it is an invaluable document of the evolution of J.S. outside the peninsula and for the great influence it had in the confection of the first Bible in Spanish,<sup>133</sup> later used by Protestants. In Italy the book represents the greatest cultural monument of the Sephardic presence in the country as well as an example of Ferrara

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<sup>132</sup> Margherita Morreale (1994) *La Bibbia di Ferrara. 450 anni dopo la sua pubblicazione.*

<sup>133</sup> . It was first published on September 28, 1569, in Basel, Switzerland. The translation was based on the Hebrew Masoretic Text. As secondary sources, de Reina used the Ferrara Bible for the Old Testament and the Latin Edition of Santes Pagnino

literary activity in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. Whereas in the Netherlands, where so many partial editions and re editions were made, it played an important role in the religious life of Protestants and Jews alike.

The Ferrara Bible entered the international Bibliography in the 1800 thanks to the scholar activity of J. le Long, J.C. Wolf and S. Rypins with “The book of 30 Centuries” of his authorship. Thanks to the accurate research of Renate Segre at the state archive of Emilia Romagna we know today that it was the 4th of September of 1551 the book adventured into world literature.<sup>134</sup>

### 5.2.5 About the authors

Once exiled *in toto* from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492-97, those reluctant Jews who would not convert to the Christian faith, brought with them their vernacular referred to as Judezmo, J.S. or Ladino<sup>135</sup> and used it as an efficient vehicle for the expression of a scattered yet united community.

The Portuguese Jews known both as Abraham Usque and Duarte Pinel and the Spanish Yom Tob Atias alias Jeronimo Vargas belonged to a group of exiled Sephardim who were granted protection by Ercole D’Este I, the Duke of Ferrara. Protected by the Duchy’s relative freedom of press and out of the range of the Spanish Inquisitions<sup>136</sup>, both men achieved the *Capo Laboro*<sup>137</sup> of their life: A “faithful” version in Ladino, “palabra por palabra” i.e word for word of the Tanah, especially dedicated to Madame Gracia Nas(i) alias Beatriz de Luna and their Maecenas, the Duke of Ferrara.<sup>138</sup>

Italian Jewry in general was characterized by a profound devotion to the literal rendering of biblical texts and freedom from the retrograde influence of dogmatic and fanatic theories. Translating in a literal manner allowed the reader to have access to the

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<sup>134</sup> Completed in February 1553. In 1551 The Duke of Ferrara had the honor to receive the first draft before completion. Margherita Morreale. *La Bibbia di ferrara* (1994)

<sup>135</sup> Ladino is a hagiolanguage; a constructed language devised to translate literally or word for word a sacred text. It emerged as a tool that Rabbis created to cope with the lack of proficiency in Hebrew of medieval Jew communities in the Iberian Peninsula.

<sup>136</sup> From 1540 to 1548 began in the neighboring Venetia the chase and destruction of unauthorized bible translations into vernacular languages and books printed in Hebrew.

<sup>137</sup> Originally titled “La Bibbia di Ferrara”.

<sup>138</sup> Gracia Nas(i) to whom the dedicatory note was partly directed, belonged to a wealthy Jewish family from Portugal that had been exiled from the peninsula and installed itself in Italy, must have contributed greatly to the financial support and completion of the project. The other recipient, and Mecenat of the dedicatory was Ercole D’Este I, Duke of Ferrara who provided the county relative freedom of press.

text as it is and not through the arbitrary interpretations of others.<sup>139</sup> It seems plausible that this programmed literalism was the one of the ambitions of the Ferrara “translators” as it was of their predecessor, and main inspiration source of their work, the Bible published by Sante Pagnino.

### **5.2.6 Traduttore, Traditori. The language and the translation techniques**

It was this already mentioned quest for the original purity of the text what made Abraham Usque and Yom Tov Atias to base their version on that of Sante Pagnino,<sup>140</sup> albeit other reasons did play a significant role. The choice of Santes Pagnino’s as a model seems to be that his Latin version of the Bible tends to comply with the original text in Hebrew. Furthermore, the intention of both Pagnino and the Ferrara “translators” was the tentative to return to the Masoretic text that at the time was considered not only the oldest but most genuine and reliable source for Biblical translations. It was precisely this literal interpretation and fidelity to the original what made the work of the Dominican to be acclaimed by both Christians and Jews.<sup>141</sup>

If Pagnino’s lexical and morpho-syntactic represented an innovation, when compared to the vocabulary and phrasing of the Vulgata, the Ferrara Bible was a return to the speech of the ancestors. As in expressed in the words of Abraham Usque:

“Fue forzado seguir el lenguaje que los antiguos Hebreos Españoles usaron, que aunque en algo estraña, bien considerado hallaran tener la propiedad del vocablo Hebraico, y ella tiene la gravedad que la antigüedad suele tener”

“It was necessary to use the language of the ancient Spanish Jews; for, although it seems strange, it has the propriety of the Hebrew words and this gives it the seriousness that antiquity naturally has”

It is evident that Ladino was considered an influential and solemn language in virtue of its antiquity and, therefore, fitted for the translations of sacred texts. The

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<sup>139</sup> ‘‘Ipsum sacrae scripturae et non textum confectum interpretatum arbitrio’’.

<sup>140</sup> Sante (or Xantes) Pagnino (Latin: Xanthus Pagninus) (1470–1541) was a Dominican, and one of the leading philologists and Biblical scholars of his day.

<sup>141</sup> M.M. La Bibbia di Ferrara, p. 186-87

language in the Ferrara Bible follows closely the Hebrew syntax rather than that of everyday Judeo–Spanish. It is written entirely in the Latin alphabet, albeit with various diacritics suitable for expressing Ladino phonetics that distinguishes it from the one printed entirely in Hebrew script in Constantinople.<sup>142</sup>

About the common belief in the similarity of Ladino and Hebrew and the idea that translating into it was nearer to the Hebrew original meaning, it should be said that even if it appears to be paradoxical in pure linguistic terms, it is not totally false in a Socio-Historical perspective<sup>143</sup>. So it is possible that this reputation<sup>144</sup> of fidelity ad verbum was based on the fact that it was into this artificial language<sup>144</sup> that the pioneers of Ladino translated the sacred texts of Judaism.

Two of the main subjects discussed at that time are here conjugated. On one hand, the one concerning the relative excellence of Vernacular varieties when translating from ancient texts, on the other that of enriching those local speeches by translating renown books into them.<sup>145</sup> Concerning the Ladino “Translation” of Ferrara, it is necessary to understand that the Ladino terms “Trasladar” (To expose, To comprehend) and “Traladacion” (Translation) were use indistinctively which means that in the Ferrara version “to translate” referred to the transference and partial transformation of an already translated text and its refreshment by rendering it in a more Latinized version

### 5.2.7 Historic and linguistic legacy

The main motivation for a Ladino translation of the bible was to render the sacred text to Jews and Gentiles who did not speak Hebrew in a vernacular channel that, according to the authors, was the most prestigious of all Latin’s vernacular varieties<sup>146</sup>.

The printing of the Ferrara Bible was more a historical necessity than the extravagance of two wealthy families. Its appearance in Ladino filled a vacuum, for both

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<sup>143</sup> Not being a Semitic language Ladino exhibit, due to the several translation from Hebrew, lexical and Morph-syntactic features that are absent in other Romance languages.

<sup>144</sup> It is artificial in the sense that, except for some scholars versed in both Latin and Hebrew and their students, not many could really make use of it in daily life. J.S., contrariwise, is the vernacular of the exiled Sephardic community that after the expulsion 1492-97 flourished along the Mediterranean.

<sup>145</sup> M.M,La Bibbia di Ferrara, p.181

<sup>146</sup> ‘ (...) and since in almost all the provinces of Europe the Spanish language is the most appreciated; I wanted this, our Bible, to be translated into Spanish so it could be as faithful as possible to the Hebrew Truth’ Abraham Usque in the Dedicatory note of the book.

Christian and Jews who wished a Latinized version of the Scriptures nearer to their vernacular and at the same time faithful to the original texts, according to the words expressed by Abraham de Usque in the dedicatory note to Donna Gracia Nasi and the Duke of Ferrara.

The project in itself was a perfect symbiosis and collaboration of Christians and (converted) Jews which made the former more aware of the literal sense of words when reading sacred texts, awoke their familiarity with Rabbinic exegesis and gave the latter the merit they deserved for the translation, preservation and the sharing of a common ancestry. Based on the Ferrara Bible was born the biblical Ladino tradition in the west as attested in Italy, Netherlands, England and the new world whereas in the former Ottoman Empire, Constantinople, Izmir, Salonica prevails the oriental one.



## 5.2.8 Sample text







## 6 Morphosyntactic and phono lexical analysis of Judeo-Spanish

The following chapter succinctly exposes the main grammatical features of J.S. The intention here is to highlight its most common traits as a whole and distinguish them from those that are specific to the certain sub traditions. It is not my purpose to give a detailed account of J.S grammar but rather to illustrate, with some key examples, the complex synchronicity of this language. For this, I shall present 10 morph syntactical features, 14 when it comes to Phonology and 34 concerning the lexical singularities that, in turn, are further divided into Hebrew -Aramaic, Turkish, French and Italian loan words.

### 6.1 Morphosyntactic features<sup>147</sup>

Common archaic morph syntactic features characteristic of J.S. are:

- Ending *-iba* of the imperfect tense of verbs belonging to the *-ir* stem e.g. *queriba*, *deciba*, *moriba*. In Modern Spanish *queria* (s/he wanted), *decia* (s/he said), *moria* (s/he died) respectively.
- The presence of Present tenses like *vo*, *do*, *esto*, in contrast to Peninsular forms *Voy*, *doy*, *estoy*.
- *-im* ending of the first person past of all verbs, following the pattern of the second

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<sup>147</sup> The selected features and the examples are taken from Paloma Dias Mas. Judeo español, historia, lengua y cultura, p.106, 116 and from David Bunis article: Judezmo. The language of the Sephardic Jews.

(*-er*) and third (*-ir*) stem. The first person past of the first stem (*-ar*) *topar*, *ordenar*, is *topi* and *ordeni*, instead of *tope* and *ordene*. Plural forms are based on this and, unlike Modern Spanish *topamos*, *ordenamos*; they are rendered as *topimos*, *ordenimos*.

- Substitution of *-mos* for *-nos* as proclitic and enclitic pronoun: e.g. *mos* *espartimos* (we go); *escuchamos* (to listen to us)
- In Moroccan Haketya, as in the Orient, the infinitive and the first person future of the indicative tense take the form of the second and third conjugation, thus: *viver(e)* instead of *vivir(e)*, *sirver(e)* for *server(e)*, *durmer(e)* for *dormer(e)*
- The forming of analytical verbs composed of the Hispanic auxiliary *ser* (to be) + an invariable Hebrew participle: *ser zohe* (to be worthy), *ser niftar* (to die)
- The adding of the Spanish morpheme *-ar* to Hebrew roots:
  - \**drš* (To preach) becomes *darsar* with the meaning of sermonize.
  - \**db'r* (To speak) is rendered *diburear* signifying discourse, speech.
  - \**hrm* (Excommunication) with the prefix *en*(into) gives *enheremar* which is to excommunicate.
  - \**kš'r* (To prepare; make/declare/Kosher) has the meaning of preparing vessels for Passover.
  - \**hms* (To heat, to warm) with the Spanish negative *-des* means to remove leavened food from the house before Passover.
  - \**bdq* (To inspect) becomes *badkar*.
- The use of verbal idioms such as: (*f*)*azer tefila* (to pray); *dar get* (to divorce)
- The attachment of Hebrew inflexional endings and suffixes to non-Hebrew stems e.g. masculine plural *-im* in the \*jocular plural of *ladronim* (thieves); the abstract suffix *-uth* with the word *xaragan* (lazy) becomes *xaraganuth* (laziness).
- Unlike Levantine J.S., Haketya exhibits the following three peculiarities:
  - The ending in *-oy* of the first person of the present tense e.g. *tengoy*, *vengoy*, etc.
  - The use of forms like *Oyer*, *oyo*, *oyis*, *oyere* for the verb *Oir* (to hear) instead of *oir*, *oigo*, *oyes*, *oire* as the Castilian norm dictates.
  - The apocopated use of the infinitive and the gerund e.g. *her*, *hendo* for *hacer*, *hacienda* (to do, doing) and the realization of the imperative of the verb *ir* (to go) as *vay*, *vajte* instead of Modern Spanish *ve*, *vete*.

## 6.2 Phonological features<sup>148</sup>

The preservation of the medieval phonetics system in J.S. reflects its archaic origins and could explain the amazement of some modern Spanish speakers when listening to any regional variety of J.S. Both the Western and the Eastern tradition exhibit conservative phonological features and innovative ones. The following phonemes, lost today in M.S, are an example of the former:

- Mute, fricative prepalatal *-/š/* evolved to *j* in M.S. Hence, *pajaro* (bird), *jabon* (soap), *tejer* (to knit) are pronounced in J.S. *pájaro*, *ĵabón* and *teĵer* respectively.
- Voiced fricative prepalatal *-/ž/* had also a similar evolution and the same happened to voiced affricated prepalatal */ĵ/*: M.S *mujer* (woman), *ojo* (eye), *hijo* (son) and *juntos* (together), *joya* (jewel), *gente* (people) are still rendered in J.S. as *mužer*, *ožo*, (h)*ižo* in the first instance and *ĵuntos*, *ĵoya*, *ĵente* in the second.
- Voiced fricative predorsal dentoalveolar */z/* is still a feature in the J.S. pronunciation of M.S: *casa* (house), *hacer* (to do), *cosa* (thing). Thus, *caša*, (f)*ašer*, *coša*.
- Voiced occlusive bilabial */b/* and fricative bilabial */β/* are distinguished in J.S. but not in M.S. Sephardim make a distinction between *haber* (Heb. friend) and *ħaber* (Turk. news).
- The Latin *f* in initial position was preserved in Salonika, Macedonia and Bosnia. So, *faba*, (f)*ijo* and *farina* instead for *haba* (beans), *ħijo*(son) and *ħarina* (flour).
- J.S. shows innovative phonetic characteristics that are also present in the southern speeches of Spain and Latin American Spanish:
- Yeísmo: Articulation of voiced lateral palatal */l/* as voiced central linguopalatal */y/*. In Andalucia, some zones of Castilia and Latin America *llamar*, *llorar* and *caballo* are pronounced *yamar*, *yorar* and *cabayo*.
- Seseo: Articulation of vocal interdental */θ/* as *s* before *e* or *i*. Thus, In Andalucia, Canarias and the Americas one pronounces *sielo* for *cielo* (sky) and *serveza* for *cerveza* (beer).
- Intervocalic falling of prefix *-illa* as evidenced in the J.S. pronunciation of words like: *estrella* (star), *familia/familla* (family) and *maravilla* (marvel) resulting in *estrea*, *famía* and *maravía*.

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<sup>148</sup> Features and examples taken from Paloma Diaz mas. Los Sefardies historia lengua y cultura, p. 105-106

- Soft pronunciation of double **r** in initial position as in *rosa* (rose), *rico* (rich), *rama* (branch) or in middle position as in *guerra* (war), *perro* (dog).
- Metathesis of group **rd** en **dr**. Thus, *cuerda* (rope), *guardar* (to store) and *verdad* (truth) are rendered: *cuedra*, *guadrar*, *vedrá*.

Contrary to Oriental J.S., Haketya, has not preserved the medieval phonemes that today are absent in M.S. The geographical proximity and historical ties that bound the North African Sephardic tradition and the peninsular one accelerated perhaps the elimination of such archaic features.

The tendency of the Moroccan Haketya speakers has been that of increasingly adapting their pronunciation to the Castilian norm. The use, for example, of Spanish *j* instead of voiced/voiceless fricative prepalatal /ʒ/ when pronouncing the words: *mujer* and *jabon* as one does in M.S. The Andalusian influence is felt in the seseo of words like *mancebo* (young man) orally rendered as *mansebo* or *plaza* as *plasa*.

As in the Levantine variety, the suffixes *illa/-illo* fall in intervocalic position. Hence, *castío* and not *castillo* and *Sevía* but not *Sevilla*. Simplification of **r** in initial position is also common but not in medial. Thus, *Perro* and not *pero*.

Three prototypical traits of Haketya are: (1) the assimilation **b/v** or **g** before the following diphthongs: *ua*, *ue*, *ui*, *uo*. E.g. *ueno* for *bueno* (good), *frauar* for *fraguar* and *antiuo* for *antiguo*. (2) Confusion of **b/v** and **g** before velar vocals **o**, **u**. One hears *Jugon* for *jubon* and *abujero* for *agujero*. (3) Reduplication, *á l'Arabe*, of the consonants of words beginning with the article *-al* e.g. The Arabic word *al-zait*, from where Spanish *Aceite* (oil) is derived, is rendered as *azzeite* while the Arabic term *al zahr*, which originated the Spanish *azahar* (fate), is pronounced as *azzahar*. Reduplication is not limited to Arabic loans but is also found in some Castilian words: *er rey* is heard instead of *el rey* (the king), *contalle* for *contarle* while *assar*, *dessear* and *mayyor* are the respective pronunciations of M.S. *asar* (to roast), *desear* (to desire) and *mayor* (bigger).

## 6.3 Lexical features

Castilian medieval lexemes such as *agora*, *avagar* (slowly), *adobar* (repare), *mercar* (to buy) are preserved in J.S. along Hispanic non-Castilian and extra-Hispanic ones. The varied places of origins of the exiles within the Iberian peninsula allowed the penetration and assimilation of loanwords from Catalan, Valencian, Aragonese, Galician and Portuguese e.g. *palomba*, *lamber*, *lombo*; M.S *paloma* (pigeon), *lamer* (to lick), *lomo* (animal back), coincides with the Leonese, Galician and Portuguese forms. *Birra* (anger) and *alfinete* were taken from Portuguese. *Lonso* (bear) reminds the Aragonese *onso* and *šamarada* (flame), resemble the Leonese forms.

The extra Hispanic components of J.S. are mainly derived from either Arabic, Hebrew-Aramaic, Turkish or French sources. Sephardic Arabism such as **haroba**, **alhabaca** and **hacino** were preserved in virtue of the phonological resemblance of classical Hebrew and Arabic when it comes to the voiceless langirial aspirated /h/. The same words are rendered in M.S as: **algarroba** ( ), **albahaca** ( ) and **hacino** ( )\*\* respectively. Other Hebrew and Arabic loans in J.S. are **abelut** (honor), **almenara** (Seven arm candelabrum; From Arabic *almenara*, which shares the same root with Heb. *menorah*), **alguayar** (to lament), **alkunyar** (to give an honorific title), **atakanar** (to tidy), **batija** (water melon), **enbatakar** (to upset, to hit, to cut), **fellahim** (farmer), **janufero** (Hypocrite), **jasidud** (Piety) **kipa** (skullcap Heb. **kippah**), **quehila** (synagogue), **kabod** (honor)

### 6.3.1 Turkisms

The close relationship of the exiled Sephardim with Turkic and Balkan people brought about an influx of terms and expression from Turkish, Greek and Serbo-Croatian. The preponderance of the Turkish ad strata is evidenced in the varied amount of loanwords from this language that are present in oriental J.S. Among the many examples that can be given, here follow some of the most representative ones:

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| <b>Ayde</b>     | Hey! Come on! Pan Balkanic use                   |
| <b>Amanet</b>   | Warehouse  |
| <b>Antori</b>   | Dress  |
| <b>Ançinara</b> | Artichoke; Turk. <i>enginar</i>                  |
| <b>Baxçe</b>    | Garden, orchard                                  |
| <b>Bayrak</b>   | Flag, banner                                     |
| <b>Basma</b>    | Handkerchief. Pan Balkanic use                   |
| <b>Bel</b>      | Waist  |
| <b>Bogast</b>   | India hemp                                       |
| <b>Boreka</b>   | Baked filled pastries made of a thin flaky dough |

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| <b>Boya</b>      | Paint; J.S. Boya <i>dear</i> means to paint            |
| <b>Burgul</b>    | Whole wheat  |
| <b>Buzear</b>    | To spend, to ruin, to wear out; Turk. Bozul <i>mak</i> |
| <b>Ĉelebilit</b> | Master, mister, boss                                   |
| <b>Ĉorba</b>     | Soup   |
| <b>Dagidear</b>  | Enjoyment, pleasure; Turk. Dağil <i>mak</i>            |
| <b>Dayanear</b>  | To withstand, Turk. Dayan <i>mak</i>                   |
| <b>Enbliskar</b> | To unite, to join, Turk. Birleštirmek                  |
| <b>Efendi</b>    | Mister   |
| <b>Ekmekĉi</b>   | Baker  |
| <b>Felek</b>     | Sky, world, universe, destiny                          |
| <b>Finĉan</b>    | Small cup  |
| <b>Imalĉelek</b> | Negligence, omission, Turk. Ihmal                      |
| <b>Merak</b>     | Passion, desire  |

### 6.3.2 Gallicisms

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| <b>Buĉeĉa</b>   | Fr. Bouchee. Amount of liquid in the mouth |
| <b>Ĉapeo</b>    | Fr. Chapeau. Hat                           |
| <b>Ĉezmis</b>   | Fr. Chemise                                |
| <b>Madam</b>    | Fr. Madame. My lady                        |
| <b>Rendebu</b>  | Fr. Rendez-vous                            |
| <b>Sueter</b>   | Fr. Souhaiter. To wish                     |
| <b>Renseyar</b> | Fr. Renseigner. Inform                     |
| <b>Polis</b>    | Fr. Police                                 |

### 6.3.3 Italianisms

|                   |                                    |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Alora</b>      | Now                                |
| <b>Escarsedad</b> | It. Scarsezza. Scarcity            |
| <b>Escopo</b>     | It. Scopo. Object, goal, intention |
| <b>Ezitar</b>     | It. Esitare. To hesitate           |
| <b>Lokanda</b>    | Lodging                            |
| <b>Manko</b>      | Deficient, Incomplete              |
| <b>Ri ŝetar</b>   | Reject                             |
| <b>Robinar</b>    | It. Rovinare. Ruin ,destroy        |

## 7 Judeo-Spanish from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century until today

After the literary apogee of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, J.S. saw the emergence of a journalistic and satiric press, more secular and costumbrist in character. Periodism and theater along with author poetry and novel writing “*a la Europeene*” were adopted as a result of the increasing influence of western culture. The schools of the Alliance Israelite Universelle, founded in 1874, had a preponderant role in the westernization of oriental Sephardic life, language and costumes.<sup>149</sup> This chapter will follow the evolution of J.S. by the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and its eventual decline

### 7.1 Judeo-Spanish press

Of these adopted genres, only journalism will be briefly discussed in this paper due to its historic relevance to the study of Sephardic language and literature. The invaluable contribution of those who have investigated on this subject<sup>150</sup> is of paramount interest for historians and linguists alike. The antagonism of traditional Sephardic life and the inevitable advance of modernity, the penetration of western ideas, and ideals, and their impact on oriental J.S., are very well portrayed in the pages of the numerous Sephardic journals that proliferated at that time.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Paloma Diaz Mas. Los Sefadies. Historia, lengua y cultura, p. 166

<sup>150</sup> David M. Bunis, Tracy . Harry, Arlene Malinowsky among others.

<sup>151</sup> Paloma Diaz Mas. Los Sefadies. Historia, lengua y cultura, p. 170



The first one of them to see light, *šaaire Mizrah* (Heb. Oriental gates) was founded in 1845 in Izmir. From this date on until the present three mayor periods can be distinguished<sup>152</sup>:

1. **Genesis** (1845-1908)
2. **Splendour** (1908-1945)
3. **Decline** (1908-Present)

To the first period belong some of the most influential, prestigious and long running J.S. newspapers. Despite the traditional and conservative life style of the Levantine Sephardim and the rigid Ottoman censorship<sup>153</sup>, the publication of such newspapers as “La Buena esperanza” (The good hope) in Izmir by 1871, “El Tiempo” (The time) Istambul, 1871; “La epoka” (The epoch) Salonika, 1875; “El Telegrafo” (The telegraph) Istamboul, 1879 and “Él avenir” (The future) Salonika, 1898 must have represented an unparalleled event in most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Sephardic Oriental communities.

From the second period onward, and until the outburst of W.W 1, Sephardic press flourished while the Ottoman Empire was agonizing. After the “old man’s”<sup>154</sup> death, the subsequent establishment of the Turkish republic and until W.W II, J.S. press had a vast geographical cover that bespeaks of the popularity of this genre among the masses. In it are included cities like: Izmir and Constantinople in Turkey, Salonika and Xanzi in Greece; Sofia, Ruse, Plovidv in Bulgaria, Turnu-Severin in Rumania; Belgrado in Serbia, Vienna in Austria and Alexandria and Cairo in the case of Egypt.<sup>155</sup>

During this belle-epoch most of the publication were made using Hebrew characters until the Latin and Cyrillic ones gained terrain as the genre declined. The use of Turkish, Greek, Bulgarian, Arabic and French in Sephardic press reflects the incredible degree of daily poliglossy in which the Sephardim lived and developed. The different and variegated affiliations and aspirations of oriental Sephardic Jewry by the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century find expression through the J.S. press of that period.<sup>156</sup>

Papers like *el Macabeo* (the Maccabee) and *La renacencia Judia* (Jewish renaissance) from Salonika were the vehicle of expression of Zionist groups whereas *El*

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<sup>152</sup> Paloma Diaz mas. Los Sefardies.Historia, lengua y cultura, p. 170

<sup>153</sup> Ibid, p. 167

<sup>154</sup> The ottoman empire. It is said that the first who coined the term was the Russian Tsar Nicolas I. He used the phrase to refer to the deplorable situation of Turkey at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> C. “We have a sick man on our hands, a man gravely ill; it will be a great misfortune if one of these days he slips through our hands, especially before the necessary arrangements are made.”

<sup>155</sup> Paloma Dias Mas. Los Serfardies, historia, lengua y cultura, p. 168

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

*Pueblo* (The people), *Solidaridad obrera* (Worker's solidarity) and *La voz del pueblo* (The voice of the people), from the same city, advocated the cause of the socialists. Another Salonika based newspaper, *La vara* (The stick), more radical in its views, defined itself openly as a newspaper of:

*“Tendencias comunistas extremistas, manifiestas y abiertas para **harbar** a derecha y iztiedra sin piadad, sin **hatir** contra la burguesia, contra el sionismo y la colonizacion Judia de Palestina.<sup>157</sup>“*

In such an ambience of journalistic belligerence, there were some who opted for moderation and equanimity. Titles as *El imparcial*, *El liberal* and *La tribuna libera*, also from Salonika, define the political position of their publishers and readers. The advent of modernity was represented by the Xanxi based *El progreso* (The progress); *El tiempo* (The time), *El Telegrafo* (The telegraph), *El instructor* (The instructor) from Constantinople and *La epoca* (The epoch) and *Avanti* (Forward) from Salonika.

Interesting to notice and worth of mentioning is the great number of satirical newspaper some of which exhibit suggestive titles that could give an idea of what their content was about. The Salonikan newspapers *El Kirbach* (The whip), *El burlon* (The mocker), *Aksyon* (action) and the Constantinople publications of *El Gracioso* (The funny one), *El djougueton* (The Jester) and that of the Jerusalem based *El descarado* (The insolent) are a good example of this. The latter defined itself as a:

*“Journal anual de isolencia, de descaradez, de punchonas(pullas), de burla y de maskaralik.<sup>158</sup>“*

The most detailed interests of the Epoch were canalized via the press. Some publications had specific folkloric interest while others like *Dirito* (Right) were for the normalization and harmonious coexistence of Jews and Christians. Even those who had a keen interest for the occultism had a voice. The Salonika based publications of *Los misterios de la natura* (Nature's mysteries) with its doses of hypnotism, magic, spiritualism, scatology, telepathy and chiromancy, served very well this purpose<sup>159</sup>.

Thus, not only rival political factions and, cultural and benefic societies, literary groups but even groups of friends published their own newspapers. Very important is the study of such a varied and rich documented aspect of Sephardic letters in a period of

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<sup>157</sup> Paloma Dias Mas. Los Serfardies, historia, lengua y cultura, p.169

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid,p.170

increasing political tensions and drastic changes in the *modus vivendis* of Sephardic Oriental Jewry.

## 7.2 Judeo-Spanish in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Diagnosis.

During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century four Mayor historical events were to have a direct and irreversible impact in the life and Language of the oriental Sephardic Jewry. The first of them was the Young Turk revolution of 1908, followed by the outburst of WWI, the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 and the subsequent abolition of the Ottoman Empire in 1927.

The Young Turk revolution was a turning point in the history of the Ottoman Empire, not only because it marked the beginning of the second constitutional era and reinstated the parliament and the 1876 constitution, but also because it took a different attitude regarding the Empires Language policy. Turk Culture and Turkicization were the two main goals of the new government. This new cultural policy, aggressive if compared to the Ottoman linguistic tolerance and encouraged ethnic pluralism, emphasized on the universalization of the Turkish Language. From this moment on all non-Muslim and non-Turkish Schools, besides imparting Turkish as a subject, were obliged to include Turkish history and geography to their curriculum.<sup>160</sup>

The birth of the Turkish Republic initially benefitted the Sephardic bourgeoisie but in due time all privileges were suppressed and the Jewish population of Istanbul, as the other non-Muslim communities, fell under the category of *ekalliyet* (Turk. minorities) The following nationalistic fever centered its radio of activities around culture and language as a strategy of ethnogeny. The shifting of alphabet in 1928 and the creation of the Turkish language association in 1932 indicated that the language situation in the former Ottoman Empire was about to change drastically.<sup>161</sup>

The same year the AIU began gradually to close its schools after 72 years of uninterrupted presence in Turkey. Both French and J.S. disappeared from public life, although they continued being used by the Sephardim as vehicles of expression either in

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<sup>160</sup> Mahir Saul. The mother tongue of the polyglot: Cosmopolitanism and nationalism among the Sephardim of Istanbul p.343-344

<sup>161</sup> Ibid p.344

the intimacy of home or when reading and writing. The population census of 1927 reflects that 84% of the 81,872 Jews declared Yahudice (J.S.) to be their mother tongue. The 54% pertaining the 1935 census is not representative and should be interpreted as an essay to abide with “turkifying” spirit of the times and not as a sign of language shift.<sup>162</sup>

This is confirmed in the following census (1945 and 1955) in which the number of J.S. speakers is registered as 63.3% and 71.7% respectively. Having receded the mentioned nationalistic fever, there were neither necessity from the authorities to pursuit their language aggressiveness nor for the Sephardim to deny that J.S. was their language.<sup>163</sup>

During the 40's and 50's J.S. publications and conversations continued on fashion. J.S., following the 1928 alphabet reform, was now rendered in Latin characters. It was during these two decades that developed the Language pattern that until today is present in the Istanbul community. The majority uses a Gallicized J.S. at home, Turkish on the streets and French for social or formal occasions.<sup>164</sup>

It was also by this time when the Jewish newspapers increased the number of articles in Turkish because of the younger generation's lack of proficiency in J.S. A Language that they neglected in favor of Turkish; the one in which they preferred to express themselves, read and write.<sup>165</sup>

The census of 1960 and 1965 show that that the percentage had diminished from 42.2% to 24% respectively. The following year, Mark Glazer conducted a research in an attempt to determine the degree of proficiency in Turkishs among the Istanbul Jews.<sup>166</sup> The resulting figures reflect the state of affair in the city concerning the fluency in Turkish that their Jewish citizens had in the second half of the past Century:

Every individual, out the 80 participants he chose as samples, spoke Turkish, 96% spoke French, 77% could communicate in J.S., 48% in English, 33% in Greek, 39% in German and only 8% in Hebrew. Glazer concluded that 84.5% of the interviewees used Turkish as their main communication channel.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid p.345

<sup>163</sup> Ibid p.345

<sup>164</sup> Ibid p.346-347

<sup>165</sup> Ibid

<sup>166</sup> Ibid, p.347

<sup>167</sup> Mahir Saul. The mother tongue of the polyglot: Cosmopolitanism and nationalism among the Sephardim of Istanbul, p.347-348

In the 70's French was dethroned and its role was taken by English, a clear indicator of how the language and political situation had changed. The situation for J.S., formerly a highly esteemed and widely spoken language in the city, was not better. The age of its speaker was increasing and hardly could one find a teenager that was fluent in J.S. The goals of the language policy of the 1920's were accomplished fifty years later when the stage of *completion*, according to the model of language shift<sup>168</sup> of Avram Glanti, was reached.<sup>169</sup>

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אנו 18 - No.2039 - Jueves 9 Noviembre 1989 ( 11 Hechvan 5750) — PRESTIO 2.80 CH'H i M.E.M.

### AMERIKA DARA GARANSIAS A ISRAEL I A LOS PALESTINIANOS




James Baker                      Itshak Chamir

Enfin, despues de longos debates, diskusiones, presiones de parte de Amerika sobre Israel, de akseptar el program de pas de 5 puntos, ke presento el ministro amerikano del eksterior James Baker, el Kabinet Governamental, kon la partispasion de los kuatro, sea el primer ministro sr. Itshak Chamir, su replasante i ministro de finansas sr. Chimon Peres, el ministro del eksterior sr. Moche Arens, el ministro de la defensa sr. Itshak Rabin, mantuvieron una reunion urgente i decidieron de akseptar a los 5 puntos de James Baker, despues ke i Baker akseptó de azer sientas livianas reparaciones

ra sobre las garansias ke dara Amerika a Israel. De otra parte, los amerikanos izieron kalmar a Egipto, diziendo ke daran garansias i a los palestinianos.

\* LAS KONDISIONES KE AKSEPTO ISRAEL

Los 5 puntos ke akseptó Israel son:

\* Konversaciones avra despues ke sera aparejada la lista de los moradores palestinianos de Yehuda Chomron i Gaza, kon los kualos Israel akseptara a tratar.

\* Israel no avlara ni tratara kon Achal.

\* El sujeto prensipal sera sobre las eleksiones en los territorios, ansi, sigun figura en la iniciativa de pas de

### MANIANA — VIERNES ORAS 9.05 KOMEMORASION DEL GRANDE M. KEMAL ATATURK AL KUMPLIR 51 ANIO

Por : Nissim Bueno

El Grande i Innolvidable M. Kemal Ataturk, komo savido murio en 10. 11.38 a las oras 9. 05 i de estoneses, en kada año, se organizan seremonias de komemorasion en la misma data i misma ora en toda la Turkia i demas, en todas las instituciones i representaciones ofisialas i diplomatikas de Turkia a travesso el mundo.



Maniana-Viernes 10 Noviembre, a las oras 9.05 egzakto, se komemorara el 51 año de la desaparision del Grande Heroe i Salvador del Pueblo Turko, ke deicho el mas valutozo regalo-La Republika Moderna i Demokrata en Turkia.

(A Kontinuar en paj. 12)

### En el Klub Kultural de Orijinarios de Turkia en Herzelia-Pitua donaron 35 mil ch. para las charas del Karmel

(Melda en pajina 6)



<sup>168</sup> His model is based on the natural evolution of language shift within a non-Turkish speaking minority language community. It consists of three stages, the first, *original*, is characterized by language proficiency in J.S. but not in Turkish. In the second stage, or *transitional*, the young generation learns Turkish fluently at school and J.S. at home. *Completion*, the last stage, and saddest of all, is that in which the youngster learn only Turkish and use it at school, in the streets and at home. The bilingual parents can communicate with their children and their own parents but the children and the grand parents cannot communicate because they lack a common channel to do so.

<sup>169</sup> Mahir Saul. The mother tongue of the polyglot: Cosmopolitanism and nationalism among the Sephardim of Istanbul, p.347-348

### 7.3 The situation today. Language death or survival?

The horrors of the holocaust displaced and diminished the remaining number of Oriental J.S. speakers in Turkey and the Balkans. The few who managed to survive were dispersed to the USA, Israel and the Americas. Including the twenty two reasons for the decline of J.S. that Tracey K. Harris proposes,<sup>170</sup> there is an important issue that cannot be avoided when discussing the survival of J.S. in the present Century and that is the increasing age of competent speakers. According to the surveys conducted in the three largest Sephardic communities of the world by Malinowsky in 1979-1982 and Harris in 1999, most of the fluent speakers are seventy years old or older and there are no monolingual speakers in any of them.<sup>171</sup>

The speech of the Sephardim today is hesitant and presents a great deal of loanwords and code switching from English in the U.S.A, Spanish in Latin America and Hebrew in Israel. This insecurities and the lack of J.S. command are the result of both minimal exposition to J.S. and also the negative attitudes that some Sephardim have towards their language use, maintenance and future survival. Often they establish comparisons between J.S. and French, Hebrew or Turkish in detriment of J.S., as perceived as a “corrupted”, “incorrect language” or not a “real language”.<sup>172</sup>

The recent efforts made on behalf of Sephardic culture and language in order to promote it and assure its transcendence into the next century, have not been accepted equally enthusiastic by all Sephardim. There are many who maintain that it is not worth the effort since there is no point in remaining attached to a language whose present domain is “limited” to either converse with old people, the telling of jokes and folklore or as a secret language and for the singing of Romances.<sup>173</sup>

The renewed interest in J.S. culture has prompted it’s present revival, especially in the case of Israel. The creation in 1997 of the ANL (Autoridad Nasionala del Ladino), an organization established for the promotion of all aspect of Sephardic life and culture and for the teaching of J.S., was a wise initiative. This National authority also publishes books, trains teachers, produces J.S. dictionaries and translates into modern Hebrew J.S. articles and master pieces.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Tracy K. Harris. Reasons for the decline of Judeo-Spanish. International journal of the sociology of language, p. 72-94

<sup>171</sup> Tracy K. Harris. The state of Ladino today, p.51

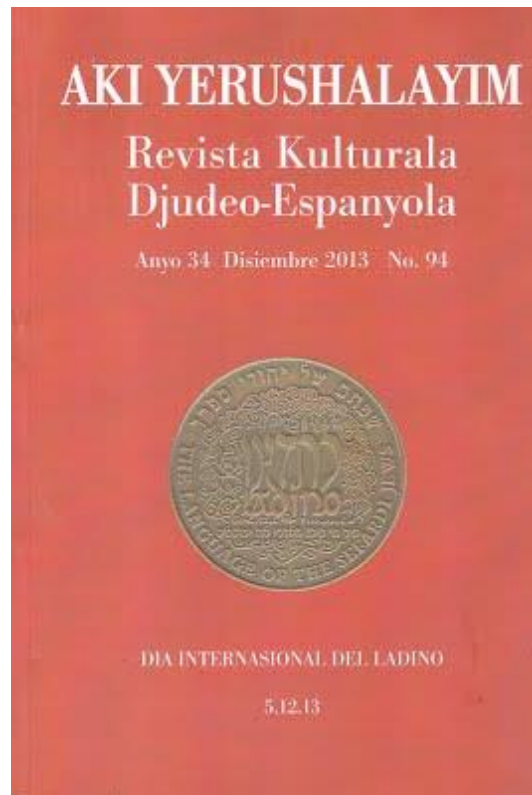
<sup>172</sup> Ibid, p.52

<sup>173</sup> Ibid, p.53

<sup>174</sup> Ibid

### 7.3.1 Press

There is only a magazine in the world written entirely in J.S: The Israeli Aki Yerushalaim, revista Kulturala djudeo-Espanyola. Founded in 1975, its articles include a great variety of subjects as history, literature, folklore, poetry, romances and even cooking recipes. Unfortunately there were no publication of J.S. newspapers from 1990, when La luz de Israel (The light of Israel) ceased its activities, until 2005 when the Istanbul monthly cultural supplement El amanecer (The dawn) started publishing entirely in J.S. Salom, a weekly newspaper from the same city, used to be printed totally in J.S. but today has only one page, the rest is in Turkish.<sup>175</sup>



### 7.3.2 Instruction

There are three mayor difficulties regarding J.S. teaching. The first one is the scarcity of qualified teachers. The second is the lack of teaching material and the third is motivation, without which, even if the other two are provided, the language cannot be passed onto the new generation.

Despite the recent publication of teaching texts<sup>176</sup> and the American public accessibility to them, the teaching of J.S. in the U.S.A is almost non-existent. The weak motivation to the language due to the low status associated with it, the lack of prestige and the fiery competition from M.S, have conspired against J.S. in the U.S.A. Currently it can

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid, p.54

<sup>176</sup> Gattegno and Rafael (1995,1998) , Varol (1998), Bunis (1999), Markova (2008)

be studied at Columbia University, at Tufts University in Boston and sporadically in some synagogues around the United States.<sup>177</sup>

In Europe there is a better situation concerning the teaching of J.S. Courses are offered in Paris at INALCO (Institut National des Langues et Civilizations Orientales), in Spain at the universities of Granada and Madrid. The Universities of Berlin, Hamburg and Munich, in Germany, have imparted courses on J.S. in the past. At the Swiss University of Basel, under the supervision of Dr. Beatrice Schmid, a group of young scholars has been recently graduated.<sup>178</sup>

In Turkey, the Istanbul based Instituto Cervantes has also offered courses in 2006 but where the situation is really favorable for J.S. is in Israel. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, that of Tel-Aviv, Bar Ilan and Ben Gurion, offer currently J.S. lessons.<sup>179</sup>

### 7.3.3 Radio and Internet

The Radio station Kol Israel, in its J.S. section Emission djudeo-espanyola used to broadcast twice a day a 15-minute program covering the news and other Sephardic subjects. Now there is only one at 19.45-20.00 (Israeli time).<sup>180</sup> Radio programming today in J.S. is minimal even when the number of possible listeners could be high, if one includes the many M.S speakers that are interested in Sephardic matters.

The manifold advantages of such a technological wonder as radio could be used as an effective tool for the revival of J.S. and its possible survival into the 22<sup>th</sup> Century. Internet, on the other hand, has proven to be an invaluable aid in the diffusion of J.S. Out of the many online sources to promote Sephardic culture and language, Tracy K. Harris proposes:<sup>181</sup>

- LadinoKomunita, a virtual community created in 2000 to communicate in J.S. about subjects of interest for the Sephardim.  
Can be reached at: <http://ladinokomunita.tripod.com/muestralingua>

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<sup>177</sup> Tracy K. Harris, The state of Ladino today, p.56

<sup>178</sup> Ibid, p.56-57

<sup>179</sup> Ibid

<sup>180</sup> Ibid, p.56

<sup>181</sup> Ibid, p.55-56



- BoletineSefarad publishes articles and news of interest and arranges events for the Sephardi community.  
Can be reached at: <http://esefarad.com/>
- CIDiCsef or Centro de investigacion y difusion de Cultura Sefardi (Center for research and diffusion of Sephardic culture)  
Can be reached at: [www.CIDiCsef.org.ar](http://www.CIDiCsef.org.ar)
- The digitized Ladino Library project that is part of the Sephardic studies project at Stanford University, has the noble idea of maximizing the accessibility of scholars and students to manuscripts and books.  
Can be reached at [www.stanford.edu/dept/jewishstudies/overview/index.html](http://www.stanford.edu/dept/jewishstudies/overview/index.html)

### 7.3.4 Prognosis

The situation of J.S. in Turkey during the last and present Century has undergone different stages, each of which deserves minute attention. The Status of J.S. as a minority language has always been in accord with the surrounding historical and sociopolitical climate. The vitality it enjoyed under Ottoman rule as a prestigious language, turned into the “health problems” experienced after the establishment of the Turkish republic and the Turkicization period.

The radical change of language policy from Ottoman cultural plurality and language diversity to nationalism and language singularity aggravated the situation of J.S. The prohibition of printing in other alphabet than the Latin meant also a significant loss for J.S. whose literature, including books, religious tractates and newspapers written in Rashi script, was doomed to oblivion since no one, except for some pious men, could longer read it.<sup>182</sup>

The shifting from a non-Turkish speaking Jewish community into a non-J.S. speaking one had immense repercussions in the almost miraculous survival of J.S. in Turkey. The conclusions of Avram Galanti’s and Mark Glazer’s surveys became manifest during the 1970’s when J.S. had been diagnosed as terminally ill. A language so archaic and mixed that it was considered by many of its speakers as a “jargon” that hindered

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<sup>182</sup> Karen Gerson Sarhon. Ladino in Turkey: The situation today as reflected by the Ladino database project, p.64

modernity and progress. By the 1970's it was generally believed that J.S. had at most 15 years before experiencing language death as a result of not having native speakers.<sup>183</sup>

The decade of the 80's was the turning point of a long period of decadence. The abolition of the law that permitted Turkish citizens to travel abroad only thrice a year brought about an increment of the trips abroad and the same time a renewed awareness of J.S. utility. A basic knowledge of this language could be used to communicate when traveling outside Turkey, especially in the Americas and the whole of the Iberian Peninsula.<sup>184</sup>

Karen Gerson informs that it was also around these years that linguists, historians, musicologist, ethnomusicologists, socio-linguists and sociologists began arriving in Turkey to investigate the unusual phenomenon of the 500 years survival of J.S. in what used to be its natural geographic setting.<sup>185</sup>

By the 90's Tracy K. Harris had described the reasons for the decline of J.S. Around the same years Armistead had declared that " Anyone who has done fieldwork among Spanish Jews soon becomes acutely aware that their language (...) has now entered a period of perilous terminal decline" Nevertheless, the academic publications of the firsts years of the 21th Century are an example of the revival, rather than death, of J.S.

The future of J.S. in Turkey, and its 21<sup>th</sup> Century revival, was assured when in 1990 the Cervantes Institute opened its doors in Istanbul. Two years later the quinentennial anniversary of the arrival of Sephardic Jews in the Ottoman Empire was commemorated. The fact that J.S. passed from the high status of sacred language that it initially had during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> to the diagnosed chronic malady of the 20th Century, and still has made it into the 21<sup>th</sup>, is worthy of appraisal and admiration.

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid, p.62-63

<sup>184</sup> Ibid, p.64

<sup>185</sup> Ibid. Arlene Malinowsky, convinced that Turkey was the only place in the world where a well-established community J.S speakers could be found at that time, set out on a fieldwork during May and June 1980 .The result was a rapport on the state of Judeo-Spanish in an interesting period, that of revival of J.S history, culture and language.



## 8 Conclusions

After having followed J.S., from its beginning to the present day, along the main geographic zones where it flourished and declined, having seen examples of its Biblical translations and analyzed the most salient features of its balladry tradition and journalistic activities; it can be concluded that:

- J.S. belongs to the Judeo-Language group<sup>186</sup> and its literary tradition dates from medieval times until the present day. The question of whether it is a language, a dialect or a jargon is always answered according to the political, historical and linguistic preconceptions that the respondent may have.
- The balladry tradition in which the Romancero is embedded has clear and verifiable parallelisms with its Germanic, Carolingian and Balkan counterparts.<sup>187</sup> This Pan-European character of the Romancero deserves more attention as well as its further connections with the world folk traditions.
- Some of the archaic, highly conservative and eclectic ballad repertoire inherited by the Sephardim from medieval times have survived among them while are altogether absent in other branches of the Hispanic ballad tradition.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> David Bunis. Judezmo: The Jewish language of the Ottoman Sephardim, p.22-24.

<sup>187</sup> S.G Armistead. Folk Literature of the Sephardic Jews, p.115-132

<sup>188</sup> S. G. Armistead. Judeo Spanish and Pan-European balladry, p.128

- The Sephardic tradition is, in virtue of its conservatism, the most fitted for the comparative studies of Pan-Hispanic and Pan-European Balladry. The thematic correspondences that it shares with other European ballad traditions are not preserved in any geographical branch of the Hispanic Romancero.<sup>189</sup>
- Romances had a vital role in the life cycle of the Sephardim. These poems are present in all aspects and phases of their existence. Some were used as lullabies, other at work, weddings and social gatherings; at solemn, sad or joyous occasions.
- Both the biblical literature and the Romances are part of the collective ideas or *Volkegedanke* of the Sephardim.<sup>190</sup> This mythological dimension is evidenced in the function they played in Sephardic life concerning the main four transition passages in all human societies, namely: birth, initiation, marriage and death.
- The biblical literary production of the Sephardim had a direct and verifiable influence in the Spanish Christians Bibles that still exhibit, despite centuries of revisions and re-editions, several Ladino traits. These texts are an invaluable document to the study of both Lt and L2 due to their paralleled diachronic evolution.
- The J.S. press from 1842 until today constitutes an irreplaceable source for future researches on the fields of history, sociology and philology for it reflects the last link of a long literary chain before the progressive and degenerative influence of French eroded its original Hispanic character. The J.S press represents the embryo of what could be a vibrant genre had it not been for what H. V. Sephiha defines as *Gallomanie gallopante*.<sup>191</sup> A lethal Francophile malady that brought irreversible consequences for the language and its survival.
- Language death does not imply cultural death.

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> The German anthropologist Adolf Bastian (1826-1905) was the first to use the terms *Elementäre gedanke* and *Völkegedanke* in an attempt to describe the interesting and dialectic relationship between the two concepts.

<sup>191</sup> Le Judeo-Espagnol, p.143-144

# Appendix

The main categories of folkloric motifs as presented by S. Thompson's Motif-index of folk-literature: a classification of narrative elements in folktales, ballads, myths, fables, medieval romances, exempla, fabliaux, jest-books, and local legends. The bolded categories correspond to those folk motifs that appear in the above-presented romances.

- A. Mythological Motifs*
- B. Animal Motifs*
- C. Motifs of Tabu*
- D. Magic***
- E. the Dead*
- F. Marvels***
- G. Ogres*
- H. Tests*
- J. the Wise and the Foolish*
- K. Deceptions***
- L. Reversals of Fortune*
- M. Ordaining the Future*
- N. Chance and Fate*
- P. Society*
- Q. Rewards and Punishments*
- R. Captives and Fugitives*
- S. Unnatural Cruelty*
- T. Sex***
- U. the Nature of Life*
- V. Religion*
- W. Traits of Character*
- X. Humor*
- Z. Miscellaneous Groups of Motifs*

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