from

OTTOMAN TURKISH

to

LADINO

the case of

Mehmet Sadik Rifat Pasha's *Risâle-i Ahlâk*

and

Judge Yehezkel Gabbay's *Buen Dotrino*

Enlarged Original Texts

in

Ottoman Turkish and Rashi Scripts,

with face-to-face Transliterations, Glossaries and an Introduction

by

Dr. Isaac Jerusalem

LADINO BOOKS

2

Cincinnati, OHIO

1990
Bilgisayarın mühir bir yazarın kalemi gibidir.

Zabur 45:2
hânralarım ta'zizen

*Muazzez Hocam*
*Halit Bey*
*Sâdiye Hamm*
*Şeref Bey*

ve şimez
*Müstafa Kemâl Atatürk*
CONTENTS

English Section

Foreword i
Introduction 1

Mehmet Sâdîk Rifat Pasha (1807-1856) 3
Yehezkel Gabbay (1825-1898) 5
Ladino: the language 18
Abraham b. Isaac Asa 25
Ladino, our language 28
Grammatical Notes 38
Ladino-English Glossary of Select Lexical Items 47
Appendix: Sarrafbaşı Yehezkel Gabbay (d. 1826) 53
Bibliography 60

Turkish Section
(right to left)

Önsöz i
Türk Ansiklopedisinden v
Abdülkerim Paşanın babama verdiği hizmet vesikası vi
Çatalca Tren İstasyonu Âmirinin ölümü duyguları vili
Risâle-i Ahlâk: Ottoman Introduction and transcription 1
Ottoman Text of the Risâle and Transcription 2
Arabic-Persian words in the Ottoman Text of the Risâle-i Ahlâk 39

Ladino Section
(right to left)

Entroduksyon i
El Buen Dotrino: Ladino Introduction by Yaakov Avigdor 2
Ladino Text of the Buen Dotrino and Transcription 3
Ladino-English Glossary of Turkish & Hebrew words in Yehezkel Gabbay's Ladino Translations 29

** The Turkish and Ladino transcribed texts have been printed on opposite sides to facilitate the comparative reading of these texts.
Calligraphic Quotations in the Turkish Section

The degree of perfection attained by Ottoman Turkish calligraphers in the graceful arrangement of writing (*istik*) remains unsurpassed in the entire Muslim world. A few specimens of this art form have been included in this book for visual enjoyment, but also for the appreciation of the messages they convey.

Before  

\[ yā hayy, yā kāyūm! \] O Living One, O Existing One, *i.e.*

p.i  

\[ yā kāyyūm! \] O Living Existence!

These are two of God’s ninety-nine beautiful names. Their Hebrew counterpart is יְהֹוָה יָד, *Living Existence.*

p.iv  

*er-rahmān*, the Merciful.

Another one of God’s ninety-nine beautiful names. The Hebrew counterpart of this word is יְהֹוָה יָד, the Merciful.

p. 9  

\[ el-djevher ʃīn-nās, lā fil hadjer \] People are the real jewels, not stones.

\[ vel-ginā fil kanājati, lā fil māl \] Wealth is in contentment, not in possessions.

p.9  

*tefekkūrū sa’ātin hayrūn min ibāsītī senetin.*

(bottom)  

An hour’s reflection is better than a year’s worship.

p. 38  

*inne Allāhe djemīlīn yūhibbū l-djemālī*  

(top)  

Verily, God is beautiful, loving beauty, *i.e.* God is beauty enamored with beauty.

p.38  

\[ yā gālib gayrī maqūlūb, yā gafūr er-rahīm \]  

(bottom)  

O unconquered Victor; O merciful Forgiver.

p. 48  

*el-hamdū lillāh*  

Praise to Allah.

Repeated four times in *makīlī* style.

In decorative style, tulips and carnations are favored flowers.

The Star of David, known as *Māhrū Sūleyman*, occurs on coins, but also as an ornament engraved on copper objects.
FOREWORD

The aim of this special publication is to bring together a nineteenth century Ottoman-Turkish text with its free translation into Ladin. I am writing primarily for laymen, their enjoyment in celebrating the Fifth Centennial of the arrival and welcome of the Sepharadim to the Ottoman Empire in 1492. While nostalgia for matters passed is my starting point, my search is really for a sense of direction, as I express our collective gratitude for all the good that did take place on the blessed soil of our beloved Motherland. Surely, today's crimson dawn forecasts many more sunny centuries of hope and happiness for the bestowers of hospitality.

Casting Ottoman Turkish or Ladin words and concepts into Western molds is a gargantuan task. Admittedly, the transcriptions offered here are quite subjective. Had I not provided the original texts, these transcriptions might have to be more objective, i.e. more visually oriented. However, with the originals at hand, readers are free to choose their preferred alternatives.

In real life, transcriptions are meant primarily for the ears, not for the eyes! They are supposed to help people, who do not know a foreign language, write down a word, or a sentence, and, when the need arises, be able to say it as accurately as possible. If your name is Malcolm, and you are travelling through Greece, chances are it will be transcribed as Malikou, not as Malikou, simply because the second l is irrelevant to anyone interested in how your name is pronounced, not how it is actually spelled in English back home.

Syriac may be the only language where defunct letters can be given "equal time", so to speak. Thanks to its linea occultans or "hiding line" option, Syriac can even surpass English in having its cake and eating it, too, as illustrated by the English word half, which Syriac could masterfully render as ن ضد. How I wish that English had similar "hiding lines", one for know, one for psychology, one for subtle, and another one for Lincoln.

In transcribing Arabic ص or ط, we insist on that emphatic dot under the s or t, but we remain silent on the non-emphatic ض or ض, or the non-emphatic ت or ت, both of which bear no resemblance to English s or t! And yet, Arabic s or t are definitely "thinner" than English s or t, precisely because Arabic has to allow sufficient room for the viability of the corresponding emphatic phonemes, which do not occur in English. If we were stricter in our transcriptions, not one of our comparative charts would survive the "real test of the ear", certainly not the English l, nor the English r, etc.

If transcribing Arabic is tough, transcribing Ottoman-Turkish is a nightmare, often for the opposite reasons. In Ottoman-Turkish ص, ن, and ط are indistinguishable. Why
then insist on esoteric diacritical marks which do not reflect the reality of Turkish? Here, I had
to make some hard choices, especially in view of what has now become Modern Turkish
practice.

Mehmet Sadik Rifat Pasha was very well versed in Arabic and Persian. In his
formative years, he must have memorized hundreds of pages of classical texts written in those
two languages. Therefore, his pronunciation of Turkish may have somewhat tilted toward
Arabic or Persian models. As he wrote ُلاَن, did he say fulân or filân? Depending on
circumstances, he may have used either pronunciation. Did he take every shadda seriously?
He must have done so most of the time. I am also sure that he pronounced every long vowel
as a long one. Today, as Arabic words have been replaced by Modern Turkish equivalents, the
need for indicating long vowels has lost its urgency. But since we are dealing here with an
older text, it was important that my transcriptions reflect the pronunciation of this nineteenth
century homme de lettres, and the particular flavor of his words as they flowed from his pen.
Admittedly, by today's standards, some of my transcriptions are still quite heavy.

The Ladino text is intended for Sephardic readers of Turkish-Jewish ancestry around
the world who are increasingly frustrated by what their language has become through the use
of strange transcription systems, which have all but disfigured it. As much as possible, I have
tried to preserve the tradition of Turkish Jews, for whom the Buen Dótrino was initially
written. Currently, the simplest transcription system involves the following:

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
sh & \text{for} & \\dj & \text{''} & \\
ch & \text{''} & 2 \\
\end{array}
\]

On the other hand, my own Ladino Introduction, which was designed to illustrate the
specific spelling and writing habits of Jews in Turkey, is based exclusively on the excellent
resources of Modern Turkish. Hence, I have used:

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\xi & \text{for} & 3 \\
c & \text{''} & 2 \\
\zeta & \text{''} & 2 \\
\gamma & \text{''} & 2 \text{ [with rafé]} \\
\end{array}
\]

* * * *

I take this opportunity to express my profound gratitude as well as my warmest thanks
to Dr. Michael Grunberger, Head of the Hebraica Division at the Library of Congress in
Washington, D. C., for his interest and continued help in making these texts available to me.