The *mente* indicator

Nothing short of the word *massive* can adequately describe the extent of the Franco-Italian influence on Rabbi Israel's Ladino. Examples like:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{buto vizado} & \quad \text{but visé} \\
\text{me aranji} & \quad \text{je me suis arrangé} \\
\text{tirarmos de la letarjia} & \quad \text{nous tirer de la léthargie} \\
\text{ize apelo} & \quad \text{j'ai fait appel} \\
\text{efekto salutaryo} & \quad \text{effet saluaire}
\end{align*}
\]

can be multiplied *ad infinitum*. However, the real floodgates of this influence are wide open in the particular area of the *mente* type adverbs. And here is why. Authors who were not exposed to French or Italian culture and literature almost never use *mente* type adverbs, except maybe for an occasional *enteramente*. Instead their Ladino imitates Hebrew by using compounds of the preposition + noun type to express the adverbial idea. They will write:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{kon kayadez} & \quad \text{instead of} \quad \text{kayadamente} \\
\text{kon malisya} & \quad " \quad \text{malisyozamente} \\
\text{en falsia} & \quad " \quad \text{falsamente} \\
\text{en vanedad} & \quad " \quad \text{vanamente} \\
\text{en firmeza} & \quad " \quad \text{firmemente} \\
\text{en igualidad} & \quad " \quad \text{igualmente}.
\end{align*}
\]

In a typical nineteenth century Ladino book like *Pele Yo' es*, *-mente* type adverbs will occur once or twice every fifty pages. The more writers and speakers of Ladino entered into contact with Franco-Italian educational and business influences, the more they fell in love with *-mente* type adverbs. This sweeping increase in the use of *-mente* type adverbs is so characteristic with Western educated people that

---

8 Usually written in two words like their Latin antecedent *vera mente*. 

---
one is tempted to label it the -mente indicator! Open any Ladino publication of the last one hundred years. The number of -mente adverbs on any page is a safe indicator of the author's degree of Westernization and, at times, of his sophistication as well.9

Rabbi Israel is very comfortable10 with both adverbial options. As one who is steeped in traditional Ladino, he is at home with the prepositional construction

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
kon \ kerensya & \text{instead of} & kerensyozamente \\
kon \ abatisyon & " & abatidamente \\
kon \ dureza & " & duramente \\
en \ partikolar & " & partikolarmente.
\end{array}
\]

But he also welcomes and relishes the -mente forms, such as:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
puntualmente \\
deskaradamente \\
kayadamente \\
kerrensyozamente \\
kategorikamente \\
puvlikamente \\
profondamente, \text{ etc.}
\end{array}
\]

**Archaic Forms**

In addition to avant-garde forms borrowed from French and Italian, the goal of respectability discussed above can also be achieved by an occasional archaism. Rabbi Israel must have kept a few of these in his translations precisely for that purpose. At times he used the obsolete:

\[
\begin{array}{cc}
\text{fuistes} & \text{instead of} & \text{fuites} \\
\text{kriastes} & " & \text{kriates} \\
\text{dishistes} & " & \text{dishites}
\end{array}
\]

---

9 Rabbi Rosette Barron Haim has made the same observation in the introduction of her rabbinic thesis on the Ladino of Rabbi Haim Yishak Shaki's *Meam Lo'ez to Shir ha-Shirim*, (Cincinnati: HUC-JIR, 1988) pp. xxxvii-xxxix.

10 Unschooled people, who never understood the need for these strange -mente type adverbs, usually made fun of those who used them profusely by responding in exasperation with malicious, rhymed rejoinders.
fikasates
ordonastes
kometistes
aumentastes
" " " "

fikasates
ordonates
kometites
aumentates.

In a similar vein, he retains the verb aver as an archaic auxiliary form:

mis lagrimas ke an versado for mis lagrimas ke versaron
mis manos an echo " mis manos izyeron
no a desparesido " no desparesyo
te as olvidado " te olvidates.

On occasion, he is nostalgic
-for the anticipatory pronoun of the Hebrew Bound Construction
(משנה), even if, as in the particular case quoted below, the Hebrew original
lacks such an anticipatory pronoun! He renders:

cל מותר פו יד ה as todo se aze por su dicha de A'

as if the Hebrew were כל מותר פו על ה.

-for a particular Hebrew preposition he will prefer to keep:

envoka en nombre de tu Divinidad (p.23)
to dovetail with בּשָׁבוּךְ נְאֵא.

Revanyo, albrisyad, turban, kirmiz

The above four words have been selected to exemplify typical problems Rabbi
Israel had to cope with in his efforts to come up with a smooth translation.

is normally rendered with revanyo (p.55), flock. But by Rabbi Israel's
time revanyo had fallen into complete disuse, and in the non-agricultural
setting of the Sepharadim, there was no need or urgency to borrow
troupeau from French, or gregge from Italian. The Turkish sürü, too, was
inappropriate. So, he let old the revanyo stay, even if very few knew what the word meant.

could easily have been rendered with anunsyad, announce, or proklamad, proclaim. Somehow he retained the old abbrisyad (p.55) which again only very few understood, but which ironically is derived from Arabic البشارة, itself a cognate of Hebrew משא של via Aramaic. Hence רוש is, indeed, abbrisyad!

is the name of the headpiece worn by the Kohen Gadol. The traditional Ladino term for it is toka. By Rabbi Israel’s time, toka described what elderly women wore. Willy-nilly, he opted for turban (p.34) which comes from Turkish тилбент

is the crimson thread. And crimson itself is derived from Turkish kırmızı, which Rabbi Israel leaves untouched as kırmız.

Against this paucity of Hebrew or Turkish words in the body of the translations, the number of Hebrew words used in the vocabulary list (pp.60-62) to help those “who did not understand” Rabbi Israel’s Ladino comes close to forty. Did everyone know these rather heavy Hebrew words which were intended for help? Probably not. The following five Turkish words are used for the same purpose:

adjidea istindak
adat kyebarlik
daldeado

Translation Variations

As a translator, but also as an interpreter of religious poetry, Rabbi Israel is sensitive to the peculiarities of the two languages involved in his work. His renditions are imaginative and graceful, even if it is not always clear why he takes more freedoms than called for. A detailed account pitting each Ladino poem against its Hebrew original is beyond the scope of this introduction. Two examples should suffice to convey an idea of what is involved. Following the Hebrew, the top Ladino text is from the standard Vienna Mahzor attributed to Yosef Yishak Alsheykh, with underneath Rabbi Israel’s reworked version.
from Yede Rashim, p. 11

v.1 לְחָם מְלָכָה וְאֶפְלוֹסֶה נַחַר לֹא נַכְאָב לִאָל
Vienna Dyo somportan, i Kriador abrigan estones fuistes a eyos.
Rabbi Israel Dyo klemente i protektor fuistes un tyempo para Tu puevlo,

v.2 נְגַלְתָּה עֵפֶרֶתְם בְּעֵפֶרֶתְם כַּרְבּוֹנָה שָׁל
Sovre KERUVIM i estreyas alevantastes sus pendones
Sus drapeles de triomfo izites alsar asta el syelo,

v.3 יַעֲלֶה יְהוָה מִמֵּפָרָה יָשֶׁר יִשְׁמָר
I por Tu nombre de Tu altura mamparastes A’ sovre eyos.
De Tu trono lo protejavas kon Tu nombre eternelo,

v.4 נֶאָשֶׁר פֶּשֶׁת יָשָׁב בְּשָׁמְתֶּם יָשָׁבָה
I andjeles ordenados pozistes por ke yeven sus armas,

v.5 נָלְגָּה מַלְכֶם יִזְהָר בְּיָהֳ准则 בְּיָהֳ准则
Vee agora su dolor - komo se kevranto poder de su rey i fonsado,
Mira aora su situasyon redusida asta el suelo,

v.6 נֶאָשֶׁר בְּנָבָה אָלָם בְּיָדָם יָשָׁבָה
I estranyo los eredo, i los desterro, komo si no fueran ijos de Yisrael
Ajenos los prean i los eredan. No tyene ijos Yisrael?

v.1 klemente is definitely clearer than somportan.
v.2 For no apparent reason syelo replaces KERUVIM, Cherubs and stars.
   Elsewhere Rabbi Israel does not at all skirt angelological references.
   Drapel is much better than the old pendon, but bandyera would be better.
v.3 Tu trono combines Tu nombre and Tu altura, with some shift in theology.
v.4 is missing. It, too, deals with angelology.
v.5 With *redusida asta el suelo*, potential political implications of *su rey i fonsado* are muted.

v.6 Technically *eredo* for גָּדוֹל, inherit, and *desterro* for אָרָד, disinherit, are more correct. By shifting around the word *eredan*, Rabbi Israel avoids again the political implications of *desterro*.

from *Yah Shimha*, p.17

---

v.1 יְמִינִים עַל הָלֶגֶת נְבָרְצֵה אֶת הָבֵית אֶת

Vienna Aguzate i kompone i paramyentes en tu sekreto.
Rabbi Israel *Ombre!* Pensa i preparate, i de tu nullidad seas konvensido,

v.2 יָוָדָה עַל הָמִיס אָפָה מִי הַנִּבְנָא

I kata ken tu i de onde tu simyento, Entyende byen lo ke sos tu, i de onde sos venido!

v.3 יִקְנֶה מִי לְהָלֶגֶת נְבָרְצֵה אֶת הָבֵית אֶת

I ken te kompozo, i ken te izo entender? I fuerse de ken te esmuve, Ken te sostyene? Ken te asaventa? I kon kuala fuersa sos movido?

v.4 בָּרוּהַהּ הָנִיִּים אֶל בֵּרֵהַת אֶל בֵּרֵהַת

I kata a barraganias del Dyo i desperta tu alma. Mira el grande poder de Dyo i tu espirito sea ezmovido,

v.5 יִרְכָּה אֶל הָסָלְתָּה אֶלָּי בְּסַסְלִית הַפַּקְר

Espekula sus ovras, empero a El no tyendas tu mano, Kontermpla i konose Sus ovras, mas de esto no es permetido,

v.6 נִבְמָאוּתָהּ בֶּהַמָּסְלָהּ בֶּהַמָּסְלָהּ בֶּהַמָּסְלָהּ בֶּהַמָּסְלָהּ בֶּהַמָּסְלָהּ בֶּהַמָּסְלָה\n
Porko non vengas a rekerir, en la fin i enel presipyo, en apartado i en enkuvyerto. Presipyo i kavo no demandes, ni lo enkuvyerto ni lo eskondido.

---

v.1 The addition of *Ombre!* serves to further energize this quite dynamic verse.
v.2 entyende is definitely better than the old kata!

v.3 There is a clear refinement in sostyene instead of kompozo, and asaventa instead of ize entender.

v.4 barragan for בעז, mighty man, and barragania for בבר, might, are commonly used Ladino words. Rabbi Israel must have been "tipped" to avoid them because of modern Spanish. We find:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rabbi Israel</th>
<th>Vienna Mahzor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>p.15 יבר המרא as Tu poder instead of Tu barragania</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p.16 בעז ת&quot;א &quot; ovras &quot; barragianias</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p.16 בעז ת&quot;א &quot; Su grande poder &quot; Sus barraganias</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My computer searched and found only one occurrence of this word on page 1.

v.5 no es permitido is a welcome departure from the literal non tyendas tu mano.

v.6 Against the sagging no vengas a rekerir, Rabbi Israel's no demandes is a direct and forceful echo to his vocative Oobre! in v.1.

**Shinannim** (p.30)

Ibn Gabirol's Yom Kippur Shinannim is replete with elaborate angelic depictions, delicate to interpret because of the subtle imagery. A glance at Rev. De Sola Pool's translation\(^1\) of same (p.134) yields words like:

coruscating
panapplied
puissantly
serried
effulgent

intended to convey the solemnity of the occasion. The Vienna Mahzor avoids the issue by providing no translation. All in all, Rabbi Israel does a good job, except maybe when he has trankuilizados (p.30) for בתפונה. As a concept, andjeles

trankuilizados calls for some explaining. *Andjeles serenos* would be certainly less controversial.

**Vidduy** (p.36 and p.49)

The confessions of the *Yom Kippur Musaf* and *Minha* are crafted along the same principles of free, but graceful translations, a definite improvement on the coarse and bumpy Ladino used in previous *mahzorim*, such as the Salonica *Mahzor*. Their flowing style and readability should not lure us into thinking that there are no inaccuracies or departures from the text. Let a few examples suffice:

p.43  
becomes  
with no trace of

 América vendido por todos en el nombre de la Iglesia con las manos y los oídos

Similarly,

becomes  
becomes  
with  

Sos razonable en Tu castigo ke me alkansa

and  

absorbed by  

Tu castigo!

Our translator must have been really lured by the irresistible rhyme of *pastor* and *konductor* to have rendered (p.43)

[My heart has strayed as a sheep without shepherd, and men found me astray]

*Se trayerro mi korason komo oveja sin pastor.*  
*I komo treno sin konductor!!* [As a train with no engineer!!]

---

12 Another expression loaned from the French: *Sois raisonnable! / Tu es raisonnable!*
וּז בּ רַאְשֵׁה הַשָּׁנָה

הִזֹּל לַעֲרֹךְ

זָה בִּדְלָה כְּלִי לִיוּ שָׁנָה, כִּרְכֵי וְיָוֵה בְּתֵל מִיָּהָהּ הַקָּפָרָהּ.

זָה

זָהיָה

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Backlash...and return to the old

In this brief introduction, I have tried to isolate a few key features of Rabbi Israel's work. In the course of this discussion, I have used on page 8 the word _avant-garde_ in preparation for an important symbolic "backlash" to Rabbi Israel's positions. Apparently not everybody liked his innovations. The particular copy from which this enlarged edition was prepared bears the personal stamp of Rabbi Joseph de Tchavès, chief rabbi of Athens, Greece. Other people may have owned this copy before him or after him. Its last owner was Haham Avraham Gargir, a Smyrniote who conducted services up to the mid-thirties at the Sephardic Beth Shalom Congregation in Cincinnati, Ohio. The fascinating thing is that someone along the line did not appreciate Rabbi Israel's _avant-garde_ Ladino. Nor did they relish some of his archaic forms. As can be observed on page 15 reproduced here, many words have been scratched throughout the printed edition and replaced in clear handwriting with older equivalents, just as some of Rabbi Israel's archaic retentions have been eliminated and simpler words put in their stead. Here is a full accounting of this "backlash":

*mizerikordya* occurs 3 times in this page. The word was too foreign and too Christian sounding. In all three instances, it was replaced with _piadad_, פְּאָדַד.

*mi fuerte* for _my strong One_, must have sounded weird. Instead _mi protejador_ was preferred.

*unifikan* As a declarative, _unifikan_ was too subtle. The simpler _aunan_ was preferred.

*verso a ti* is a translation of French _vers toi_. Ladino _delantrre_ was better.

*te son deskuyyertos* Simply _te_ for _תְּ_ was weak. The stronger _a ti_ was more in line with standard Hebrew translations.

*afirma* is correct as a translation of _אָפִירָם_, but it was misunderstood! _Affirma_ can mean both _assert_ and _affirm_. Rabbi Israel meant _affirm_, his reader understood _assert_, and so he changed it to _sostyene_, sustain.

*akosta a mi* is an archaic form left untouched by Rabbi Israel. His critic changed it to the simpler _aserka de mi_.

eskucha same remark, even though in this case most people must have
known what eskucha meant. It was still changed to the more direct
oye.
sey tardivo renders ḥatzad. With ḥatz it means to be patient. Thus the
unequivocal say pasenyoso was inserted.
suplika borrowed from Italian supplica, for ḥatz supplication. This, too,
was not tolerated. It was replaced with the more prosaic demanda.
se ajita is patentment from French s'agite! In Ladino, the two clichés for the
soul are:

estrechura de alma, [כץ] from דץ to be narrow

and its opposite

anchura de alma [כץ] from דץ to be wide

This business of mon âme s'agite was too much of an intolerable
Galicism. Hence, back to the safer mi alma se estrecha!
Note that in Hebrew מ"ע מ"ע means my soul moans.

***
***
***
***
***

On a more personal level, I would like to conclude by saying that for decades
Rabbi Israel's translations, especially his version of the Yom Kippur confessions,
have successfully uncovered for me memorable levels of nurturing piety. The task
of introducing the work of a creative person often puts us in the unenviable corner
of the perennial critic. My admiration for Rabbi Israel's courage in tackling, even in
those early days, the delicate issue of the use of the vernacular in the liturgy for the
sole benefit of the laymen, and his passionate appeal on behalf of their religious
needs, places him among those open-minded leaders that have always graced our
communal scene. If I have spared no effort in preparing this enlarged and restored
edition, it is in view of my conviction that a remnant out there will read it and profit
by his touching words. They are potent. They have enlivened many souls.
Note on Transcription

Transcription is in the eye of the beholder. Since in transcribing Ladino at least three languages are involved, aiming at consistency is indeed a nightmare!

It is hoped that laymen with a variety of shades in Ladino familiarity will read these texts for edification. Diacritical points (which we call chapeyikos, little hats) would constitute a major barrier for them. That is why on a practical level, whenever these were meaningless to them, they have been eliminated almost entirely. We all know that ş is ş, ñ is ñ, and ü is c. Therefore, they have been set aside to help the laymen get over this ordeal. Thus:

' is both dj (as in gem)

and ch (as in child)

't is French j (Spanish j is unknown in Ladino)

u " sh

***

* Most titles are followed by a page number in brackets. These refer to the respective De Sola Pool Makzorim where the Hebrew text and an English translation may be found.

** The pagination of the six piyyuim which are found after p.63 does not follow the sequence of the 1910 edition. Their pagination reflects the order of the 1922 edition. Thus your copy is not defective.