

LADINO LITERATURE

(BIBLIOGRAFÍA DE LIBROS EN LADINO)

«Mientras los Judíos de Oriente conserven el habla española, y en habla española —o *habla español*, como ellos con antiguo giro dicen— recen a su Dios, al Dios de Abraham y de Jacob, mientras viertan en español sus sentires y sus añoranzas, será su patria esta España, que tan injusta y cruel fue con ellos».

MIGUEL DE UNAMUNO.

[De una carta a D. Angel Pulido. Cf. Angel Pulido, *Españoles sin Patria y la Raza Sefaradí*. Madrid, 1905, p. 104.]

WEBSTER'S Dictionary defines Literature as «the total of preserved writings belonging to a given language or people; and more specifically as «that part of it which is notable for literary form or expression»¹.

What kind of literature has been produced by the Levantine or Sephardic Jews who, after the expulsion from Spain in 1492, found refuge in the Balkan countries? Is there a Judeo-Spanish literature? Has Judeo-Spanish, like Yiddish, for example, the right to claim the possession of a literature of its own? Why not?

¹ The literature of the Jews has not yet been given a name that recommends itself to universal acceptance. The various names that have been given to it (rabbinical, hebraic, theological, etc.), are all inadequate. While the object of this essay is to discuss Judeo-Spanish literature as applied to the Sephardim in the Oriental countries exclusively, and no the Jewish people as a whole, nevertheless, it has been necessary to apply the term *Jewish literature* as something that embraces the *appreciable writings produced by Jews from the earliest days of their history up to the present time, regardless of form, of language, and, in the middle ages, at least, of subject matter*. For an interesting discussion on this question. see: S. LEVY, *What is Jewish Literature, ?* In: *Jewish Quarterly Review*, Philadelphia, 1904, XVI, 300-329.

says Rabbi Shabetai Djaen². It is the creation of the original spirit of a people's life which for centuries has been the echo of the soul of the sons of Sepharad. And these sons of Sepharad have continually sung their joys or lamented the sorrows of their daily life in Judeo-Spanish and always in the same rhythm.

There exists in Judeo-Spanish a vast quantity of translations of prayer and other liturgical books and a daily press which was published in Ladino at Salonica, Vienna, Smyrna, Constantinople, Jerusalem, Belgrade, etc. Many works relating to mystical and religious themes, depicting the miracles of Rav HAari and Haim Vital, such as «Shevet Yehuda», «Leket Ha-Zohar» were composed in Judeo-Spanish³.

Miraculous stories of Baal Shem Tov and others have been translated from the Yiddish into Ladino. Books on ethics and religious tendencies such as the *Meam Loez*, *Kab-Ha-Yashar*⁴, *Pele Yoetz*, *Kiryat Hana* (commentaries on Ecclesiastes) etc., were also translated. There were many adaptations and translations from profane literature such as «The Bread carrier», «The Orphan», and many comedies by Molière, Sardou, Alexandre Dumas fils, and other famous French writers. All of this, says Rabbi Djaen, constituted the spiritual treasures of the Sephardic home.

Professor Salo W. Baron, the distinguished historian *par excellence* in the United States, says that the history of Ladino literature has yet to be written⁵. One must agree with Prof. Baron, for while a good number of studies on the Ladino language — dialectical variations, morphology, vocabulary, syntax, phonology, etc. — have been published in a number of Romance and Germanic languages, including English⁶, only some sketchy articles on Ladino Literature have been written from time to time. And some of these articles have appeared for the most part in Ency-

² SHABETAI DJAEN: *Sobre algunos escritores en Ladino*. In: *Judaica*, Buenos Aires, 1939, Nos. 73-75, p. 40.

³ *Leket ha-Zohar* was translated into Ladino and published at Belgrade in 1859 and 1861. Cf. M. KAYSERLING, in *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1925, VII, 325.

⁴ *Kab-ha-Yashar*. *Castigüero hermoso con mucho consuelo* was published at Constantinople in 1857. Cf. M. KAYSERLING, *JE*, 1925, VII, 325.

⁵ Cf. *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, New York, 1937, II, 94.

⁶ Cf. HENRY V. BESSO: *Bibliografía sobre el judeo-español*. In *Bulletin Hispanique*, Bordeaux, 1952, LIV, Nos. 3-4, 412-422.

clopedias, in some foreign language journal or book not always accessible to the general English reader⁷. Therefore, it would be of considerable help if some scholar were to undertake this task in the very near future. I am cognizant of the fact that this essay is also sketchy, and probably imperfect, but its only excuse is that it breaks ground in the field.

Those who have written about the literature of the Sephardim after the expulsion from Spain—the literature which has been written in Ladino exclusively—have characterized it as being «a very modest literature», a «comparatively rich literature», and as having «a large and probably an older literature than Yiddish»⁸. The late Dr. William Milwitzky, for example, says that:

«Judeo-Spanish has a very modest literature, save for its important liturgical output; and for its rich store of folk literature, borne into exile and preserved, still Spanish in form, content, and spirit, as naturally and faithfully, almost as their religion»⁹.

Dr. Mayer Kayserling who was the spiritual leader of the Sephardic Community of Budapest for many years, and has written profusely on the Sephardic Jews, had this to say regarding Ladino literature:

There exists in Judeo-Spanish or Ladino, a comparatively rich literature, which arose at the beginning of the 16th century and was still diligently cultivated up to the beginning of the present.»¹⁰

⁷ Cf. M. KAYSERLING: *Ladino (or Judeo-Spanish) language and literature*. In: JE., New York, 1925, VII, 325; DE HAAS: *Encyclopedia of Jewish Literature*. In one volume. New York, 1934, p. 289; WILLIAM MILWITZKY: *Judeo-Spanish Literature*. In: *Encyclopedia of Literature*, Edited by Joseph T. Shipley. New York, 1946, p. 650; *Enciclopedia judaica Castellana*. México, D. F., 1950. Article: *Ladino*...

⁸ «It should be observed that Yiddish, though the native tongue of millions of Jews through centuries, could hardly have been considered as possessing a literature until the second half of the nineteenth century when Yiddish publications had undergone an enormous expansion». Cf. Dr. ISRAEL SCHAPIRO: *Report of the Semitic and Oriental Division*. In: *Report of the Librarian of Congress for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 1961*. Washington D.C. p. 92.

⁹ Cf. WILLIAM MILWITZKY: *Judeo-Spanish literature*. Op. cit., 1946, p. 650.

¹⁰ Dr. M. KAYSERLING: *Judeo-Spanish or Ladino*. In: JE. New York, 1925, VII, 324-326. Among some of the works by Dr. Kayserling on the Sephardim, see:

Since this essay will deal exclusively with the Ladino literature of the Sephardic or Spanish Jews who settled in the Orient after the expulsion from Spain in 1492, an attempt will be made to describe this literary activity from the beginning of the 16th century through the beginning of the twentieth¹¹.

Expelled from Spain and Portugal at the end of the Middle Ages, the Sephardim were received with benevolence by Sultan Bayazid II in his vast Turkish Empire. Bayazid, the most powerful monarch of his time, understood very early that the Judeo-Spanish element would be of great help to his young country which was still agitated by the indigenous peoples which had been subjugated by the strong arm of the Osmanlis.

The major part of the refugees from Spain and Portugal settled in the Balkan countries, in the Islands of the Eastern Mediterranean, in Constantinople, in Asia Minor, in Syria, in Palestine. There existed in these regions nuclei of indigenous Jews, called *romaniotes* or *griegos* and their ritual was called *Mahzor Romanija*. It was not long before these native sons, who had been oppressed for many generations during the Byzantine domination, decided to go over and fused with Sephardic Judaism.

Many Sephardic Jews took refuge in the countries of North Africa: Egypt, Lybia, Tunis, Argel, and Morocco, and with the time, these also became fused with their indigenous correligionists. Many Spanish Jewish families also found asylum in the Italian cities of Rome, Ancona, Venice and Calabria. From there they emigrated to the Orient, after a few years of residence in the Italian Peninsula, because of persecutions and edicts of expulsion similar to those they had suffered in Spain and Portugal.

Bibliotheca-Española-Portuguesa-Judaica... Strasbourg, 1890 (only two pages are devoted to the Ladino Literature in this monumental work); *Sephardim, Romamsche Poesie der Juden in Spanien*. Leipzig, 1859; and numerous other articles and studies in the Jewish Encyclopedia and the publications of the American Jewish Historical Society, etc.

¹¹ For the study of the Spanish literature of the Sephardim who settled in Holland in 1593, a literature which was written in Castilian Spanish, in Portuguese and in Hebrew, see: HENRY V. BESSO, *The dramatic Literature of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews of Amsterdam, Holland, in the 17th and 18th centuries*. New York, Hispanic Institute of Columbia University, 1947.

The major part of these exiles from Italy settled in the Islands of Jonias, Peloponese, Tesalia and Salonica¹².

The literary activity of the Sephardim in the cities of the Orient was very important in the 16th century. The books published during this period, written in Rashi characters (cursive Hebraic characters), are, in its majority, of religious and moral content. They were prepared and published with the object of strenghtening the religious and ethical feelings among the Sephardic Jews. The Spanish used in these books is impeccable. Among the first published books in Judeo-Spanish of that period was a translation of the ritual rules for slaughtering¹³, and was designed to meet immediate religious needs.

The translation of the Bible in Hebrew vocalized in square characters, made in Constantinople in 1547, was the first larger work which the Sephardic Jews of Turkey published in the language «which the old Jews use»¹⁴. This translation served as a model to those that were to follow¹⁵. Other translations followed and were printed in Rashi characters. It is estimated that some 5.000 such works have been published in Ladino or Judeo-Spanish¹⁶.

The most significant characteristic of this literature is that the greater part of it was, directly or indirectly, the outgrowth of the Bible.

The Spanish Jewish writers of the 16th century who settled in Turkey may be divided into two classes: those who came from Spain, and those who were natives of the new country (Turkey).

Among those who emigrated from Spain mention must be made of Joseph Ben Ephraim Caro (1488-1575). He was born in

¹² Cf. MICHAEL MOLHO: *Consideraciones sobre el Folklore Sefardi*. In: *Davar, Revista Literaria*. Buenos Aires. Núm. 76. pp. 63-64.

¹³ Constantinople, 1510, and reprinted several times at Venice, Pisa, London and Amsterdam. Cf. M. KAYSERLING: *JE.*, 1925, VII, 324-326.

¹⁴ Cf. M. KAYSERLING: *JE.*, 1925, VII, 325.

¹⁵ Cf. MAX GRÜNBAUM: *Jüdisch-Spanish Chrestomatie*. Fankfurt-am-Main, 1896, p. 12.

¹⁶ Cf. C. RAMOS-GIL: *La lengua española en Israel*. In: *Tesorero de la Literatura de los Sefardies*, Vol. I. Jerusalem, 1959, p. XXXVII; M. Molho, of Buenos Aires, in a letter addressed to the author in June 1959, stated that he has in manuscript a list of books written in Judeo-Spanish in Salonica during the past four centuries. This list, according to Mr. Molho, has about 1.000 titles.

Spain and died in Safed (Palestine) in 1575. He composed the gigantic work *Bet Yosef*, later followed by the *Shuljan Aruj* which aimed at establishing a definitive Jewish religious code.

Some parts of this book have been translated into Judeo-Spanish. One such book appeared with title «Livro llamado en Lashon Hakodesh Shuljan Hapanim y en Ladino Mesa de Alma», in order to enable men and women who did not know Hebrew to become acquainted with the religious rules and ceremonies (Salonica, 1568; Venice, 1602).

There were other important writers during this period. Abraham de Isaac Laniado, a disciple of Joseph Caro, lived in Safed, and one of his works is the *Nekudot-Hakeser* with a Ladino subtitle: *Cantares y levaures que disho Shelomo el Propheeta, Rey de Israel con spirito de prophesia delante senior de todo el mundo*. Venetia, Bragadini, 5379-1619¹⁷.

Salomon Ibn Verga was also born in Spain and settled in Turkey where he practiced medicine. The *Shevet Yehuda* which he composed, was a sort of cooperative enterprise between Salomon's father - Juda (who was a cabalist) and his son, Joseph, who was a Rabbi at Adrianople. The *Shevet Yehudá* was a Jewish chronicle originally written in the Hebrew Language¹⁸. It was later translated into Latin, German and Spanish. The first Spanish translation is dated Amsterdam, and was made by Meir de Leon (*La Vara de Juda compuesta en la lengua hebraica por Selomoh Verga y traduzida en la espanola por Meir de Leon, Amsterdam, 1640*)¹⁹.

Another edition «nuevamente corregido con licencia de los Sres. del Mahamad. Em Amsterdam, por Mosseh d'Abraham Pretto Henri (quez) en la officina de Jan de Wolf. Ano 5504 que

¹⁷ MOISE FRANCO: *Essai sur l'histoire des Israélites de l'Empire Ottoman*. Paris, 1899. *Bibliotheca*, p. 56.

¹⁸ It is believed that the first edition — which is found in the British Museum of London — appeared in Turkey under the reign of Sultan Solaiman, probably at Adrianopolis, in 1550. Cf. FCO. CANTERA BURGOS: *Chevet Jehudá (La Vara de Judá) de Salomon Ben Verga. Traducción espanola con un estudio preliminar*. Granada, 1927, p. 42.

¹⁹ Cf. MOISE FRANCO: *Essai*, p. 75. Another Spanish version appeared in Granada, Spain, in 1927. It was translated and annotated by the distinguished Spanish scholar, Sr. don Francisco Cantera Burgos, one of the Directors of the Instituto Arias Montano, in Madrid, which publishes the very important journal SEFARAD.

corresponde a 1774») is mentioned by Cantera Burgos²⁰. The same Spanish scholar (Cantera Burgos), cites two Ladino translations: (Salonica, 5610/1850), and Belgrado, 5619/1859, (translated into Ladino by David de Alcalai y su hijo Moseh de David)²¹.

The *Shevet Yehuda* of Salomon Ibn Verga is not only the most complete work of this kind, but also, as pointed out by Isadore Loeb «the most original and the most living of all the Hebrew chronicles dedicated to the history of the Jews in the Middle Ages»²².

If Hebrew was the language of religion and of religious books, Spanish continued to be, in Turkey, as it had been in Spain, the language of the people. Not only Almosnino, but other writers as well, are examples of its predominance. Sadic Ben Joseph Formon lived in Turkey, probably in Salonica in the middle of the 16th century. He translated from the Hebrew into Ladino the *Sefer Jobot ha-Levavot libro llamado en ladino "Obligacion de los corasones"*. And he translated this book into Ladino, as he says, «*porque esta lengua es la más usada entre nosotros*». This translation was printed in Hebrew square characters with vowels²³.

The original work of *Jovot Halevavot* was written in Arabic by Bahya Ibn Paquda, and was translated by Juda Ibn Tibbon. A century later, in 1670, the same work was translated into Portuguese by Rabbi Samuel Abbas of Amsterdam, Holland.

Another writer of the 16th century was Mosen Almosnino who was born in Salonica in 1510 and died in 1580. He wrote

²⁰ Op. cit., p. 42.

²¹ Cf. BURGOS, op. cit., p. 43; MICHAEL MOLHO: *Sefarim Ivrim*. Buenos Aires, 1957, p. 15, no. 144; KAYSERLING: *Bibliotheca*, p. 108.

²² «de toutes les chroniques consacrées à l'histoire des Juifs au moyen âge, la plus vivante...». Cf. ISADORE LOEB, *Le folklore Juif dans la chronique du Shebet Yehuda d'Ibn Verga*, in: *Revue des Etudes Juives*, XXIV, p. 1; See also, MARIO BEJARANO: *Histoire de la Juiverie de Seville*. Madrid, 1922, pp. 89, 93, 172-173.

²³ Cf. MOISE FRANCO: *Essai*, p. 77; CYNTHIA CREWS: *Recherches sur le Judeo-Espagnol dans les Pays Balcaniques*. Paris, 1935, p. 23, states that Formon was a native of Salonica. Michael Molho, on the other hand (Cf. MEAM LOEZ, p. 7), points out that Sadock (or Sadic) was the son of the celebrated Joseph Formon of Patras, Greece. And while both Franco (op. cit., p. 77) and Crews (op. cit., p. 23) give the Ladino title of the books as: *Obligacion de los corasones*, as we have seen, Molho says that the title of the Ladino translation is *El dover de los corasones*. Kayserling (*Bibliotheca*, p. 1), indicates a second translation in Ladino which appeared in Vienna, in 1882.

many books in Hebrew as well as sermons, funeral orations, commentaries, etc. His master piece, however, is the work he wrote in pure Spanish with the title *Sefer Anaagat Hajayim*, or *Regimiento de la Vida*. A Spanish critic is reported to have said that this work «may be considered as one of the rarest of the Castilian language»²⁴.

In the history of Oriental Judaism, says Moise Franco, the 16th century was the most prolific period from the point of view of literary activity. This was not the case with the 17th century, however. It is not that Jewish thinking failed during this century. If the literature during this period did not produce such men as Joseph Caro, or Moise Almosnino, or prominent Rabbis such as Capsali or Yosef ben Loeb, it did, nevertheless, give us a Yosef del Medigo, a Juda Ibn Verga and others²⁵.

Toward the last year of the 17th century, there appeared the *Coplas de Purim* (1700). These gay couplets, in free verse, put much joy in the coreligionists of the Orient on the festival of Esther.

An apologetic work, *Fuente Clara* (Cf. Kayserling, *Bibliotheca*, p. 47) which is now very rare, appeared anonymously at the end of the 16th century; and at the beginning of the 17th century, Isaac Troki's *Hizuk Emunah* was translated into Spanish by Isaac Athias²⁶.

For some time the Ladino literature seemed to have confined itself to Hebrew translations and to books concerned with ritualistic matters. During the first centuries of the Turkish rule, says Saul Mezan, there were practically no important events associated with the Jewish populations which had become inactive and had led a passive existence in the country²⁷.

²⁴ Cf. MOISE FRANCO: *Essai*, p. 78 («cette oeuvre peut-être considérée comme une des plus rares de la langue castillane».) For a detailed study of Moise Almosnino's work, *Regimiento de la Vida*, see: MICHAEL MOLHO, *Dos obras maestras de Moisés Almosnino*. In: *Estudios y Ensayos sobre Tópicos Judíos*. Buenos Aires. Edición del Iwo, 1958, pp. 95-102.

²⁵ Cf. MOISE FRANCO: *Op. cit.*, pp. 89-90.

²⁶ ABRAHAM GALANTE: *Histoire des Jcs Juifs d'Anatolie*. I. Les Juifs d'Izmir (Smyrna), Istanbul, 1937, p. 341, cites a Ladino translation of *Hizzouk Emouna* translated from the Hebrew, by Isaac Amaradji, which was published in 1840. It is a book of religious controversy.

²⁷ SAUL MEZAN: *Les Juifs espagnols en Bulgarie*. Sofia, 1925, p. 46.

Two factors contributed to the intellectual downfall of the Sephardim during this period: The means of communications with the Western countries particularly with the Marranos of Spain had become less and less frequent; and the uneducated *milieu* which surrounded them. There was, in effect, very little information about Jewish life in that period up to the 18th century.

In the first decades of the 18th century, a desire for culture and education was grandually reawakened in the Judeo-Spanish speaking communities of the East. Judeo-Spanish literature was, in consequence, filled with new life, and many Judeo-Spanish works were published at Vienna, Belgrade, and especially at Constantinople, Salonica and Smyrna.

Some outstanding original works include: *Zirje Zibur*, a treatise on religious laws and decisions, published at Constantinople 1733; *Shuljan Amelej*, by Abraham ben Isaac Assa published at Constantinople in 1749. Isaac Nombrado translated the entire ritual code *Oraj Jayim* under the title of *Shuljan Hamelej, Mesa del Rey en ladino claro con su «Agaha»* published at Constantinople in 1774. «Shevet Musar» was translated about 1740, and a later translation was also published at Smyrna in 1860.

Especially influential upon the culture of the masses of Levantine and Balkan Sephardim have been the Ladino versions of Bahya Ibn Paquda's *Jovot Halevavot*, printed in square Hebrew letters in Venice, 1773, reedited, in the rabbinical alphabet, in Constantinople, ca. 1890²⁸.

The literary works of the Spanish Jews in the Orient should have a place in the Histories of Spanish literature. In practically all the large cities of the Balkan countries where they settled after the expulsion, whether in Salonica, Constantinople, Smyrne, Belgrade, Jerusalem or others, there grew up during the 16th through the 19th centuries, a multitude of writers of all kinds of genres. These writers used, with more or less purity, the same Spanish language, and were carried by the same tendencies and desires to propagate directly and indirectly, the language they had spoken and used in the mother country for many centuries.

Neither the type nor the length of this essay permits to make a longer survey and least of all a critical study of the Judeo-Spa-

²⁸ Cf. WILLIAM MILWITZKY, *op. cit.*, p. 651.

nish writers and the literature produced by the Sephardim in the Turkish Empire²⁹. There were, however, many writers no less notable for their merits that it would be well for Spanish literature to incorporate them. His was done with some of the Sephardic writers who flourished in Amsterdam, Holland, in the 17th and 18th centuries. While it is true that a large number of the works written in Judeo-Spanish relate to religious and/or liturgical themes, nevertheless, there were other branches of human activity which they touched and adorned. Among these productions, especially those written in the 16th and 18th, and even the 19th centuries, one may find some of more than ordinary literary merit³⁰. It may be that Judeo-Spanish literature does not have, in the opinion of some critics, its Abramovitsch or its Peretz. From the historical and cultural point of view, however, there is material enough to permit of constructive and instructive comparisons between the two great types of Jewish «jargons»³¹.

The literary productions of the 18th century comprise: 1. Original works in Judeo-Spanish; 2. Translations of Hebrew works which appeared previously, and 3. A large number of Hebrew books having to do with rabbinical decisions.

The capital work of the 18th century, the work considered by the Jews of the Orient —up to 85 years ago— with as much respect as the Bible, is the *Meam Lo'ez*. This book appeared in Constantinople in 1730, and was reedited at Salonica in 1798. The author was Jacob Hulli. Upon the death of Hulli, Isaac Magreso continued the *Commentary on Genesis* up to the end of the 4th book³².

²⁹ Those interested in a critical study of the literature produced in the Balkan countries will profit greatly by consulting the works of M. J. Benardete, Abraham Galante, Moïse Franco, José Nehama, Michael Molho, Saul Mezan, Isaac S. Emanuel and others.

³⁰ ABRAHAM YAARI: *Catalogue of Judeo-Spanish books in the National Library of Jerusalem*. Jerusalem, 1934 states that there are many Sephardic authors mentioned in his Catalogue, who have written dozens of works (Introduction, p. VI), whose names are not found in the reference books that we use daily.

³¹ Cf. JULIEN WEIL. Review of M. Pinès: *Histoire de la littérature Judéo-allemande*. Paris, 1911. In: *Revue des Etudes Juives*, 1912, LXIV, no. 127, p. 159.

³² Cf. MOÏSE FRANCO, op. cit., p. 122; M. J. BENARDETE, *Hispanic Culture and Civilization of the Spanish Jews*. New York, 1953, p. 115; MICHAEL MOLHO, *Le Meam Loez*, *Encyclopedie Populaire des Juifs Sephardis*. Salonica, 1945, p. 18; KAYSERLING,

The Meam Loez is a sort of Folkloric work in Judeo-Spanish and consists of thirteen volumes, written, consecutively, by nine different writers. It contains, in the form of commentary on the Bible, legends, maxims, rules of conduct, and many other bits of information. It was the most popular book of the Sephardic masses in Turkey from 1730 up to the most recent period and was the one work that has contributed more to form the soul of the Sephardic Jews³³.

The Meam Loez is varied, rich, profound in its contents. It deals with institutions of Judamis, of its ceremonies, its rites, its ethics, its philosophy, its prophylactic rules, its history, its comment upon the prescriptions of the Law, clarifies them by surrounding them with a profusion of details borrowed from all the commentators... It is a friend that leads by the hand, teaches you, amuses you, invites you to laugh and at times excites you emotionally and makes you cry. It enthralis and holds the attention of the least curious among its readers or listeners³⁴.

The title of this book (Meam Loez) is taken from the Psalms (114, 2), in which the Psalmist says that the House of Jacob when liberated from Egypt, came out from o «barbaric people» (Meam Loez), the term «barbaric» in this instance having the same meaning as that which was used among the Greeks, that is to say, from a people which speaks an unintelligible language, and not Hebrew.

There does not exist a similar work in Jewish literature, either in Hebrew or in any other language. One could very well qualify it as being a Sephardic Encyclopedia or even a Popular Encyclopedia³⁵. The style is clear, simple, fluid, and contains a very rich vocabulary.

Biblioteca, p. 66; *Enciclopedia Judaica Castellana*. Mexico, D.F., 1950, VII, pp. 347-348; Article: Meam Loez: Lazarus Grunhut and M. Kayserling. In: *Jewish Encyclopedia*. New York, 1925, IV, p. 382. Article on *Jacob Culi*.

³³ Cf. *Enciclopedia judaica Castellana*, 1950, VII, 347-348; M. J. BENARDETE, op. cit., p. 115; MOLHO, *Meam Loez*, p. 18.

³⁴ Cf. MICHAEL MOLHO: *Le Meam Loez*... The above paragraph quoted, in English translation, by M. J. BENARDETE, op. cit., p. 115.

³⁵ Cf. the title given to his study by Michael Molho... *Le Meam Loez Encyclopedie Populaire*... Mr. Molho has made a thorough study of the Meam Loez in this book. It contains very precious material for those who may be interested in its further study. He is the first writer to have treated this subject in a modern language. Cf. also,

The material for this very elaborate encyclopedic commentary in Ladino, dealing, as we said before, with Jewish life in all its aspects, was taken from the rich treasures of the Bible, the Talmud, the Midrash, the Zohar, and the principal works of rabbinical literature of all branches³⁶.

The first five parts of this book were published in Constantinople in 1733, partly at the expense of Judah Mizrahi. The first part appeared in a second edition at Salonica, in 1798, and a third edition at Smyrna in 1870. The other parts were reedited and published in Smyrna in 1871-73. A portion of the first part was issued under the title «Hakedat Itzjak» (The Sacrifice of Isaac), and was published at Smyrna in 1864.

The first four volumes of the Meam Loez have been translated into the Arabic language by Abraham Lejarhi (Argel, 1911-1914³⁷), and there is also a commentary on Job in Ladino (a translation) made by Abraham Hacohe Benardout, published at Salonica, in 1899³⁸.

The number of editions which were made of the Meam Loez is an eloquent proof of the great popularity of this work.

The dates and places of publication of the Meam Loez, says Prof. Benardete (op. cit., p. 116), show how the printing press unified the Sephardic world. Besides there being Sephardic Jews in Leghorn, in Smyrna, Jerusalem, Salonica and Constantinople, where the Meam Loez was printed, we infer from these figures the popularity of the work which served to maintain the Spanish language notwithstanding all the factors that worked against its preservation.

In addition to the above mentioned works on the Meam Loez, and others, there appeared in 1732, at Constantinople, the *Coplas de Joseph* by Abraham de Toledo. One of the earliest poetic works, these are couplets where the author celebrates the story of Joseph, son of Jacob.

M. J. BENARDETE, op. cit., p. 14; *Enciclopedia Judaica Castellana*. Mexico D. F., 1950, VII, p. 348.

³⁶ Cf. LAZARUS GRUNHUT and M. KAYSERLING. In: *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1925, IV, 382: Article on *Jacob Culi*; M. MOLHO: *Meam Loez*, p. 16 et seq.

³⁷ Cf. *Enciclopedia Judaica Castellana*. 1950, VII, 348.

³⁸ The comentary on Job, in Ladino, by Abraham Benardout is found in the collection of Ladino books in the Library of Congress.

The *Meshivai Nefesh* or commentary on the *Azaroth* of the Spanish Jewish poet Salomon Ibn Gabirol, was the work of Sabbetai de Jacob Vitas. This commentary appeared in Constantinople in 1743 or 1744.

Moise Franco lists n less than 175 works in Hebrew, mostly Talmudic works which were written during the period 1704-1800. These were published and printed at Salonica, Smyrna, Constantinople, Livorno, Venice, Amsterdam, etc. No less than 178 authors are represented and some anonymous writers as well. Mr. Franco summarizes this period as follows: «The eighteenth century was the most fertile in Talmudic works; we cannot but affirm the fact that the quality was just as good as the quantity»³⁹.

Judeo-Spanish literature has undergone a notable change in the 19th century. For a long time, in the past, the Rabbis seemed to have had a monopoly, as it were, of the literary productions both in Judeo-Spanish and in the Hebrew language⁴⁰. As in the preceding three centuries, the Sephardim of the Orient had produced in the 19th century, a vast rabbinical literature. But the non religious writers, the lay writers, began to take over and take away what used to be the prerogatives of the rabbis. There are many treatises on Education which appeared during this period and we see also the birth of the periodical press. These new writers in their own way wanted, to moralize and to educate the public. And so, except for some 30 books of ethics and about 10 books of miraculous tales, written by the Rabbis themselves, there were about 40 novels translated from the French, from the Hebrew and even from the Greek⁴¹. There appeared also, at this time, a certain number of historical works related to Turkey, some biographies of famous people⁴², collections of songs and ballads, some plays, travel stories or chronicles, organic or statutory rules of the organizations and communities, many school texts for the teaching of Hebrew and Arithmetic, some scientific works

³⁹ Cf. MOISE FRANCO: *op. cit.*, p. 124. «Le dix-huitième siècle fut le plus fécond en œuvres talmudiques: nous ne saurions affirmer que la qualité vaille la quantité».

⁴⁰ M. FRANCO: *Essai*, p. 269.

⁴¹ CYNTHIA CREWS: *op. cit.*, p. 25.

⁴² Biographies in Judeo-Spanish appeared about the philanthropists Moses Montefiore, Adolpho Cremieux, President of the Alliance Israelite Universelle, Albert Cohen, and others.

such as a treaty on Zoology, one on medicine, one on Astronomy, one or two works on philosophy, a treatise on Turkish (Ottoman) law, and finally an epic poem⁴³.

It would be superfluous to add here that the study of the French language had played a large part in the genesis of this literature. However, that may be very much as in the olden days, the writing profession did not seem to have been accepted as well among the Jews of Turkey⁴⁴.

With the possible exception of the Editors of Judeo-Spanish periodicals, the remainder of the authors seemed to have been, for the most part, young people who were engaged in some commercial pursuit and employed their free time to the composition or the translation of some book.

The various literary genres developed by the Spanish Jews of the Balkan States deserve a separate study. As indicated before, the number of writers were many and some of them were notable for their merits. Spanish literature has much to study in the productions of these men —prose writers, poets, dramatists, historians, etc.— because all of their productions are written in the language of Cervantes and Calderon.

Novels. Among the prose writers, those who distinguished themselves either as original writers or translators of prose, playwrights, poets, as newspaper editors, etc., were: Gabai, Carmona, Ben Quiat, David Fresco, Isaac Yaacob Estrumsa, Balansi, Galante, Behar, Eliau Arditi, Jacques Loria, Shelomo Israel She-rezli, Ben Sion Taragan, and others. We find in this literature an abundance of writers who have cultivated the novel and short stories⁴⁵.

There are also translations from the French, English, Hebrew and Russian, from the works of Theodor Herzl, Shakespeare, Eugène Sue, Ponson de Tirail, Alexandre Dumas, Emile Zola, Racine, Molière, Xavier de Montepin, and others.

⁴³ Cf. M. FRANCO: *Essai*, p. 270.

⁴⁴ Cf. M. FRANCO: *Essai*, p. 270.

⁴⁵ The Library of Congress collection of Judeo-Spanish books has approximately 120 novels (Historical and general) which were published in Ladino in Constantinople, Salonica, Smyrna and Jerusalem.

Poetry.—Poetry, both ancient and modern, including Hebrew translation of poets such as Gabirol, Yehuda Halevi, etc., is also represented in this group of writers. Shemuel Mitrani, for example, composed some verses on the occasion of the Turkish Independence in 1908; Haim Janania also composed verses on the occasion of the Turkish Independence and the fall of Abdul Hamid; Elia R. Carmna, a prolific prose writer, translator and newspaper editor, wrote «verses dedicated to the Chief Rabbi Haim Nahum at Constantinople», and Yosef Isaac Erera composed religious poems on the occasion of Purim and Shevuot, as did Saadi Halevi who was the author of the famous *Complas de Purim*, etc.

Shabetai Djaen, from whose work I have quoted before, recalls a number of other poets who are worthy of mention. Rabbi Baruj Mitrani, (Andrianople); David Florentin (Salonica); Abraham Capon (Sarayevo); M. Papo (Rustchuk); A. Navon (Estambul); Josef Marco Baruj, Moshe David Gaon (Jerusalem); Zeky Efendi Attias (Sarayevo); Laura Papoe (Sarayevo), and many other who have composed beautiful poems, epigrams and maxims. Many of these poems were published and many others are still extant in manuscript form⁴⁶.

Drama. — Judeo-Spanish literature includes a considerable number of playwrights. The theatre is represented by works written either independently, or translated from the French, Hebrew and other languages. Professor Abraham Galante, Dean of the Historians of the Sephardim of Turkey, newspaper editor, and Corresponding member of the Royal Academy of History of Madrid, is the author of a play «Rinio o el amor salvaze»; Jakim Behar wrote an original play in verse *La familia misterioza*; Molière, Racine, and other French authors had some of their plays translated into Judeo-Spanish. Ben Ezra, for example, translated from the French *El correo de Lyon*; *Le malade imaginaire* of Molière was translated by Benataf; *Israel*, by Henri Bernstein also was translated, and Moshe Catalan translated the *Comedy of Errors* (Los Buchuques) from the English of William Shakespeare.

In the last quarter of the 19th century, novels, short stories

⁴⁶ Cf. SHABATEL DJAEN: *Sobre algunos escritores en Ladino*. In: *Judorca*. Buenos Aires. 1939, nos. 73-75, p. 41.

and plays (Racine's *Esther*, Molière's *l'Avare*) were translated from the French and Hebrew or were worked over independently. In 1936, the Sephardic Studies Group of the Hispanic Institute of Columbia University, in New York, translated Racine's *Athalie* into Judeo-Spanish. This play was represented at the MacMillin Theatre of Columbia University in 1936.

The actors were all Sephardic speaking men and women and the language used throughout the play, of course, was *Ladino* or Judeo-Spanish⁴⁷.

Other writers of plays in Judeo-Spanish are: Jacques Loria, who wrote «El capitan Dreyfus»; Bahor Azaria, author of «Abraham»; Oraham Cappon, poet and newspaper editor, is the author of «Los Angustiadores»; and Rabbi Shabetai Djaen, a prolific writer of comedies in Ladino who was fortunate enough to see his plays represented among Sephardic groups in Bosnia (Yugoslavia), in Egypt, in Bulgaria, in Greece and in New York (U. S. A.). His plays were also represented in the National Theatre of Serbia, today Yugoslavia.

There are many others whose names have not come to my attention, but the works of those mentioned in this brief review are found in the collections of the Library of Congress and other Institutions⁴⁸.

In addition to the Bible translations, some religious works such as the *Pirke Avot* (The sayings of the Fathers), which also served for liturgical purposes, were often translated and together with the Hebrew text, were printed at Livorno in 1856, and republished at Salonica in 1887, and at Vienna, in 1897. The popular *Kav-Ha-Yashar* (*Castiguerio hermoso con mucho consuelo*),

⁴⁷ The *Section of Sephardic Studies* of the Instituto de las Españas (Columbia University), has as its aim the Study of Spanish-Jewish culture. Research projects are carried out in the history, literature and folklore of this culture, and the results therefrom are published. The rich field of Judeo-Spanish culture is being studied both from a historical standpoint and also as it is preserved today in the traditions of the Sephardic people. I have in my possession the manuscript copy of this Ladino translation.

⁴⁸ ABRAHAM YAARI in his *Catalogue* (*op. cit.*, *introduction*, p. VI), says that there are many men who have written dozens of books, yet they have not been fortunate in being mentioned in any of the books we use as references. See also: HENRY V. BESSO: *Judeo-Spanish Books in the Library of Congress*. Washington, D.C., The Library of Congress (In Press).

was translated in Ladino, and appeared at Constantinople in 1857⁴⁹.

An examination of the list of works written in Judeo-Spanish reveals that there exists an immense didactic literature which has been utilized in the schools. Such books as: *Prinsipios de Religion*; *Gramatica Hebraea*⁵⁰; *Shoel y Meskiu*; *Rav Pealim*; *Libro de Historia*, have been very popular. In the past century, Dr. Simon Bernfeld, a teacher of Hebrew, published a *History of the Jews*, in Ladino; and Rabbi Yaacob Hay Altaras (Bajore), published three volumes under the title of «Tezoro de Israel»⁵¹.

Folklore.—Judeo-Spanish literature, oral and traditional, has a great treasure of proverbs, many of them in old Spanish refraneros, or as quotations in some ante-expulsion Spanish text. The Library of Congress possess a book by Salomon Israel Sherezli listing a good number of these Judeo-Spanish proverbs in alphabetical order. There are other proverbs scattered in various books. There have been many of these Judeo-Spanish proverbs collected and transcribed into Spanish in various professional journals and books⁵².

Along with the proverb literature, Judeo-Spanish is comparatively rich in songs —«coplas», «cantares», «roscas»—, for Purim, with carnival games composed for the occasion. The first «Coplas de Purim» appeared about 1700. A «Compendio de Alegria» appeared at Leghorn in 1782; another at the same place in 1792, and 1875. «Roscas de Purim» was published at Vienna in 1866; and «Coplas Nuevas» at Salonica, in 1868. Many other religious and secular poems in Ladino are still extant in manuscript form.

The Sephardic prayers and songs of the 15th of Shevat (Tubshvat) under the title of «Peri Etz Hadar» (Fruit of the Tree Ha-

⁴⁹ Cf. WILLIAM MILWITZKY: op. cit., p. 651.

⁵⁰ The first Hebrew grammar in Ladino published at Vienna in 1823, it was followed by several other editions. Smyrna, 1852; Bucarest, 1860. Cf. M. KAYSERLING: *JE*, 1925, VII, p. 326.

⁵¹ SHABETAI DJAEN: op. cit., p. 42.

⁵² Those interested in this aspect of Sephardic folklore will find it profitable to consult HENRY V. BESSO: *Sephardic Proverbs, a Bibliography*. In: *Le Judaïsme Sepharai*, London, Avril 1959, nouvelle serie, no. 18, pp. 822-827.

dar), was published at Venice in 1776, Belgrade, 1865, and many other places. Abraham Yona and others have published chap books full of these melodious and traditional Sephardic ballads which are invaluable for the study of the Spanish Romancero today.

More astonishing is the remembrance of the songs of olden Spain. The late Dr. William Milwitzky tells how the women in Salonica, weaving or cooking, may chant the epic of the unhappy but brazen Juan Lorenzo D'Acuna, whose unfaithful wife married Ferdinand I of Portugal (1338), and who flaunted two golden horns in his cap⁵³.

More than two hundred of these epic cantigas are household songs among the Hispanic Jews. To these have been added songs of their own composition, of various literary quality; riddles, engagement, marriage, and childbirth songs; funeral plaints (*endechas*); religious festival songs; for Purim, for the Feast of the Torah (*Shevuot*); songs with Biblical content, the fall of Adam, the sacrifice of Isaac, of Abraham, the triumph of Joseph, the mission of Moses, etc. Practically all of these are represented in some of the chap books found in the various collections.

For the literary history of Spain, however, the romances or ballads of the Spanish Jews are of great importance. A good number of these romances conserve today the spirit and the form of this genre of ancient peninsular poetry⁵⁴.

«Anyone who has studied Spanish balladry intensely and understands the transcendental importance of its artistic values and the Spanish spirit that it conveys», says the late Prof. Aurelio M. Espinsa, «can realize why it has remained in Spanish literature and art, and in Spanish tradition generally, as the folk manifestation par excellence of Spain's artistic spirit. *And this manifestation has persisted across the ages wherever Spanish is spoken*»⁵⁵.

⁵³ Cf. WILLIAM MILWITZKY: op. cit., p. 650-653.

⁵⁴ On this very interesting subject see: RAMÓN MENÉNDEZ PIDAL: *L'Épopée castillane à travers la littérature espagnole*. Paris, 1910, p. 194, *traducción francesa* de Henri Merimée. There has been a tremendous stimulus in the revival of the Romancero Sefardi in the past few years. In this connection, I am preparing a Bibliography of the *Romancero Judeo-Español*, which I hope will be published very shortly.

⁵⁵ Cf. AURELIO M. ESPINOSA: *Traditional Spanish Ballads in New Mexico*, in: *Hispania*, 1932, XV, no. 2, p. 90.

There are also prose stories of *consezas* which are transmitted orally. Most of these numerous *consezas* are greatly relished. They are, however, for the most part, the common stock of all Levantine folk groups, with only occasional adaptation to Jewish life and doings⁵⁶. Thus, the Turkish priest, or *Jodja*, butt and hero interchangeably of many Turkish tales sad or salty, becomes *DJoja* in the Judeo-Spanish versions⁵⁷.

The study of history being so interrelated with literature, it will not be amiss to say a few words about the attitude which the Spanish Jews in the Balkan countries had with reference to this branch of learning. A taste for history was awakened with the presentation of books on Universal history, as well as Turkish, French, and Jewish history. A short *History of the Ottoman Empire*, for example, was issued for the instruction of the people and was published at Salonica, in 1860, and at Constantinople in 1873. A *History of Alexander the Great* was translated from the Hebrew in 1857, one on *Napoleon III*, from the French was published at Belgrade in 1860, and the *Historia Universal* was translated from the English by Judah Nehama, and published at Salonique, in 5621/1861⁵⁸.

Before concluding the discussion on the literary situation among the Hispano-Levantine Jews in the 19th century, therefore (just before and after the desintegration of the Ottoman Empire), let us pass in review the renewed activities of the Judeo-Spanish presses in the production of books and particularly the newspapers.

The Spanish Jews were the first to introduce the printing business in Turkey for the first time shortly after the discovery by

⁵⁶ Cf. WILLIAM MILWITZKY: op. cit., p. 653; Most of the specialists in Judeo-Spanish philology —men like Wagner, Luria, Crews Baruch, Levy, and others— (Cf. HENRY V. BESSO: *Bibliografía sobre el Judeo-español*) have used these folk tales, or *consezas*, in order to analyze the morphology, phonology, vocabulary and syntax of the dialects of Judeo-Spanish. See also CYNTHIA CREWS: *Judeo-Spanish Folk-Tales in Macedonia*. In: *Folklore*, June 1932, pp. 193-225.

⁵⁷ Nasreddin Hodja or *Djoja*, is the name of a religious Turkish citizen, well known for his good humor and his opinions full of good sense. He is a real philosopher, who understood life very well. Cf. ABRAHAM GALANTE: *Le Juif dans le conte, le proverbe et la chanson orientaux, Istanbul*, 1937. p. 37, note 2.

⁵⁸ Cf. KAYSERLING: *Bibliotheca*, p. 76; idem: *JE*, 1925. VII. p. 326.

Cuttenberg⁵⁹. However, the oldest text which was found in the Libraries of the Orient dates back from 1506. This book, *Zevaj Pesaj*, by Isaac Abravanel, appeared at Constantinople under the reign of Sultan Selim I.

Referring to the introduction of newspapers in the Orient, the honor of having founded the first Judeo-Spanish newspaper in Turkey, belongs without a doubt to the Sephardic community of Smyrna. Better still it belongs to one of its members, Mr. Raphael Uziel Pincherle. The *Shaare Mizraj* or *Puerta del Oriente* (The door of the East), was the name of this newspaper which was founded in the year 1846.

All the Judeo-Spanish newspapers in the Orient were printed in rabbinical characters; only the Hebrew newspapers appeared in square Hebrew characters.

The Sephardic Jews of Rumania had published the only Judeo-Spanish newspaper printed in Latin characters⁶⁰. During the 2 years of its existence, it was redacted or edited by a Sephardic Rabbi of Eski-Zagara (Roumelie-Orientale), who took refuge in Rumania after the Turko-Russian war of 1878.

Honorable mention necessarily must be awarded to the *Luzero de la Paciencia*, the only Judeo-Spanish newspaper redacted in Latin characters, as was stated before. Many important writers from Spain wrote to the Editor, Mr. Elia Crespín, to congratulate him on his undertaking and a good many of them contributed articles on more than one occasion⁶¹.

It should be noted that no less than 30 newspapers appeared on Turkish soil in less than 50 years. Twenty two of these newspapers were edited and printed by the Sephardic Jews of the Orient. However, a good number of these newspapers did not have a long life; most of them were of an ephemeral nature. Accordingly, not all of them could have had the same influence on the readers, or the public in general⁶².

⁵⁹ Cf. M. FRANCO: *Essai*, p. 277.

⁶⁰ The title of this newspaper was *El luzero de la Paciencia* (Le luminaire de la Patience), Turnu-Severin (Rumania). Editor, ELIS M. CRESPIÑ: *Journal Judeo-espagnol paru en 1886*. Cf. M. FRANCO: *Essai*, p. 279.

⁶¹ Cf. M. FRANCO: *Essai*, p. 282.

⁶² M. FRANCO: *Essai*, pp. 278-280 lists some 35 newspapers printed in Judeo-Spanish in the Orient by the end of the 19th century.

The Sephardic press written in Judeo-Spanish, transcribed in Rashi type was very numerous in previous years and periodicals were published in Smyrna, Constantinople, Salonica, Belgrade, Paris, Turnu-Severin, Vienna and other cities. Such important periodicals as *El Avenir*, *El telegrafo*, *El tiempo*, *Le Epoca*, *La America*, *La Vara*, *El Luzero*, etc., can be examined in the Libraries of Congress, The New York Public Library, the Library of The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, and other places. The painstaking investigator will obtain a rich field of information both in science and politics not easily procurable from other sources. Besides a number of magazines, there are also a number of weeklies and monthlies, as well as interesting almanacs published at Salonica, Constantinople, New York and other cities, which are now out of print⁶³.

Among the more important periodicals in Judeo-Spanish dailies, Zeeklies and monthly magazines, we should mention: *El Meseret* of Smyrna, *El progreso*, of Vienna, *El Telegrafo* and *El Tiempo*, of Istanbul, *La Epoca*, *El Avenir*, of Salonica, *La Alvorada*, of Ploesti, Rumania, *La Verdad*, of Sofia, *La Luz*, of Sofia, *El Sol*, Bucarest, etc.

Among the magazines, one must mention: *La Guerra de Historia*, of Vienna, which was a very popular and well read magazine. It contained novels, poetry, proverbs, miscellanea of literature, translations and original writings of various authors who published their articles under their names or used pseudonyms. *El Macabeo*, of Salonica, contained many important articles, both in Judeo-Spanish, in French and in Greek, from the pen of outstanding men of letters and professors⁶⁴.

⁶³ The historian of Sephardic immigration and the Ladino press and literature all over the world will find in the columns of these Ladino newspapers, an invaluable mine of material.

⁶⁴ Pending the publication of my *Bibliography of Judeo-Spanish Press in the world*, I am giving below a few sources which contain information about Judeo-Spanish periodicals published in various parts of the world:

a) JOSEPH CAPODYA. *The Jewish Digest*, New York, November 1940, I., no. 2, 87-88.

b) *Enciclopedia Judaca Castellana*. México, D.F., 1949, VI, 491-503. Subtitle: *Prensa*, pp. 498-501. Lists approximately 205 periodicals published in Turkey, Greece, Serbia, Austria, Bulgaria, Rumania, Egypt, Palestine-Israel and the United States of America. This list is reproduced from a pamphlet on the Judeo-Spanish press (Jerusa-

The Jewish press of Salonica was exceedingly well developed up to a few years ago. In this Jewish community of 60,000 souls, there were no less than 14 periodicals, among them seven daily paper, almost all with between 1,000 and 2,000 readers, chiefly in Salonica. Of the daily papers, three were published in French, and four in Ladino or Spaniolit⁶⁵. The French papers were the only dailies published in Salonica in a Western European language, and were read by all foreigners in Salonica who did not read Greek.

Prof. Benardete, whose penetrating study of the conditions of Sephardic Jews in the 19th century, and from whose work I have quoted before, has this to say about the newspapers and magazines the Sephardim were asked to read. He says: «More graphic than anything else is the idea of a polyglotic chaos we obtain through a classification of the newspapers and magazines the Sephardim were asked to read»⁶⁶.

Unfortunately, the Judeo-Spanish press which, as indicated before, had been very numerous in previous years, is experiencing today a certain decadence. Of the long list of these periodicals

lem), originally published in Hebrew, by the late Moshe D. Gaon, Sephardic writer who lived in Jerusalem.

c) MOISE FRANCO: *Essai sur l'histoire des Israélites dans l'Empire Ottoman*. Paris, Durlacher, 1897. On pages 277-283, Mr. Franco lists some 35 newspapers published in Ladino.

d) ABRAHAM GALANTE: *La presse judéo-espagnole mondiale*. In: *Hamenorah*, Constantinople, Juillet-Aout-Septembre, 1935, XIII, nos. 8, 9, 10, pp. 186-199. Prof. Galante lists the newspapers by country of publication.

e) MEYER KAYSERLING: *Bibliotheca - española - portuguesa - judaica*. Dictionnaire... Strasbourg, Trubner, 1890. On pp. 112-113, Kayserling lists 29 Judeo-Spanish periodicals.

f) JUAN PÉREZ DE GUZMÁN: Los Israelitas de origen español en el Oriente de Europa. La conservación de la lengua castellana entre ellos y su inclinación hacia España. In: *La España Moderna*. Madrid, Julio de 1904, Año. 16, no. 187, 21-22. (Mentions the names of a few newspapers in Hebrew published in Jerusalem and Odessa, and a few of the Judeo-Spanish dailies and/or weeklies published at Constantinople, Salonica, Smyrna, Sofia, etc.).

g) ABRAHAM YAARI: *Catalogue of Judaeo-Spanish books in the National Library of Jerusalem*. Jerusalem, 1924. (On pp. 94-101, nos. 705-789, Dr. Yaari, lists 84 Judeo-Spanish periodicals).

⁶⁵ Cf. HANS KOHN: *Letters from Abröad. New Regime in Greece, Saloniki*. In: *The Memorah Journal*. New York, 1929, XVI, no. 5, p. 445.

⁶⁶ Cf. M. J. BENARDETE: *op. cit.*, p. 129.

and reviews mentioned in various sources (see Note *supra*), which appeared throughout the world and in Palestina before the establishment of the State of Israel, hardly five or six these periodicals are published today. The two weekly newspapers — *La Verdad* and *El Tiempo*, published in Tel-Aviv, Israel, are printed in Latin characters. The weekly newspaper *La Vara* of New York, which had a very long life and was the last of the Judeo-Spanish periodicals in the world printed in Hebrew characters, ceased to exist in 1948 because of economic reasons. And the monthly *La Boz de Turquye*, which continued to be published in *Judeo-Spanish and Turkish*, up to 1948, was printed in Latin characters.

The tradition to print Judeo-Spanish newspapers in Hebrew characters seemed to have been broken in the past fifteen or twenty years. The few newspapers as are published today, in Tel-Aviv, are printed in *Latin characters* with a phonetic orthography which seems to have been carried to an extreme. It, of course, reflects very faithfully the pronunciation of Spanish as spoken by the Sephardim in Israel⁶⁷.

⁶⁷ On the subject of the purification of Judeo-Spanish and the controversy that was carried on in the Sephardic press between Dr. Angel Pulido y Fernández, on one hand, and the Sephardic intellectuals at the beginning of the century, on the other, see: ANGEL PULIDO Y FERNÁNDEZ: *Españoles sin Patria y la Raza Separdi. Intereses nacionales*. Madrid, 1905, Chapters 5 & 6.

Following the thought of PRUDENCIO MUDARRA in his *Historia de la literatura española* (Tomo II, p. 15), that *el castellano es hijo del hebreo* (the castilian is the son of Hebrew), the distinguished Dean of Sephardic Press, Mr. Sam Levy, native of Salonica and now a resident of Paris, France, is the only one of the old friends and correspondents of Pulido, who still carries on a controversy in the Jewish press in favor of the preservation of the Ladino language. Cf. SAM LEVY, various articles on the *Ladino language* published in *Les Cahiers Seardis*, mentioned in my *Bibliografía sobre el Judeo-español*, published in *Bulletin Hispanique*, 1952, LIV, nos. 3-4, pp. 412-422.

Another staunch supporter of the purification of Judeo-Spanish and a firm believer that Ladino is not as corrupt a language as it is made to believe, is Sr. don JOSE M. ESTRUGO, author of *Los Sefardies*, Habana, 1958. Mr. Estrugo has advocated the use of Ladino and the purification of the Ladino language by the use of the Spanish words which, he claims, and rightly so, are just as correct in Judeo-Spanish as those used some 40 or 50 years ago by the Sephardim, as are being used today in Spain and Hispano-American countries.

M. Jose Nehama, the historian par excellence of the Sephardim of Salonica, is also an advocate of the purification of the Judeo-Spanish idiom and believes it can be

A characteristic phase of the activity of the Judeo-Spanish printing presses — Sherezli (Jerusalem); *El Meseret* (Smyrna), Carmona y Zara (Egypt), Abraham Galante (Cairo), Arditi y Cohen (Constantinople), Saadi Halevi (Salonica)— was the publication of translations of world classics and books from foreign languages into Judeo-Spanish. Of special significance are those books translated from the French, Italian, Russian, Hebrew, Turkish, Greek, etc.

The translation of these books, whether from the domain of science, belles-lettres, or fiction, are in no less degree of value from the linguistic point of view. They illustrate the development of the ancient tongue in its creation and incorporation of new terms, and prove to be of interest to students of Spanish language and philology⁶⁸.

Another interesting aspect of these printing presses was the work of the Protestant missionaries. For purpose of propaganda, the Protestant missionaries, (The Scotch Missionary Society of Constantinople), brought translations of the Holy Scriptures in Judeo-Spanish. Scores of people benefited very much from these cheap books, well printed, in a language that was their own. In this respect, the Protestant missionaries brought something unique for the Sephardim.

The Scotch Missionary Society, of Constantinople, had also

done very easily by the introduction of certain words from the Castilian Spanish alphabet without much difficulty. In a letter, dated May 27, 1959, to Sr. don Jose M. Estrugo, M. Jose Nehama makes his views known on this subject. The letter (or copy of it) which was sent to me by my good friend and coreligionist, Sr. Estrugo, is in Spanish and I have taken the liberty of translating the appropriate passage into English. This is what M. Nehama has to say on this question: «...A few pages, devoted to Judeo-Spanish, will be of interest to you. How right you are to rebel against the barbarisms and linguistic absurdities used by those who, at times, write in Judeo-Spanish! If a good and simple Latin transcription had been adopted from the beginning, giving to the letters of the (Judeo-Spanish) alphabet the value that they have in modern castilian, the totality of Oriental Judaism would have been invigorated; as such it would have fully penetrated the immense Spanish literature and would have been in close contact with the whole of Hispano-America. All of which would have opened an endless horizon to our coreligionists in the Orient».

⁶⁸ Prof. Benardete is of the opinion that most of these translations were usually very poor. Cf. M. J. BENARDETE: *op. cit.*, p. 129.

published in Ladino «El Manadero», a partly scientific review dealing with Jews and Judaism (Constantinople, 1855)⁶⁹.

Unfortunately, the Judeo-Spanish literature has seen its last days, especially since the extermination of the Sephardic population in the Balkan countries during the Second World War. The city of Smyrna, for example, no longer possesses any printing establishments equipped with Judeo-Spanish types either in Rashi or square characters. The very rare pamphlets that are being published at the moment, to quote Prof. Abraham Galante⁷⁰, are printed in Turkish characters, that is, in Latin characters. In Salonica, it is very doubtful indeed that there are now any printing establishments equipped with Judeo-Spanish or rashi types. The once glorious city of Salonica is no more and it is not believed that there could ever be a revival of Judeo-Spanish letters. The insignificant number of Sephardim living there at the present time (approximately 1200), are being completely assimilated.

Before concluding this essay, I should like to summarize the views expressed by a distinguished Spanish scholar regarding the importance of the literature written by the Sephardic Jews, especially the religious literature written in Judeo-Spanish (en lengua sefardi), as he states. This scholar is Professor David Gonzalo Maeso, of the University of Granada, Spain. In 1953, he published an important study on *La exégesis rabínica en lengua Sefardi. Fuentes para su estudio* (The rabbinic exegesis in the Sephardi language. Sources for its study)⁷¹.

In this essay, Prof. Gonzalo Maeso attempts to point out the importance which is embodied in the religious literature written in Judeo-Spanish (en lengua sefardi), and indicates the main sources for its investigation. This subject has been ignored both by the Rabbis and Jewish scholars, and Prof. Gonzalo Maeso maintains

⁶⁹ A copy of this interesting journal is found in the collection of Judeo-Spanish books of the Library of Congress. Cf. also M. J. BERNARDETE: op. cit., pp. 127-129 and p. 134, note 6.

⁷⁰ Cf. ABRAHAM GALANTE: *Histoire des Juifs d'Anatolie. Les Juifs d'Izmir (Smyrne). Ier volume.* Istanbul, 1937, p. 330.

⁷¹ Cf. DAVID GONZALO MAESO: *La exégesis rabínica en lengua sefardi. Fuentes para su estudio.* In: *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos.* (Anejo al «Boletín de la Universidad de Granada»). Granada, 1953, II, 15-40. Reviewed in *Sejarad.* Madrid-Barcelona, 1954, XIV, 190-191.

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NOTA DE LA DIRECCION

El silencio del articulista, nuestro querido amigo Henry V. Besso, tan documentado y minucioso en su información, acerca de la edición completa, transliterada y anotada, del *Me'am Lo'ez*, emprendida por los Profs. Gonzalo Maeso y Pascual Recuero y cuyo *Tomo Preliminar: Prelógómenos* apareció a fines de este año 1964 (Editorial Gredos, Madrid), obedece sencillamente al hecho de que el presente artículo obraba en la Dirección de esta *Miscelánea* con bastante anterioridad.

En este mismo número puede verse información sobre dicha publicación al final del artículo titulado: «*Ante una edición, transliterada, del Me'am Lo'ez...*» En dicho *Tomo preliminar* tiene el lector, naturalmente, toda la información deseable respecto a ese gran comentario bíblico sefardí, su composición, autores, contenido, vicisitudes, ediciones etc.