

**The Jewish Pearl of the Aegean:
Izmir**
(Language, Literature, History, Art and Culture)

Edited by
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It is worth highlighting the main scopes of her outstanding research; namely, Mediaeval Jewish-Spanish Poetry, translating the complete poetry work by Ibn Gabirol, and releasing highly-ranked studies on Maimonides, Ibn Jalfun and Ibn Verga.

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Rachel Amado Bortnick was born in Izmir in 1938. After attending the Bene Berit (Jewish) and İnönü (Turkish) elementary schools, she studied at American School for Girls, ACI, from which she graduated in 1958. She attended Lindenwood University (St. Charles, Missouri, USA) on a full scholarship, graduating with B.A. in Chemistry in 1960. She and her present husband, architect Bernard Bortnick, came back to Izmir to get married at Beth Israel synagogue. She presently resides in Dallas, Texas. In 1999 she founded Ladinokomunita, the first Ladino correspondence group on the Internet, still going strong with over 1600 members from around the world. Now retired from teaching ESL (English as a Second Language) for 35 years, she continues to devote much time in promoting the Judeo-Spanish language and culture of her childhood home. She is the sister of Selim Amado, of blessed memory.

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Preface and Acknowledgments

In November 2018, during an interview with Yakup Barokas for the *Şalom Dergi*, a journal published by the Turkish Jewish Community, I expressed my goals and desires about the future of Sephardic studies in Turkey, saying – at some point – "I'm disposed to do them. I just need support." A few days after the publication, I received an e-mail from Rıfat Bali, editor-in-chief and managing partner of Libra Kitap. He wrote he had read the interview and he was interested in publishing my works. He was the first person in Turkey who was "interested in my 'work'". I told him so exhaustively that I had an 'idea' – a book series project – consisting of publishing edited books, with each book being dedicated to Jews in one Turkish city where the Jewish community is or was important. This is how the idea for this book came about, as the first volume of this book series. In 2019, I finally started with this project: I contacted Mr. Bali, nominated the members of the scientific committee as well as possible collaborators and finally sent out the call for papers. 3 years and 8 months later (with the pandemic in between), we finally have in our hands the book.

I decided to begin with the Jews of the city of Izmir, a shining star in the 17th century that proved to be a multicultural city thanks to its vibrant economy and multiethnic and religious residents, the Sephardic Jews being one. Numerous volumes have been published to shed light on the Jewish heritage in this city. However, I believe this book will fill the gaps that have not yet been covered. The book features dedicated, multidisciplinary (history, literature, language, art, archaeology, etc.) articles on the Jews of Izmir, presenting various perspectives from the beginning of their presence

until today. I hope this book will secure its place among those numerous volumes and pave the way for future studies. This volume will be followed by others in which the keyword (city) will be changed.

While editing this book, I faced a problem common to multi-authored volumes: the variety of the transcription or writing systems applied by different authors. I chose to grant ‘liberty’ to the authors – in this case, the liberty to use the system they preferred – but scholarly work essentially required concordance among their articles. Therefore, the Index of this book enables readers to find different ways of writing a place name (e.g. Izmir, İzmir, Smyrne, Esmirna, Ezmirna, Ezmirne, Ezmir) or the name of the same journal (e.g. *El Masalozo*, *El Mazaloso*, *El Mażalošo*) or the same personal name (e.g. Moshe, Moïse, Moses, Mozes, Mošé).

On a separate note, I must admit that it was pretty hard work to edit this book, but I was fortunate to be surrounded by some great professionals with whom we had to go a long way together: the members of the scientific board, the authors of different articles, the anonymous readers of the manuscripts, the language editor, the editor-in-chief at Libra Kitap and myself. I exchanged tons of e-mails with each of them. Each articles proposal submitted for publication in this book was first evaluated by the scientific board. Approved articles were reviewed by at least two double-blind reviewers. The papers were meticulously edited by me and were proofread by the language editor before being passed over to the editor-in-chief at Libra Kitap for finishing touches. Finally, the members of the scientific board, namely (in alphabetical order) Michael Studemund-Halévy, Moisés Orfali, Paloma Díaz-Mas, Rifat Bali, and Selim Salti – whom I offer my sincere thanks for being part of the editorial process of this book – approved the publication.

I would particularly like to thank all authors of this book. Publishing this book would have been impossible without their contribution. During the long gestational process for the book, none of the authors complained about the delay nor renounced their valuable work. I would like to thank each and every one of them for their patience and the trust they placed in me. It was an enormous privilege to have the opportunity to work with a number of superb and professional researchers and professors. Unfortunately, one of them,

Moshe Shaul, ז"ל, passed away before the book came out. The authors and I dedicate this book to him and to all Sephardic Jews of Izmir origin.

I extend my sincerest gratitude to all the anonymous reviewers of the articles, all of whom provided authors with valuable suggestions, corrections and references that improved the final result of the articles in various respects. For obvious reasons I cannot mention their names, although I would really like to thank them 'out loud'. They know themselves. Thank you.

I would also like to thank The Salti Institute for Ladino Studies at Bar-Ilan University (Israel) for the grant conceded for the translation of the article of Jacob Barnai from Hebrew into English.

I owe special thanks to Ezgi Caymaz Kurt, who did a watercolor painting of the current situation of the Hevra (Talmud Tora) Synagogue, a fine piece of meticulous and artistic work I highly admire. Her outstanding artwork gives the book an impressive cover.

It has been a great pleasure to work with Rifat Bali, the editor-in-chief at Libra Kitap. I owe him my thanks, particularly for his confidence in this project.

A special "thank you" to Laurence Salzmänn who generously provided the Izmir photos for the album.

I also thank the layout designer for her careful work and the cover designer for mastering the colours to create a wonderful cover design highlighting Ezgi's illustration.

My debt of gratitude goes out to my friend Ergin Kaptan, the English language editor of some articles of this book and a great professional. He was (and is) always there whenever I needed him. Without his help, editing this book would not have been possible.

It is also a tremendous honor for me to have Michael Studemund-Halévy as the prologist to this book. I appreciate his disposition not only for this book but also for every single instance that I needed him. Thank you, Michael.

A very special gratitude to my mentor, María José Cano – If I am who I am in an academic sense, it is because of her. I will always be proud to be her disciple.

Prologue

Michael Studemund-Halévy

Izmir, the pearl of the Aegean, has been home to many civilizations, cultures, and religions. Disparagingly called *Gâvur İzmir* (Infidel İzmir) among Muslims because of its large non-Muslim population. The city was populated by Levantines, Armenians, Francos (Francophone Catholics), Portuguese Marranos from the Iberian Peninsula, and a community of entrepreneurial Europeans from Italy, Britain, and France, with the Greek-Rûm Orthodox forming a majority and the Muslim Turks a minority. Today, İzmir is a city where Muslim Turks constitute the majority, but it remains to be an exclusive melting pot with a diverse and integrated socio-demographic structure.

Recently, the rich and multifaceted Jewish history of İzmir has received some considerable attention beyond the historiographic discourse as a glance at the national and international publications, conferences and exhibitions reveals. But what about those traces of Jewish history – and Jewish presence – that are not easy to find or recognize? In its completeness, the transmission of both written sources (from archives and libraries) and material culture (in the form of cemeteries, synagogues, miqvaot and printing) that exists for İzmir is unique in the Turkish-speaking world. The urban Jewish cityscape includes synagogues and cemeteries, historic and modern Jewish neighborhoods (*mahalles*). İzmir, home to Turkey's mostly secular Jewish community, still has a sizeable Jewish population (the Jewish community, which once numbered over 25,000, has now been reduced to about 1,800), but continues to be a cosmopolitan city with a cosmopolitan life.

The Beginnings of the Jewish Community in Smyrna*

Jacob Barnai

Abstract

This article is a survey of the beginning and development of the Jewish Community in Izmir in the end of the 16th and 17th centuries. Different from other communities in the Ottoman Empire in the Byzantine era, and to which the Sephardi exiles joined in, to Izmir the Jews arrived only a century later when the Izmir port was rebuilt and developed.

The first Jews to the town arrived from the neighbour cities and later from all over the Ottoman Empire and Europe. A big number of immigrants from the Central Communities as Salonika, Constantinople, Safed and Italy. An important wave the Portuguese Marranos, who returned back from Christianity to Judaism after hundred years and more.

As was common, the Jewish immigrants to Izmir, constituted *Kehalim* ('congregations') and Synagogues and a leadership of Rabbis and Laymen. In the mid 17th century, there were six different congregations in later more in Izmir. The congregations choose a central Rabbinate and laymen to deal with common daily life issues as Kosher food and Regulations (laws).

* Adapted and updated on the basis of J. Barnai (2014). *Smyrna, the Microcosmos of Europe. The Jewish Community of Smyrna in the 17th and 18th Centuries*. Jerusalem: Carmel Publishing House (in Hebrew); translated by Michael Glatzer. The translation was supported by The Salti Institute for Ladino Studies of Bar-Ilan University, Israel.

Introduction

Smyrna (Izmir) is an ancient and important city, which already had a Jewish community in the Hellenistic and Roman periods.¹ There is no clear evidence to date that the Jewish community continued to exist during the Byzantine period,² and thus, when the Ottomans conquered it in 1424 there was evidently no Jewish community there. Among the communities of *sürgün* ('exiled') that the Ottomans deported to Istanbul after the conquest of 1453, there is no mention of the community of Smyrna, but there is mention of the nearby community of Tire.³ In the fifteenth century, Smyrna was a small town of no importance and consequently no Jewish immigrants settled there.⁴ Also at the beginning of the sixteenth century when many of the exiles from Spain settled in nearby Tire and Manisa and established communities there, they evidently had no interest in Smyrna and passed it by.⁵ In two Ottoman lists of taxpayers from Smyrna from the years 1528 and 1575 we did not find names of Jews,⁶ so we may presume that there was no community there at that time, although some Jews may have lived there, perhaps temporarily.

1 Juster 1914: 183; Galante 1985: 7-8; Roth-Gerson 1972: 16; Goffman 1990: 77-80; Ekstein 1999: 6-7.

2 Ankory 1959: 113.

3 *Mishnat R. Eliezer*, 185b; Benayahu 1947: 37-48; Heyd 1953: 299-312; Hacker 1979: 22, 223, 279.

4 Goffman 1990: 98.

5 Rozanes 1937-1938: 43-44.

6 Baykara 1974: 118-119.

Art, Tradition, and Innovation in The Jewish Community of Smyrna: A Turkish Present and a Hispanic Past

"[...] en ella vive la comunidad judía sin ser molestada, afligida ni con el orgullo herido de los griegos, o de los armenios".

A. Púlido. *Españoles sin patria y la raza sefardí*. p. 232.

Miguel Ángel Espinosa Villegas

Abstract

This study aims to review the relationship of the Jewish community of Izmir with artistic and craft practices. Their aesthetic role as well as cultural, economic and sociopolitical roles are assessed. Arts and crafts can be very valid instruments for maintaining cultural traditions, such as Judeo-Spanish, but also for penetration into the community of political, social and innovation or renovation ideas. These ideas serve to create a living link between the group and the real environment, and prevent its secure stagnation in an irretrievable past, which however is the case in daily life. Therefore, this study is an approach to the most prominent people in the community and their performances. We cannot forget the artistic landmarks of the city: the urbanism developed from the Havra Sokağı, the main street, or the architecture of their houses and synagogues (Bikkur Holim, Neve Shalom, etc.). The article also analyzes the special cultural dichotomy of a community that lives between a rich Hispanic past and an environment which impels modernity while molding its personality and identity within Turkish and Sephardic Judaism.

Introduction: Prior Community History

Although the Jewish presence in Asia Minor dates back to the first century, it still emerged after the destruction of the Second Temple by Titus (70 CE), when a greater confluence is found. Despite being cited in the Apocalypse as one of the seven churches (Ap 2; 8-11), the first news about Jews in Izmir does not come from Jewish sources. We have some archaeological testimonies like a ring with a menorah and an inscription that tells us about an Archisynagogue called Rufina. If, during the Byzantine era, the Izmir community went unnoticed, the Jewish population began to flourish after the Ottoman incorporation in 1424 and the reactivation of the port. The first Sephardim arrived around 1530 from Livorno, a city with which they would maintain close commercial contacts throughout their history, but also from Eastern Europe in Ottoman hands. Probably, there was also a Sephardic migratory wave from the Maghreb during the reign of the Ottoman Empire.

The economic splendor of the port throughout the 17th century attracted other Sephardim from Greece and Istanbul. The community of the Franks, which also included Portuguese Jews and Italian converts, was thus instituted. This diversity of people likely led to the splitting of the group into two communities due to differences in interpretation of the laws of the Kashruth between its leaders: Rabbi Yitzhak Meir haLevi from Istanbul and Rabbi Yosef Escapa from Thessalonica, who ended up being right and was followed by other senior rabbis. The messianic episode of Shabbetai Zevi, Escapa's disciple, was also related to that halachic battle, and Zevi

Urla Jewish Community and Cemeteries*

Tayfun Caymaz

Abstract

The settlement of Urla appears to have been founded in the period of Aydinid Emirate in the first half of the 14th century. Over time, the city hosted an increasingly-crowded Greek population as well as a small Jewish community. The first official population survey on the Jewish people was performed in 1831. They were living in a small quarter next to Turkish neighborhoods in the town center. One of the two cemeteries of the community completely disappeared while only one grave could be preserved in the other cemetery.

* Map and photographs of this article have been arranged by Ezgi Caymaz Kurt, catalog by Öykü Ulusal.

Introduction

Located just west of Izmir, Urla is situated in the center of the peninsula of the same name. There are some opinions¹ that identify this settlement with the old Vryela.² However, except for some re-used architectural elements brought from elsewhere, the remains of the pre-Turkish period were not found in archaeological surface surveys conducted in the main town area. According to the records of foundation, the oldest building in the town is Eski Cami (Old Mosque) constructed by the will of Fatih İbrahim Beg³ in the first half of the 14th century.⁴ Urla was quite developed in the 16th century. In 1575, it became a major center with a population of 6,600.⁵ Due to its land being favorable for various types of agriculture, particularly olive and vineyards, as well as the nautical opportunities it presented, the Urla Peninsula became the center of attraction for new lives. Communities from the Aegean islands and Greece came to the peninsula to work before settling there in time.⁶ The Greek population was gradually increasing and, by the end of the 19th century, Greeks represented the majority in some parts of the peninsula.⁷ The other groups living with Turkish people were the Jewish and Armenian people. These people were living in small communities in town centers. All Greeks left the region in September 1922. The Jewish population decreased

1 Ahrweiler 1965: 50-51; Milioris 1955: 15.

2 Ducas XXVI 4.

3 One of the sons of Aydın Emir Mehmed Beg.

4 Akın 1946: 71-72, 142, 149.

5 Kütükoğlu 2000b: 114.

6 Baykara 1980: 280; 1991: 39; Milioris 1955: 83-104.

7 In 1891, Greeks constituted 51% of the population in Urla. In Çeşme, the rate was 87%. (*Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Aydın* ['Almanac of the Province of Aydın'] 1308 A.H./1891: 406-407). See Baykara 1980: 282-284.

Alexandre Benghiat's 'Kabastil' and his 'Letters from the Village', or the Modern Judezmo Speakers' Conflicted Relationship with Turkish*

David M. Bunis

Abstract

According to the available documentation in Hebrew and Judezmo, the attitude of the speakers of Judezmo (or Ladino or Judeo-Spanish) toward the Turkish language has always been positive, or at least neutral. However, the attitude of some speakers toward the borrowings from Turkish in Judezmo – borrowings which have existed in the language from the 16th century on – changed radically with the onset of the Modern Judezmo Period at the turn of the 19th century. Whereas the speakers unhesitatingly employed such borrowings into the early 19th century, from that time on, especially under Haskalah influence, Western Europeanized speakers began to look askance at the Turkisms in their language. The article examines the free use of Turkisms in Judezmo documents from the pre-modern era, and then focuses on the critical view of Turkisms adopted by the *frankeados* or Westernized Sephardim of the Ottoman Empire from the mid-19th century. Their highly Western Europeanized *nuevo lenguaje* 'new language' is shown to be in sharp contrast to the *djudezmo kabá* or 'common Judezmo' used by the Jewish masses of Izmir at the turn of the century, as exemplified in the humorous *Letras del Kazal* or 'Letters from the Village' published in Alexandre Benghiat's Judezmo periodical *El Meseret* of Izmir, and attributed to a fictitious reporter called Kabastil 'Common Style'.

* This research was supported by The Israel Science Foundation (grant no. 1930/17). It is a pleasure to thank my colleague, Dr. Omer Shafran, for his contribution to the transcription of the *Letras del Kazal* and for checking some of the words it incorporates. The research is part of a more extensive project on the writings of Alexandre Benghiat in popular Judezmo, or what he called *djudezmo kabá* or, following the Turkish word order, *kabá djudezmo* (*El Meseret* 23:54 [Izmir, 1919], 1) 'common Judezmo'. (For example, Benghiat recommended that, when writing about matters significant to the whole Jewish community, journalists use clear, 'common Judezmo' that grocers and fruit-sellers could understand ("Esto lo deven los gazeteros de eskrivir kon biervos klaros [...] en djudezmo kabá para ke lo entienda i el bakal i el manaf") (*El Meseret* 2:44 [1898], 344).

Introduction

As a group, the Jews expelled from Iberia at the end of the 15th century who found refuge in the Ottoman Empire at the invitation of Sultan Bayazit II arrived at the shores of the empire without a knowledge of its official and administrative language, Turkish. The immigrants must have found it difficult to cope with the predicament; it is likely that they were assisted by the veteran Romaniote Jews, with whom the learned Iberian Jews perhaps communicated in Hebrew or Greek. But as documented in the Hebrew and Judezmo literature which the Ottoman Sephardic rabbis began to create upon their arrival in the empire, the first generation of Sephardim born there began to manage with Turkish, at least spoken popular urban Turkish. After all, although throughout the centuries of their residence in the Ottoman Empire most Jews were probably unable to read or write Turkish in the Arabic-letter Ottoman alphabet, they heard the language spoken all around them and many interacted verbally with Turkish speakers on a daily basis. Before the 19th century some were perhaps assisted by Turkish tutors; from the 19th century increasing numbers of Judezmo speakers studied Turkish in formal Jewish and later non-Jewish educational frameworks.

The present article is meant to offer a glimpse of the linguistic interaction of the Judezmo-speaking Jews with their Turkish-speaking neighbors in the Ottoman Empire in general, and in the city of Izmir in particular, and how that interaction was reflected in the Jews' own communal language. The discussion will begin with the Middle Judezmo Period, from the time of the Iberian Jews' arrival in the Ottoman Empire around 1492, and will move on to the Modern Judezmo Period, from the end of the 18th century. The discussion