



Spanish and Ladino Versions of The Song of Songs

Las versiones del Cantar de los Cantares en español y en ladino

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Abstract

The biblical Song of Songs has undergone numerous translations into Spanish and Judeo-Spanish (Ladino) since the Middle Ages. While some translations exclusively feature the original biblical text, others also incorporate translations of the Aramaic interpretations found in *Midrash Shir Hashirim*. A comparison of these translations highlights a distinction in orthography between medieval and post-medieval renditions. The former are exclusively rendered in Latin letters, whereas the latter are presented in either Hebrew or Latin script. Medieval, and pre-17th century Ladino translations, encompass solely the biblical renderings, whereas post-medieval translations, dating from the 17th century onwards, encompass the translations of both the biblical text and the Aramaic interpretations. This paper specifically examines and contrasts the first three verses of the initial chapter, analyzing translations from three medieval sources and six post-medieval sources. The observed variations in these translations can be attributed to factors such as orthographic conventions, chronological influences, and the geographical locations of publication. Through these comparative analyses, it becomes evident that Ladino translations of biblical texts tend to adhere more closely to the original Hebrew source and maintain a stricter fidelity to established norms when compared to translations of the Aramaic texts.

Keywords: The Song of Songs; Ladino; Spanish; Hebrew; Aramaic; translations.

Resumen

El Cantar de los Cantares bíblico ha sido traducido al español y al judeoespañol (ladino) en numerosas ocasiones desde la Edad Media. Mientras que algunas traducciones presentan exclusivamente el texto bíblico original, otras también incluyen traducciones de las interpretaciones arameas del Midrash Shir Hashirim. La comparación de estas traducciones revela que la ortografía distingue entre las traducciones medievales y las posteriores a la Edad Media: las primeras están escritas exclusivamente en letras latinas; las segundas se imprimen en letra hebrea o latina. Las traducciones medievales y las sefardíes realizadas antes del siglo XVII incluyen únicamente las traducciones bíblicas, mientras que las traducciones posteriores a la Edad Media, a partir del siglo XVII en adelante, abarcan tanto el texto bíblico como las traducciones de las interpretaciones arameas. Este artículo examina y contrasta específicamente los tres primeros versículos del primer capítulo, analizando traducciones de tres fuentes medievales y seis fuentes posteriores a la Edad Media. Las variaciones observadas en estas traducciones pueden atribuirse a factores como las convenciones ortográficas, las influencias cronológicas y las ubicaciones geográficas de publicación. A través de estos análisis comparativos, queda claro que las traducciones ladinas de textos bíblicos tienden a adherirse más fielmente al texto hebreo original y mantienen una fidelidad más estricta a las normas establecidas en comparación con las traducciones de los textos arameos.

Palabras clave: El Cantar de los Cantares; ladino; español; hebreo; arameo; traducción.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Song of Songs (*Shir Hashirim*) is one of the five scrolls (*megilot*) traditionally read during Passover (Pesach) to demonstrate the connection between the people of Israel and God after the Exodus from Egypt. In Sephardic Ladino-speaking communities, it is read immediately after completing the Haggadah. However, in various Jewish communities it is read at different times. Ashkenazi communities read it on Shabbat during Pesach, while Italian and Yemenite read it on the seventh day of Passover after *Mincha*. In many cases, Jews read it on the eve of Shabbat or in the *Arvit* prayer of the Shabbat during counting the *Omer* between Pesach and Shavuot.

The *peshat* interpretation of the Song of Songs, which reads the text as presented, portrays the affection between a man and a woman. However, the *derash* interpretation, as seen by Jewish sages, views it as an allegorical composition symbolizing the deep bond between God and the people of Israel. This significant consideration led to the inclusion of the Song of Songs in the biblical canon. The allegoric interpretation was formulated in Aramaic during the era of the Geonim (roughly the 7th to 11th century) and was subsequently incorporated into the established traditional text¹.

The Song of Songs has been published numerous times in Hebrew with the Aramaic interpretation. It has also been translated into many Jewish and non-Jewish languages. In this paper I will focus on the Spanish and Ladino translations of the biblical Hebrew text and its Aramaic interpretation, exploring the linguistic variations and their sources, such as the time, location, and the linguistic background of the publishers. The Aramaic translation into Ladino was added to the biblical texts only during the 17th century, so my research is based on medieval and post-medieval translations of the biblical text, and on the later translations of the Aramaic text.

Biblias romanceadas is the term used to describe Bible translations from the Middle Ages in Spain². These translations were primarily preserved in manuscripts, many of which were found in monasteries and other locations starting from the 12th century. Numerous manuscripts were incomplete and did not always contain all the books and chapters of the Bible. Some of these translations were directly derived from the Hebrew Bible, giving them a more “Jewish” character. In contrast, others, often referred to as “Christian” translations, were based on the Latin Vulgate, which was itself partially influenced by the Greek

¹ See for instance Jerusalmi, 1993: vii-xl; Kimelman, 1980; Stern 2013; Shinan and Zakovich, 2020:7-30; Schoenfeld, 2020.

² Good surveys and descriptions of the medieval biblical translations appear in Morreale, 1960; Lazar, 2000: iv-xvii; Pueyo Mena, 2008: 194-211; Pueyo Mena, 2023, and the bibliographies there.

Septuagint. Moreover, these translations exhibited variations regarding the inclusion of the New Testament alongside the Old Testament. Even among those based on the Hebrew Bible, the order of the books did not always adhere to the traditional Hebrew sequence.

Ladino translations of the Bible began to appear in print after the Expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula, and most of these early publications used Hebrew letters. Initially, individual books were printed, such as Daniel around 1515, Psalms around 1545, the complete Pentateuch in 1547, which included both Ladino and Judeo-Greek translations, and various single books with Ladino translations. However, it wasn't until 1739-1745 that the entire Bible, with a comprehensive Ladino translation, was published by Rabbi Abraham Asa in Hebrew letters. Prior to this publication, earlier editions of the whole Hebrew Bible also included Ladino translations of specific words in Ladino³. Notably, the Song of Songs, being a beloved text, was published multiple times with Ladino translations during this period⁴.

The entire Bible was fully translated into Ladino in Latin letters in Ferrara in 1553 and later in Amsterdam, based on the Ferrara Bible, albeit with minor modifications. The Ferrara Bible was published without the Hebrew text, aligning with the medieval tradition of Bible translation. In fact, many discussions concerning the translations of the aforementioned Bible translations regarded the Ferrara Bible as a follower of this medieval tradition. This translation was made available in both Jewish and Christian versions⁵, with some slight variations among them⁶. The Jewish version was dedicated to Doña Gracia and signed by Yom Tov Atias and Abraham Usque, while the Christian version was dedicated to Don Hércule da Este al duque and signed by Jerónimo de Vargas and Duarte Pinel (the Christian names of the former translators). The Ferrara Bible in both versions is believed to have been authored by *anusim* (*ex-conversos*) who returned to Judaism. The ensuing discussion pertains to the Jewish version.

For my analysis, I have selected three medieval and six post-medieval biblical translations. The medieval Bible translations that have their roots in the Hebrew Bible include E3 and E4, both of which are preserved in the library of the Escorial Monastery. These two manuscripts are widely recognized as the most closely related versions to the post-medieval Ladino translations. In addition, I have incorporated the Alba Bible, which

³ See Bunis, 1994; Alfonso, 2021.

⁴ An exhaustive descriptive list of all the Ladino biblical translations can be found in Cohen, 2021: 37-58.

⁵ See Hassán and Berenguer Amador, 1995; Pueyo Mena, 2008, 2023; Fellous-Rozenblat, 2012.

⁶ One of the differences stems from the interpretation of the Hebrew word *álmā* in Jesaias 7:14, translated in the Jewish version as *moça* [mosa] 'young woman', and as *virgen* 'virgin' in the Christian one. See Orfali, 1995: 232.

was translated by Rabbi Moshe Arragel (AR)⁷. All three of these manuscripts are written in Latin characters and were sourced from the *Medieval Biblical Corpus*⁸. These three medieval manuscripts present the biblical text without the Aramaic interpretation⁹.

In this study, the post-medieval examples of the Song of Songs comprise two translations into Ladino written in Latin letters and four written in Hebrew letters. The Ferrara Bible from 1553 (F) is written in Latin letters and does not include the Aramaic interpretation. Conversely, the Amsterdam translation from 1664 (A), also in Latin letters, incorporates Ladino translations for both the biblical verses and their accompanying Aramaic interpretations¹⁰.

The remaining Ladino translations, which are written using Hebrew letters, include both the translation of biblical verses and the Aramaic translations. These translations are from Constantinople in 1774 (C), Venice in 1778 (V), Salonika in 1876 (S), and Livorno in 1926 (L)¹¹.

2. LADINO TRANSLATIONS OF BIBLICAL HEBREW

For this discussion, I have chosen to analyze the first three verses of the Song of Songs. The Hebrew and English translations are presented here for all three biblical verses¹².

⁷ See Lazar, 1995: ix-xxxvii, Pueyo Mena, 2008: 197-206.

⁸ See *Corpus Biblia Medieval*, 2008-, retrieved during March-May 2023.

⁹ After conducting this research, it was brought to my attention, that Pueyo Mena (2008; 2023: 227-229, 233-235, 239), and Pueyo Mena (2023: 215, 224, 226) included some Ladino variations of the first chapter of the Song of Songs from various sources. His findings only partly overlap with mine.

¹⁰ Pueyo Mena (2008: 210-215) describes the texts and brings the translations of the biblical verses of the first chapter of the Song of Songs in Ferrara 1553 the variations in Amsterdam 1646, 1726, and 1762; and Amsterdam 1712, and the Ladino translation of the Aramaic interpretation from Amsterdam, 1712.

¹¹ See details of the texts in the Reference list below. Earlier versions from Salonika included Ladino *Cantar de los Cantares* between 1568-1572, but without the Aramaic interpretation, see Pueyo Mena, 2023: 218, 228; Cohen, 2021: 39-40.

¹² For ease of comparison, I have transcribed into Latin letters the Ladino translations using Hebrew characters. In the discussion I will use the standard spelling of Spanish. I have ignored minor differences such as adjuncts of preposition like *de los ~ delos*, *de su ~ desu*, and differences in spellings such as *s~z*, *b~v*, *i~j* and *u~v* which are common in these texts. The letter *gimel* with a diacritic represents Spanish *ch*, *g* or *j*. To indicate the last ones, I use *ğ* or *ĵ* respectively. The letter *š* represents Hebrew *shin*, *x* in medieval texts.

2.1. שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים אֲשֶׁר לְשֹׁלֹמֹה

(Šīr ha-ššīrīm 'āšer li-Šəloṃo)

"The song of songs, which is Solomon's".¹³

E3: Canto de los cantos de ssalamon

E4: Cantar de los cantares de salamon

AR: --- (Cantico de los canticos que a Salamon)¹⁴

F: Cantico de los canticos, que a Selomoh

A: Cantar de los cantares que á Selomoh

C: Cantar de los cantares que a Šelomo

V: Cantar de los cantares que a Šelomo

S: Cantar de los cantares que a Šelomo

L: Cantar de los cantares que a Šelomo

The name *Šalomo* is pronounced *salamón* in the medieval translations, as in Spanish, whereas all the post-medieval translations use the Hebrew form *Šelomo(h)*. The preposition *de* 'of' is used in the medieval translations before Solomon, except Arragel. All the post-medieval as well as Arragel translate literally *que a* 'that to' reflecting the Hebrew structure *āšer li-(Šalomo)*.

The word *cantar* 'song, sing' is used in the medieval E4 and in all the translations that include the Aramaic translation. E3 uses *canto*, whereas Ferrara and Arragel use *cántico*, all being synonymous.

This brief verse already shows the difference between medieval and post-medieval translations. Ferrara and Arragel deviate from the post-medieval translations with only one feature, the translation of 'song'. Arragel and the post-medieval translations translate the expression *āšer li-* literally in the same way.

2.2. יִשָּׂאֲנֵי מִי מִיָּיִן כִּי־יִשָּׂאֲנֵי מִפִּי־הַיַּיִן כִּי־יִשָּׂאֲנֵי מִפִּי־הַיַּיִן

(Yiššāqenī mi-mnəšiqōt pīhū ki-ṭobīm dode^ekā mi-yyāyin)

"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for thy love is better than wine".

E3: Besase me de los besos de su boca que mejores son sus amores mas que vino

E4: Beseme de los besos de su boca ca mejores son tus amores que el vino

AR: Beseme de los besos de la su boca que mejores son las tus tetas que vino

¹³ English translation by King James Version.

¹⁴ The translation of this verse is missing in Arragel, however, before the actual translation, the following words are cited: "*Cántico de los cánticos que a Salamón*", *conviene a saber: que dize que Salamón, profeta seyendo, e faziéndolo en fin de sus días, que este es el mejor de los libros que él fizo* "'Song of the songs that of Salomon", it is convenient to know that it says that Salomon, being a prophet and doing it at the end of his days, that this is the best of the books that he made'. I am grateful to Javier Pueyo Mena for adding this information to me.

- F: Besaseme de besos de su boca, por que mejores tus querencias mas que vino
 A: Bezaseme de bezos de su boca que mejores tus querencias mas que vino
 C: Bezaseme de bezos de su boca, que mijores tus querencias mas que vino
 V: Bezaseme de bezos de su boca que mijor tu querencia mas que vino
 S: Bezaseme de bezos de su boca, que mijores tus querencias mas que vino
 L: Besaseme de bezos de su boca, que mehores tus querencias mas que vino

Only E4 and Arragel differ from the rest of the texts in the translation of *yiššāqenī* 'let him kiss me' (*beseme* vs. *besaseme*-*bezaseme*).

The preposition *mi-* in *minnāšīqōt* 'with/ from kisses' is translated in the medieval translations as *de los* 'from the', and it is grammatically correct because it occurs in a definite construct state construction. The post-medieval editions translate the structure literally as *de* 'from', without the definite article.

The Hebrew word *kī* 'that; because' is only interpreted as 'because' in two translations: E4 (*ca*) and F (*por que*). All other translations translate it rigidly as 'that' (*que*).

The Hebrew word *dodeyka* is translated by all the post-medieval translations as *tu(s) querencia(s)* 'your haunts, favorite loves' from the verb *querer* 'love'¹⁵. The first medieval translations E3 and E4 use *sus/tus amores* 'your loves' in the plural form, and only Arragel interprets this as *tus tetas* 'your breasts', following the Greek Septuagint that reads "μαστοί σου" (*mastoi sou*), and the Vulgate: *ubera tua* both meaning 'your breasts'¹⁶. This might be a misreading of *dodeyka* 'your.m love' as *dādeyka* 'your.m breasts', although the meaning does not fit in this context, because it is addressed to a male.

E3 uses *mas que* 'more than' for the translation of the second occurrence of Hebrew *mi-*, like all the post-medieval translations, whereas E4 uses *que el* and Arragel *que* without the word *mas* indicating 'more'.

2.3. לְיַחַ שְׁמֵינִיךְ טוֹבִים שְׁמֵן תּוֹרֵק שְׁמֵךְ עַל־כֵּן עֲלָמוֹת אֶהְבֹּךְ

(Ləreʿaḥ šəmāneykā ṭōbīm šemen tūraq šəmeḵkā 'al-ken 'ālāmōt 'āhebūkā)

'Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee'.

E3: Al loor de.los azeytes los buenos azeyte fue vaziado en.tu nonbre por ende las moças te amaron

¹⁵ Only Venice deviates from the other translations in using the singular form *tu querencia* rather than *tus querencias*.

¹⁶ Among the other medieval translations, E6/E8 and GE also translate *las tus tetas*, close to the Greek and Latin translations. See *Corpus Biblia Medieval*, 2008-.

E4: El olor de tus vnguentos buenos vnguento vaziadizo es el tu nonbre por eso las donzellas te amaron

AR: del olor de los tus suaues vnguentos olio es vaziado el tu nonbre por tanto las mançebas te amaron

F: Por olor de tus olios buenos, {como} olio vaziado tu nombre, por tanto moças te amaron

A: A olor de tus azeytes buenos, azeyte fue vaziado tu nombre, por tanto moças te amaron

C: A guezmo de tus azeites buenos, azeite fue vaziaada tu nombre, por tanto mancevas te amaron

V: A olor de tus azeites buenos como azeite fue vaziaada tu fama, por tanto mancebas te amaron

S: A guezmo de tus azeites buenas, azeite fue vaziaada tu nombre, por tanto mancebas te amaron

L: A olor de tus azeites buenos, como azeite que fue vaziado tu fama por tanto mosas te amaron

The preposition *la-* 'to, for' is translated into *a-* 'to' by the post-medieval translations except for Ferrara which chooses *por* 'for', while the medieval translations vary: *al* 'to the' in E3, *el* 'the' in F4, and *del* 'of the' in Arragel.

The Hebrew word *reʿaḥ* 'fragrance, smell' is translated as *güezmo* only in Constantinople and Salonica; all the other translations use *olor* (which is misspelled in E3).

The word *šəməneʿkā* 'your ointments' is translated as *tus azeites* 'your oils' by the post-medieval translations, except for Ferrara which uses *tus olios* 'your oils'¹⁷; E3 uses *azeites* as well, but instead of *tus* 'your' it has *los* 'the'. Two medieval translations use *ungüentos* 'ointment', E4 and Arragel.

The Hebrew adjective *ṭōbīm* 'good.pl' is typically translated as the adjective *bueno* in all the translations except for Arragel, who uses *suaves* 'smooth'. However, most of the translations follow the Hebrew word order, placing the adjective after the noun. Arragel, on the other hand, places it before the noun: *suaves unguentos*.

Among the post-medieval translations, Salonica is the only one that uses the feminine form *buenas* instead of *buenos*. However, this does not represent a significant phenomenon compared to the other examples presented above.

The expression *šəmen tūraq* 'ointment poured forth' is translated in the following ways: *azeite fue vaziado* (E3, Amsterdam, Constantinople, Venice, Salonica), *ungüento vaciadizo* (E4), *olio es vaziado* (Arragel), *{como} olio vaziado* (Ferrara), *azeite que fue vaziado* (Livorno).

¹⁷ *Olio* is a lesser used word in Spanish referring especially to olive oil, *óleo* in Modern Spanish.

Šamek̄ā ‘your name’ is translated as *tu nombre* by most versions, except for Livorno and Venice that use *tu fama* ‘your fame’. However, E3 adds *en* ‘in’ in front of *tu nombre*, E4 and Arragel have *el tu nombre*, and E4 also adds the copulative verb *es* in front of this expression.

The conjunct *‘al-ken* ‘therefore’ is translated as *por ende* in E3, by *por eso* in E4, and by *por tanto* in all the other translations (Arragel and all the post-medieval translations).

Finally, the word *‘ālāmōt* ‘maidens’ is translated in the following ways: *moças* (E3, Ferrara, Amsterdam, Livorno), *mancebas* (Arragel, Constantinople, Venice, Salonika), and *doncellas* (E4), all referring to ‘young girls, virgins’.

When summing up the varieties found in these three biblical verses, it is clear that the post-medieval translations resemble each other much more than the medieval ones, although the word *nombre* ‘name’ is common to both medieval and post-medieval translations other than for Venice and Livorno. Moreover, most of the variations exist in the medieval translations.

The medieval manuscript E4 departs in most of the linguistic aspects discussed so far. Only in the translation of *cantar* ‘song’ in 1, *olor* ‘smell’, *buenos* ‘good’, and *nombre* in 3 does it resemble most of the post-medieval translations.

Arragel deviates from the other translations in nine features, one common to all the medieval translations, *de los* in 2 instead of *de* in all the others. In the translation of *beseme* ‘kiss me’ in 2 and in *ungüentos* ‘ointments’ one time in 3 it resembles E4. In the translation of *olio* ‘oil’ it resembles Ferrara in 3. In the other cases it is unique: *tetas* ‘breasts’ in 2, and *es vaziado* ‘poured forth’ in 3. It resembles the post-medieval translations in the translation of *que* in 2, and *olor*, *por tanto* in 3, and in *mancebas* it resembles Constantinople, Venice, and Salonika.

E3 seems to be the closest translation to the post-medieval ones: in *besaseme* ‘kiss me’ and *que* ‘that’ in 2, in *olor* ‘smell’, in *aceite* ×2 ‘ointment’, in *fue vaziado* ‘poured’, *moças* ‘maidens’ and *nombre* ‘name’ in 3. It deviates from the others in *de* ‘of’ in 1 (=E4), in *de los* mentioned above (=E4, Arragel), and *amores* ‘love’ in 2 (=E4), and in *en* ‘in’ and *por ende* ‘therefore’ in 3.

Although Ferrara is a post-medieval translation, it is unique in the following cases: it uses *cántico* ‘song’ in 1 like Arragel but unlike the others, it interprets Hebrew *ki* as *por que* ‘because’ in 2, and it uses twice the noun *olio* ‘oil, ointment’ and *vaziado* ‘poured’ without the preceding *fue* ‘was’ in 3.

The medieval translations were clearly done by individuals who translated the texts quite freely. This is the reason for the many variations found in them. Ferrara was printed in 1553, very close to the time of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. The publishers Yom Tob Atias and Abraham Usque followed the Ladino calque oral tradition of translating

liturgical texts but being converted Jews (*anusim*), who had adopted standard Spanish to hide their Jewish origins they retained some of the Spanish vocabulary rather than the Judeo-Spanish one (e.g., *cántico*, *olio*).

The remaining post-medieval translations show similarities with three exceptions: Constantinople and Salonika translate the word *reʿaḥ* ‘smell’ in 3 as *güezmo*, a common Judeo-Spanish word, while all other translations use the more common Spanish word *olor*. Venice and Livorno interpret *šmeḳā* ‘your name’ as *tu fama* ‘your fame’ instead of *tu nombre* ‘your name’. In addition, Ferrara, Amsterdam, and Livorno translate ‘maidens’ as *moças*, like E3, instead of *mancebas*.

These deviations appear to be influenced by the translators’ locations. Constantinople and Salonika represent the eastern hemisphere of Judeo-Spanish speaking communities, while Ferrara, Amsterdam, Livorno, and Venice reflect the western type of translations, which is closer to Iberian Spanish¹⁸.

In Livorno’s translation, it is noteworthy that the letter *het* is used (מיחור <meḥor>) in the Spanish word *mejor* ‘better’. This choice reflects the standard pronunciation of the Spanish *jota*, which in medieval times was pronounced [ʒ]. All the other Hebrew script translations used *gimel* with a diacritic to represent the sound [ʒ], which was retained in the Judeo-Spanish speaking communities. The use of *het* in the Livorno’s translation indicates the influence of Modern Spanish on the translator’s choice (and see more examples below).

3. LADINO TRANSLATIONS OF ARAMAIC INTERPRETATION

The Ladino translations of the Aramaic interpretation exhibit a tendency to adhere to the traditional method of calque translation commonly used for liturgical texts. In the biblical texts, one could observe indications of an eastern and western division in certain instances. Are these distinctions also reflected in the Ladino translations of the Aramaic interpretations? Specifically, it will be investigated whether the translations from Amsterdam, Venice, and Livorno share similarities with each other, while the translations from Constantinople and Salonika demonstrate similarities between themselves. Furthermore, it is worth considering the potential influence of the use of Latin letters explicitly in the Amsterdam translation.

The complete Aramaic translated text into Ladino is provided for the second and third verses while for the first verse, I have included only the explanation of the first song due to

¹⁸ The division between eastern and western Ladino translations is attested in the Bible and in other studies, see Benabu, 1985; Schwarzwald, 1989: 74-96; Schwarzwald, 2008: 17-30; Pueyo Mena, 2023: 213-214.

the extensive interpretation that covers all ten songs and their historical significance¹⁹. The Ladino of the Aramaic translations of these three verses are listed in the Appendix²⁰. Because of the length of the texts, I will only discuss here the variations, as presented in Table. 1.

Table 1: The variation in the Ladino translations of the Aramaic first three verses.

GLOSS	A	V	C	S	L
prophet	propheta	profeta	profeta	porfeta	profeta
spirit	espírito	espírito	esprito	esprito	espíritu
prophecy	propheta	profezia	profezia	porfetizia	profezia
before	delante	delante	delantre	delantre	delante
this world	el mundo este	el mundo el este	el mundo el este	el mundo el este	el mundo el este
at the time	en tiempo que	en ora que	en ora que	en tiempo que	en ora que
said	dixo	dišo	dišo	dišo	diho
Sabbath day	día del Sabat, día de Sabath	el dia de šabat, día del šabat	el dia de šabat, día del šabat	dia de el šabat, día de šabat	el dia de šabat, día del šabat
blessed	bendito	bendicho	bendicho	bindicho	bendito
six	seys	seš	seš	seš	seis
(and) affection	avantajadamente	---	---	y avabtajada mente	---
miracles	milagros	maravillas	maravillas	maravillas	maravillas
good signs	señales buenas	señales las buenas	señales las buenas	señales las buenas	señales los buenos
chosen	escogido	escuchado ²¹ 'heard'	escoğido	escojido	escoñido
anointment	uncion	untacion	untacion	untacion	untacion
kings' heads	cabezas de los reyes	cabeza de reyes	cabezas de reyes	cabeza de reyes	cabezas de reyes
priests	sacerdotes	kohanim	kohanim	kohanim	sacerdotes
pious people	justos	ğustos	ğustos	ğustos	ħustos
path	de camino	sinderos	senderos	sinderos	senderos
the coming world	el mundo que viene	el mundo que viene	el mundo que viene	el mundo el que viene	el mundo que viene

¹⁹ The first song relates to Adam singing for the Sabbath. The second is about Moses and the Israelites singing while crossing the Red Sea; the third when the Israelites received the water well; the fourth when Moses died; the fifth when Joshua was in Gibeon; the seventh when Barak and Deborah won the war against Sisera; the eighth is from David's song; the ninth relates to King Solomon; the tenth is sung by the Jews who remained in exile.

²⁰ Pueyo Mena (2008: 215) cites some of the translations of verses 1 and 2 from Amsterdam 1712. See the comparison to the 1712 version in the Appendix.

²¹ The word is written this way: *עֲשׂוּחָדוּ* with the vowel *u* after the *qof* and a *kamats* under the *gimel*, which must be read *escuchado*. It might be a typo in this version. In similar translation from Venice 1695 (Bragadin Printhouse), the word is *escoğido*, as in all the other versions.

Amsterdam is unique in the addition or deletion of the definite article in three cases (a, c, e) and in lexical varieties in three others (b, d, f):

- a. *el mundo este* ‘this world’ in 1; the definite article is not duplicated before *este*, unlike the other translation.
- b. *milagros* ‘miracles’ in 3; all the other translations use *maravillas*.
- c. *señales buenas* ‘good signs’ in 3, where all the other translations added the definite article *las* before *buenas* (*buenos* in Livorno)
- d. *unción* ‘anointment’ in 3; all the other translations use *untación*. Both are Spanish words.
- e. *cabezas de los reyes* ‘kings’ heads’ in 3: the definite article *los* is added before *reyes* ‘kings’; it is missing in the other translations.
- f. *de camino* ‘path’ in 3 translates the Aramaic word *’orħa*; Constantinople and Livorno translate *senderos*, whereas Salonica and Venecia translate *sinderos*.

In Salonica’s translation, there is a unique occurrence of *porfeta* ‘prophet’ and *porfetizía* ‘prophecy’ in 1. These forms are known in spoken Judeo-Spanish for the metathesis of the vowel next to *pr*²². The form *porfetizía* is derived from the verb *profetizar*, which is synonymous with *profetar*, from which all other translations derived *profecía*.

Livorno is exceptional in the use of the masculine forms in ‘good signs’: *señales los buenos*, while the others (except Amsterdam, see above) use the feminine forms (*señales [las] buenas*). It is also unique in the use of *het* reflecting Modern Spanish, rather than *gimel* with a diacritic or *šin* in all the Hebrew script versions, and *x* [=š] and *j* or *g* [=ž] in Amsterdam (*diħo* in 1, *escoħido* and *ħustos* in 3; cf. discussion above).

In all the other cases certain versions share some translations:

Amsterdam and Salonica share two translations:

- a. *en tiempo que* ‘in time that’ in 1, while all the others use *en ora que* (lit: in hour that).
- b. The addition of the word *avantajadamente* ‘affection’ in 2, with the addition of *y* in Venice, which is missing in all the other translations.

Amsterdam and Livorno share three unique features which show the influence of Modern Spanish: *bendito* ‘blessed’ and *seys/seis* ‘six’ in 2, and *sacerdotes* ‘priests’ in 3. All other

²² See Zamora Vicente, 1985: 358-359.

translations use the Judeo-Spanish forms: *bendicho*²³, *seš* and the Judeo-Spanish Hebrew integrated word *kohanim*.

The Aramaic expression *yoma de-šabta* ‘day of Sabbath’ occurs twice in 1. Venice, Constantinople, and Livorno share the same translation: first *el dia de šabat* and then *dia del šabat*, while Amsterdam and Salonica translate them as *dia de el šabat* and *dia de šabat*. It looks like a stylistic variation.

Constantinople and Salonica share two features which are common to spoken Judeo-Spanish: *esprito* ‘spirit’ and *delantre* ‘before’ in 1. All the other translations use the Spanish equivalent *espíritu*²⁴ and *delante*.

Upon reviewing the comparisons made thus far, it becomes evident that the Amsterdam translation, written in the Latin script, stands out as exceptional in comparison to the others. It employs three special lexical items (*milagros*, *unción*, *camino*), exhibits a freer translation style compared to the others, particularly in the use of definite articles, and shows lexical resemblance to the later translation from Livorno using Spanish words (*seis*, *bendito*, *sacerdotes*) rather than the more commonly used Judeo-Spanish equivalents (*seš*, *bendicho*, *kohanim*). Like the case of Ferrara discussed earlier, the Amsterdam version was produced by ex-conversos, whose knowledge of Judeo-Spanish was limited, leading them to follow Spanish norms. This explains the significant divergence from the other translations in Hebrew script.

The late Livorno translation also shows variations from the other translations in the spelling of *het* and the choice of *bendito*, *seis*, and *sacerdotes* which reflect Modern Spanish. The target readers of the Livorno print house were the Spanish communities in North Africa, the former *Ḥeketia* speakers, who since the 19th century gradually adopted Modern Spanish. They kept the traditional text but with modifications that fit Modern Spanish. This explains the variations found in this translation.

The Salonica translation shows prominent features that reflect spoken Judeo-Spanish more than the other translations: metathesis in the words for ‘prophet’ and ‘prophecy’: *porfeta*, *porfetizía*. In the use of *esprito* and *delantre* it shares the Judeo-Spanish use as detected in Constantinople as well, the other eastern translation. Its free version appears in the use of *en tiempo de*, like Amsterdam, unlike the other translations that have *en hora de*.

²³ *Bindicho* in Salonica.

²⁴ *Espiritu* in Livorno.

4. CONCLUSION

The comparison of the Ladino translations of the biblical Hebrew verses and the Aramaic interpretations reveals that there is greater variation among the latter compared to the former. It appears that the translators adopted a stricter approach when translating the biblical text, adhering more closely to its rigid structure. However, when it came to the Aramaic interpretation, the translators allowed themselves more flexibility, resulting in slight deviations from the strict biblical translations. This suggests a more lenient attitude towards the Aramaic interpretation in terms of translation choices.

The Ladino translations from Hebrew of the first three biblical verses demonstrate significant differences between medieval and post-medieval translations. It is important to consider the time in which these translations were written. Earlier translations retain old linguistic features, while more modern ones adapt to both modern Spanish and Judeo-Spanish developments.

Additionally, the location of the translator plays a significant role. Among the post-medieval translations, similarities can be observed between the western Amsterdam and Livorno, and the eastern translations from Constantinople and Salonica. Venice falls somewhere in the middle, displaying most of the Ladino eastern features, except for the translation of *fama* 'fame' instead of *nombre* 'name', which is like the Livorno translation²⁵. It is known that Venice was populated with three Jewish communities: The Italian original inhabitants of the city, the ex-*Converso* community, and the Judeo-Spanish speaking community that emigrated from the east. Its translation reveals both Eastern and western features.

These findings highlight the significance of orthography in determining the nature of the translation. Both medieval translations and post-medieval translations from Ferrara and Amsterdam were written using Latin letters. This choice of orthography allows the translators to adhere to more Spanish-like standards in their translations. On the other hand, the use of Hebrew letters in the translation brought the translators closer to the oral word-for-word translation, as observed in both the Hebrew and Aramaic texts being rendered into Ladino.

The Ladino translations of the Aramaic interpretations of the same verses further support the significance of orthography, time of publication, and location. The Ladino translation in Latin script from Amsterdam is largely distinct from the Hebrew script

²⁵ The Venice translation was printed in Pua's print shop. Pua's family originated in the Ottoman Empire, and although he published in Italian cities, most of its tradition was eastern despite the location. See Yaari, 1958: 323-419.

translations mentioned earlier. Despite being relatively old, it generally aligns with the western tradition seen in the late Livorno translation.

Constantinople and Salonica exhibit characteristics of later oral Judeo-Spanish tradition. The Venice Ladino version closely resemble the eastern translations of the Aramaic texts²⁶.

The study of Ladino translations is inherently intricate, evident in the variations present in both the translations of biblical verses and the interpretation of Aramaic. Despite these variations, the Ladino essence in these translations is marked by several overarching features:

1. The translations adhere closely to a literal, word-for-word calque approach.
2. The divine name is consistently represented as » (YY) in Hebrew script texts and as *A* in Latin script texts, both pronounced as *adonay*.
3. Proper names maintain their Hebrew forms, such as *Šelomoh*, *Mošeh*, and *Adam*, as opposed to alternative renderings like *Salamon*, *Moisen* or *Moises*, *Adan*.
4. Jewish concepts remain untranslated, including *Šabat*, *Mišna*, *Talmud*, and even *Kohanim*.
5. Certain words unique to Judeo-Spanish, such as *meldadura*, *muchidumbre* (present in all translations), and *avantajadamente*, *bendicho*, *güezmo* (found in some), are incorporated. These words are exclusive to Sephardic texts.
6. The connective particle is consistently *y*, never *e*²⁷.

An examination of the translations from the Song of Songs further underscores these general characteristics found in other Ladino translations.

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C = Constantinople, 1744: Moshe Lazar (ed.), *The Ladino Five Scrolls (Abraham Asa's Versions of 1744)*, Culver City: Labyrinthos 1992, pp. 4-5, 14-17.

²⁶ I ignore the typo error in using *escuchado* 'heard' instead of *escogido* 'chosen', see note above.

²⁷ See Schwarzwald, 2010.

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- L = Livorno, 1929: מגלת שיר השירים עם פתרון כל פסוק בלשון ספרד ופתרון התרגום כמו שנוהגים לאומרו בכמה קהילות קדושות, ליוורנו תרפ"ט (1929) בדפוס שלמה בילפורטי וחברו, דף כו-כח
- S = Salonica, 1876: מחזור שלוניקי לשלש רגלים כמנהג ספרדים, מהדורת דפוס קופת "עץ חיים", שלוניקי תרל"ו (1876), עמ' 478-476
- V = Venice, 1778: שיר השירים שנוהגים לקרות בימי הפסח עם התרגום ועם פתרונו בלשון ספרדי, ונציה שנת ובעת ההיא אצמיח לפק [תרל"ח] (1778) בדפוס שלמה פואה, [ונציה], דף כ-כא

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APPENDIX: LADINO TRANSLATIONS OF THE ARAMAIC TEXTS IN THE VARIOUS TRANSLATIONS

Amsterdam 1664²⁸

1. Cantares y alabaciones, que **dixo** Selomoh el **Propheta**¹, Rey de Israë² con **espírito**³ de **profhecía**⁴, delante Señor de todo el mundo. **A.**

Diez cantares, fueron dichos en el mundo este⁵, cantar este, alabado mas que todos ellos, cantar⁶ primero, dixo Adam, en tiẽpo que fue perdonado à el su peccado, y vino dia⁷ del Sabath, y mamparò⁸ sobre el, abriò su boca **y dixo, Psalmo**⁹ cantar¹⁰, para dia de Sabath.

2. Dixo Selomoh el Propheta¹¹, **Bendito** su nombre de. **A.** que dió à¹² nos ley¹³, por mano de **Mosse**¹⁴ **escrivano** grande, escrita sobre dos tablas de piedra, y **seys** ordenes de Misná y Talmud¹⁵ con meldadura, y era hablan con nos¹⁶ fazes con fazes como varon¹⁷ que beza à¹⁸ su compañero, de muchedumbre de querencia, que amó á¹⁸ nos **avantajadamente**, mas que à setenta pueblos.

3. A boz de tus **milagros**, y tus barraganias, q' hiziste à pueblo **de** casa de Israë^l, se estremecieron todos los pueblos, que oyeron à oyda de tus barraganias, y tus señales buenas, y tu nombre Santo fue oydo en toda la tierra, q' era escogido mas que azeyte de la **vncion**, que era vntanse sobre **cabeças** de **los** Reyes y **Sacerdotes**, y por tanto amaron los justos por andar detras **de camino de** tu bien, por que hereden el mundo el este, y el mundo **que viene**.

Constantinople 1744

1. Cantares y alavaciones que dišo Šelomoh el profeta, rey de Yišrá'el con **esprito** de **profezia delante** Senyor de todo el mundo YY.

Diez cantares fueron dichos en el mundo **el** este; canrar este alavado más que todos ellos.

Cantar primero dišo Adam en **ora** que fue perdonado a el su pecado; vino **el** día de Šabat y mamparó sovre el avrió su boca y dišo salmo cantar para dia **del** Šabat.

2. Dišo Šelomoh el **profeta: bendicho** su nombre de YY que dio a.nos ley por mano de Mošeh el escrivano grande escrita sovre dos tavlas de piedra y seš ordenes de Mišnah y

²⁸ These are the variations from Amsterdam 1712 according to Pueyo Mena, 2008: 215: 1. profeta; 2. Israel; 3. espíritu; 4. profecía; 5. el este; 6. ellos. Cantar; 7. el día; 8. amparó; 9. dixo psalmo; 10. de cántico; 11. propheta; 12. dio a; 13. Ley; 14. Mosseh,; 15. Gemra; 16. Nos,; 17. Varón; 18. a. The variations are minor and pertain mostly to orthography, stress assignments, and punctuation marks. Definite articles are also marked differently. The only lexical difference is the use of *Gemara* in 1712 instead of *Talmud* in 1664.

Talmud con meldadura y era avlán con nos fases con fases, como varón que beza a su companyero de muchidumbre de querensia, que amó a nos mas que a setenta puevlos.

3. A boz de tus maravilyas, y tus barraganias que **izistes** a puevlo de caza de Yiśrā'el se estremesieron todos los puevlos que oyeron a oída de tus barraganias; y tus senyales **las** buenas, y tu nombre el santo fue oído en toda la tierra que era escoğido, mas que azeite de la untasion que era untánse sovre **cavesas** de reyes y *kohanīm*; y por tanto amaron los ĵustos por andar detras **senderos** de tu bien por que ereden el mundo el este y el mundo que viene.

Venecia 1778

1. Cantares y alabaciones que dišo Šelomo el profeta rey de Israel con esprito de profezia **delante** Senyor de todo el mundo YY.

Diez cantares fueron dichos enel mundo **el** este cantar este alabado mas que todos ellos.

Cantar primero dišo Adam en **ora** que fue perdonado a el su pecado vino el día de šabat y mamparo sobre el abrió su boca y dišo salmo cantar para dia de šabat.

2. Dišo Šelomo el profeta, **bendicho** su nombre de YY, que dio a nos ley por mano de Moše el escribano grande escrita sobre dos tablas de piedra y seš ordenes de Mišna y Talmud **con** meldadura y era hablan con nos faces con faces, como varon que beza a su companyero, de muchidumbre de querencia, que **amo** a nos, mas que a setenta puevlos.

3. A boz de tus **marabilyas** y tus barraganias que hiziste a pueblo de caza de Israel, se estremesieron todos los puevlos que oyeron a oida de tus barraganias, y tus **senyales las** buenas, y tu nombre el santo, fue oido en toda la tierra que era **escuchado** más que azeite de la untacion que era untanse, sobre cabeça de reyes y **kohanim** por tanto amaron los ĵustos por andar detras **sinderos** de tu bien por que ereden el mundo el este y el mundo que viene.

Saloniki 1876

1. Cantares y alabaciones que dišo Šelomo el porfeta rey de Israel con esprito de **porfeztizia delante** Sinyor de todo el mundo YY.

Diez cantares, fueron dichos en el mundo **el** este, canrar este alabado mas que todos elyos.

Cantar primero, dišo Adam, en tiempo que fue perdonado a.el su pecado, **bino** dia de el šabat y mamparo **sobre** el, **abrió** su boca i dišo, salmo cantar para dia de šabat.

2. Dišo Šelomo el porfeta, bindicho su nombre de YY, que dio anos ley, por mano de Moše el escrivano grande, escrita sobre dos tablas de piedra, y seš ordenes de Mišna, y Talmud con meldadura, y era ablan con nos faces con faces, como varón que beza a su companyero, de muchidumbre de querencia, que aquerencio anos, y **avantaĵada** mente mas que a setenta pueblos.

3. A boz de tus maraviyas, y tus barraganias, que izites a pueblo caza de Israel, se estremecieron todos los pueblos, que oyeron a oída de tus barraganias, y tus señales **las** buenas, y tu nombre el santo, fue oído en toda la tierra, que era escoĵido, más que aceite de la untacion, que era untanse, sobre **cabesa** de reyes y **kohanim**, y por tanto amaron los ĝustos, por andar detras **sinderos** de tu bien, porque ereden el mundo el este y el mundo **el** que viene.

Livorno 1929

1. Cantares y alavaciones que **diĥo** Šelomo el **profeta** rey de Israel con **espíritu** de porfezia **delante** Senyor de todo el mundo YY.

Dies cantares fueron dichos en el mundo **el este**. **Canrar** este alabado mas que todos ellos.

Cantar primero, **diĥo** Adam en **ora** que fue perdonado a el su pecado, vino **el** día de šabat y mamparo sobre el abrio su boca y **diĥo** salmo cantar para día **del** šabat.

2. Diĥo Šelomo el **profeta**, bendito su nombre de YY, que dio a nos ley, por mano de Moše el escribano grande, escrita sobre dos tablas de piedra, y **seis** ordenes de Mišna y Talmud, con meldadura, y era ablan con nos faces con faces, como varón que beza a su companyero, de muchidumbre de querencia, **que amo** a nos, mas que a setenta pueblos.

3. A boz de tus marabilyas, y tus barraganias, que izites a pueblo de caza de Israel se estremecieron todos los pueblos que oyeron a oida de tus barraganias, y tus senyales **los** buenos, y tu nombre el santo fue oido en toda la tierra que era **escoĥido** mas que azeite de la untacion que era untanse sobre **cabesas** de reyes y **saserdotes** y por tanto amaron los **ĥustos** por andar detras **senderos** de tu bien por que ereden el mundo el este y el mundo que viene.