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TAMAR ALEXANDER-ELIEZER PAPO

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ON THE POWER OF THE WORD: HEALING INCANTATIONS OF BOSNIAN SEPHARDIC WOMEN

The article is dedicated to Sephardic popular medicine, more precisely to Sephardic feminine traditional healing incantations, the way these were preserved and perpetuated in the Sarajevo Jewish community. These incantations are set, meticulous magical formulas widely distributed among Sephardic communities, that have parallels in Christian Iberian culture (the land of origin of the community's members) as well as in the culture of Ottoman Muslims and Christians (the country of Sephardic resettlement). The authors perceive these incantations as a literary genre in all regards, and the article proposes a literary-cultural analysis of all such incantations that were preserved in Bosnian tradition. The limitation to one single communal tradition allowed for a more sharp distinction between the different sub-genres, as well as for a proposal of a model that could, in future, constitute a research instrument applicable to the genre in general.

Keywords:

Bosnian Sephardic folklore, oral literature, traditional medicine, folk healing, high tradition versus low tradition, popular beliefs, evil eye, white and black magic.

INTRODUCTION

Belief in the power of the word is one of the core principles of magic thinking, in all cultures, throughout generations. A word once spoken cannot be taken back, it operates in reality-and it even has the power to create reality.¹ Many of the speech customs in Sephardic society are based on this belief. Thus, for example, in his book *Ya'alezu Ḥasidim*,² Ribbi Eliezer ben Isak Papo, one of the most

1 For a discussion of the topic in Jewish culture, see E. Urbach, *The Sages -- Their Concepts and Beliefs* [Hebrew], Jerusalem 1986, 103–14; J. Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, Philadelphia 2004, 78–84; and also J. Z. Lauterbach, “The Belief in the Power of the Word”, *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 14 (1939), 287–302. On the power of the word in the Sephardic context, see I. J. Levy & R. Levy Zumwalt, *Ritual Medical Lore of Sephardic Women: Sweetening the Spirits, Healing the Sick*, Urbana and Chicago 2002, 74–94.

2 E. I. Papo, *Ya'alezu Ḥasidim: Sefer Mussar we-ʿEṣot* (first edition: Jerusalem 1983). Citations in this article were taken from the second edition: Jerusalem 1989. For the ideal concept of speech among the Sephardic rabbis, see the entry *Dibbur* (Speech) in E. I. Papo, *Pele Yo'eṣ*, Constantinople 1822.



famous *Hahamim* of Sarajevo and one of the greatest *Mussar*-leaders in the XIX century, cautions his flock as follows:

*Do not open your mouth to the Devil, for a covenant has been forged with the lips, and a person should not call his comrade goy (non-Jew) or mumar (apostate) and the like, lest Heaven forbid, it will come true regarding him or his offspring.*³

In line with the same concept, in the Sephardic popular culture one should not mention demons by name, for the very mention of them leads to their appearance. Rather, one should use euphemisms, such as: *los de basho* (those from below), *los mejores de mozotros* (those better than us), and so on. Moreover, members of the Sephardic group sometimes call the demons *pan barato* (cheap bread). If the word already has the power to create reality, then not only must one refrain from mentioning demons (whose appearance, after all, is unwanted), but should even substitute their name with something that everyone wants to have available – namely: cheap bread, i.e. an easy livelihood.

Obviously, one must be careful with curses, too since they can also influence reality. Therefore, curses are often made in a form of a self-abolishing clause like, for example: *El Dio ke no te mate* (May God not kill you), or *El Dio ke no lo tome* (May God not take him).

Even the story of a negative personal experience should be shifted from the first to the third person, and from here to there. For example, the words *estava hazino* (I was ill) will be immediately followed by the words *el/eya aya* (that one there), which transfers the evil to an unknown person and to an unknown place. The mentioning of diseases or unfortunate events is usually accompanied by a distancing expression, such as: *londje de mozotros* (far away from us), *leshos de kaza de Djidio* (far from a Jewish home), or *ke non moz oyga la mala ora* (May you not hear an evil hour).

In contrast, until the beginning of modern times, the Sephardic Jews made profuse use of blessings apt for an occasion or a personal situation of an individual at a given moment, since the blessing has the power to influence reality. For example, unmarried persons were customarily blessed with *novio/novia ke te vea* (May we have the privilege of seeing you as a groom/bride), a married woman with *afijada ke te vea* (May we have the privilege of seeing you with sons)—and to a performer of a good deed they would say, *el Dio ke to lo page kon bueno* (May God pay you a fine reward).

3 Ibid., p. 214.



Of the supreme importance in the interpretation of dreams are the words uttered by the interpreter, since the dream follows none other than its solution.⁴ A negative interpretation will result in a negative realization of the dream—and vice versa. Especially bad dreams require a verbal ceremony called improvement of a dream in which three people say to the dreamer *halma ṭava haze* (you saw a good dream) three times. The very utterance of the words has the power to turn the bad dream into a good one. One may consider this ceremony parallel to the healing ceremonies, which are also based on utterances.

In this article we wish to deal with the Sephardic healing rituals based on *prikantes*,⁵ that is: on the healing incantations.⁶ Most of the rituals comprise words and actions, yet in each ceremony the ratio between these two factors differs. Generally, in personal rites, such as healing rituals, stress is placed on the verbal aspect. In contrast, in collective ceremonies more emphasis is given to the visual aspect.⁷ We shall concentrate on the texts accompanying healing rites from the tradition of the Sarajevo community, which had not been widely documented nor drawn scholarly attention. This community began to take form a few decades after the Expulsion from Spain, mainly through the itinerant traders from Salonika, who slowly began to settle in this important commercial locus that served as a crossroads for the exchange of merchandise between the Ottoman Empire and the Christian Europe.

As with all other urban centers in the Ottoman Empire, Sarajevo too was a multi-ethnic city. The local Muslims (mostly local Slavic population that converted to Islam following the Ottoman conquest) dealt mainly with warfare and administration-while commerce was concentrated in the hands of city's Jews

4 *Talmud Yerušalmi*, Ma'aser Šeni, ch. 4, p. 55, col. 3, halaḥa 6; *Talmud Bavli*, Beraḥot 55–57; *Midraš Eḥa Rabbah*, Vilna ed., ch. 1, Buber ed., peraša1, 51–55; see also, S. Almuli, *Mefašer Helmin*, Salonika 1516, and *Pitron Halomot*, Amsterdam 1637, in *Sefer Pitron Halomot ha-Šalem*, ed. M. Bakal, Jerusalem 1965.

5 This is the common pronunciation in Sarajevo. There are other dialects, however, in which the term is pronounced as *prekante*.

6 A wide-ranging literature of Jewish incantations was already in existence at the end of the ancient period and in the Middle Ages. It is documented in magic objects and many guidebooks. For a study of the phenomenon, see Y. Harari, *Early Jewish Magic: Research, Method, Sources* [Hebrew], Jerusalem 2010. Selections from this literature found their way into the modern-time remedy books (see, for example, PhD dissertation by Hagit Matras, *Hebrew Charm Books: Content and Origins * Based on Books Printed in Europe During the 18th Century*, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem 1997. Precisely against the background of the traditional, male incantation literature, the genre of Sephardic *prikantes* gains intensity.

7 S. T. Tambiah “The Magical Power of Words”, *Man* 3, (1968), 175–208.



and Serbs. While most of Bosnian Christians (Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats) lived outside the urban centers and were peasants or artisans, Bosnian Jewish minority lived exclusively in the large cities, firstly, only in Sarajevo – but later, in Travnik also. With the Austro-Hungarian occupation (1878–1918) and the blossoming of industry that came in its wake, the Jews began to settle also in other cities of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Relations between the Jewish minority and the ruling Muslims, as well as between the Jewish minority and the two Christian communities were decent and at times even cordial.⁸ With the arrival of Ribbi David ben Jakov Pardo⁹ Sarajevo became a leading Jewish community. Until then its rabbis had been recruited from elsewhere, and they were mostly simple Torah scholars who relied for their instructions upon the rulings of the major rabbis in important centers of Jewish law. But from the time this *Haham*, who was one of the leading Torah scholars of the XVIII century, took up residence in the city, the status of the community changed from one extreme to the other. Questions of *halaha* (Jewish law) were addressed to Ribbi David Pardo from all over the Sephardic world, and the yeshiva that he founded ordained rabbis who served as *halahic* arbiters in the Balkan region.

2. RESEARCH SURVEY

Concentrating back on the prikantes of this specific group, the first researcher to pay attention to the practice was Moshe David Gaon, one of the pioneers of Sephardic studies in Israel and a native of Travnik in Bosnia and Herzegovina. His articles on the topic will be cited below extensively. Isaac Levy and Rosemary Levy-Zumwalt,¹⁰ who wrote a book on medicine rituals among

8 Attesting to that is the unique festival of the Sarajevo Jews called *Purim de Saray*, indicating the rebellion of the leaders of the Muslim community in Sarajevo against the Bosnian *wazir* who spread blood libels against the leaders of the Jewish community in an attempt to extort money from them. This event also had literary reverberations; see, for example, E. Papo, *La megila de Saray*, Jerusalem 1999.

9 On the history of the Jews of Sarajevo from the time of the founding of the community up to the Austro-Hungarian conquest, see M. Levy, *Die Sephardim in Bosnien, Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Juden auf der Balkanhalbinsel* (reprint of the 1911 edition), Klagenfurt 1996; this book was also translated into Ladino, M. Levy, *Los Sefaradim de Bosna por Dr. Gran Rabino de Sarajevo*, La Aksion, Salonika 1932. On the subsequent period, from the Austro-Hungarian occupation through to the Holocaust, see A. Pinto, *Jevreji Sarajeva i BiH*, Sarajevo 1987; as well as Y. Maestro, “Qehilat Sarajevo ben Šete Milhamot ‘Olam” [Hebrew: The Sarajevo Community between Two World Wars] in Z. Loker *A History of Yugoslav Jews*, vol. 2, *Jews in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in Modern Times: Essays and Articles* [Hebrew], Jerusalem & Tel-Aviv & Haifa 1991, 264 and 281

10 Levy & Levy-Zumwalt (see above, n. 1.) The eighth chapter of the book is devoted entirely



Sephardic women, interviewed a number of informants from Sarajevo and Zenica.¹¹ However, their work does not contain any *prikantes* from Bosnia that had not been published previously.¹² One “new” Bosnian *prikante* appears in Susana Weich-Shahak’s book on Sephardic children’s songs,¹³ and it came from Sarajevo-born informant. We can state that, except for the important article by Krinka Vidaković-Petrov,¹⁴ which deals with the interrelations between Sephardic folklore in the Balkans and the folklore of neighboring ethnic groups (putting special stress on the mutual relations between the folklore of the Sephardic Jews in the former Yugoslavia and its Slavic environment), there are no current studies analytically treating *prikantes* from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In contrast, a handful of articles has been published on the *prikantes* of other Sephardic communities from the ex-Ottoman area. First mention goes to the pioneering article by Avraham Danon¹⁵ on the folk beliefs of the Jews of the Ottoman Empire, which appeared as early as the end of the nineteenth century. There are also some more recent studies, such as the work by Raphael Patai¹⁶ that focuses on the *indulko* ceremony,¹⁷ as it was carried out in the Ottoman Empire and on a remedy called *mumya*.¹⁸ The previously mentioned study by Levy and Levy-Zumwalt deals with Sephardic Jews in general, although particular emphasis was given to the heritage of the Jews originating from Rhodes. Recently, the comprehensive and detailed article by Yaron Ben-Naeh on magical beliefs and acts among the Ottoman Empire Jews appeared.¹⁹

to the topic of *prikantes*, and the ninth chapter deals with the *sarradura* (enclosure) ritual and the *prikantes* related to it.

11 See an impressive list with the names of 70 informants; see above, n. 1, 207–10. Only three of the interviewees, however, were natives of Bosnia, two from Sarajevo and one from Zenica.

12 In chapter 5 n. 14, they cite the incantation *Te lambo* (I will lick you) by J. Maestro (more about him will be said later) as a parallel to the tradition of Rhodes..

13 S. Weich-Shahak, *Repertorio tradicional infantil sefardí: retahilas, juegos, canciones y romances de tradición oral*, Madrid 2001.

14 K. Vidaković-Petrov, “Spanish Folklore and the Balkan Cultural Environment”, in T. Alexander, A. Haim, G. Hasan-Rokem and E. Hazan (eds.) *History and Creativity in The Sephardi and Oriental Jewish Communities*, Jerusalem 1994, 285–300.

15 A. Danon, “Les superstitions des juifs ottomans”, *Méusine*, 8 (1896-1897), 265-281; “Les superstitions des juifs ottomans”, *Actes de l’Onzième Congrès International des Orientalistes*, Paris 1899, 259–270.

16 R. Patai, “Indulco and Mumia”, *Journal of American Folklore*, 77 (1964), 3–11.

17 That is, on the whole, how the term was used in Sarajevo, but there is an alternate form: *induluku*. In other dialects it was found as *indulko* or *endulko*.

18 This term, which originates from the mummies of Ancient Egypt, was used in all dialects as *mumya*, and the intended meaning was the dried remnants of bones that were preserved. In traditional society healing power was attributed to these remains.

19 Y. Ben-Naeh, “A Tried and Tested Spell: Magic Beliefs and Acts among Ottoman Jews” [Hebrew], *Pe’amim*, 85 (Autumn 2000), 89-111.



In Michael Molcho's book on the customs of the Jews of Salonika,²⁰ the author dedicates a chapter to magic practices customary among this community.²¹ The first scholar to focus exclusively on the topic of healing rituals in the heritage of one single community is Melvin Firestone,²² who dealt with the healing ceremonies among the Sephardic Jews of Seattle.

3. CORPUS

As far as Bosnian prikantes are concerned, this far we have located 19 different texts belonging to this communal tradition. We based ourselves on seven sources: Sifre de-Ve Rav²³ by Ribbi David ben Jakov Pardo;

20 M. Molho, *Usos y costumbres de los sefardies de Salónica*, Madrid-Barcelona 1950.

21 *Ibid.*, 276–302.

22 M. Firestone, "Sephardic Folk-Curing in Seattle", *Journal of American Folklore*, 75 (1926), 301–10.

23 His commentary on Numbers and Deuteronomy. *Sifre* is a tanaïtic *midraš halaḥa*, compiled by the School of R. Akiva, on the last two books of the Pentateuch, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The quotations in this article were taken from the new Hebrew edition of the Lev Sameah Institute, Jerusalem 1990). Par. 172 of the *midraš* deals with the verse, *One who casts spells, or who consults ghosts or familiar spirits, or one who inquires of the dead* (Deut. 18:11), and explains the meaning of the verse as follows: One who casts a spell – one casts with a snake, one casts with a scorpion. The statement of the *midraš* is clarified by the ruling of Maimonides (*Mišne Tora*, Hilḥot °Avoda Zara we-Huqot ha-Goyyim, ch. 11, halaḥa 12 in the Qapaḥ ed., according to the Yemenite manuscripts; *halaḥa* 10 in the printed editions): *Who casts, it is someone who speaks words that are not a regular language and have no meaning, and he thinks in his foolishness that they are beneficial to the point that they say such-and-such over the snake or the scorpion does not harm. And whoever says such-and-such over a person is not harmed by them---*. In his explanation of the statements of the *midraš*, Ribbi David Pardo has recourse to the issue in *Sandhedrin* 65a, and he summarizes it and elucidates it according to Rashi. Under discussion is a controversy between Rabba and Abaye over the issue of the punishment of one who *burns incense to a demon*. According to Rashi's commentary, this means one who burns incense as an act of magic in order to call demons. As Ribbi David Pardo continues, he describes in astonishment and repulsion the ritual for calling up demons, which is called *indulko grande* (great sweetness) as was customary among the Jews of Bosnia. The description will be quoted and analyzed in the ensuing.



Dameseq Eli^cezer²⁴ and Mešeq Beti²⁵ by Ribbi Eliezer ben Santo (Šem-Tov)

24 *Dameseq Eli'ezer* consists of three parts: the first, *Dameseq Eli'ezer: Heleq Oraḥ Hayyim*, was printed in Belgrade in 1860/61; the second, *Dameseq Eli'ezer: Heleq Yore De'ah*, was printed in Belgrade in 1864/65; and the third, *Dameseq Eli'ezer: Heleq Šeni de Yore De'a*, was printed in Jerusalem in 1883/84. All three were written in Ladino in the form of a dictionary, namely, the *halaḥot* appearing in the book are given as alphabetically arranged entries. The first part deals with commandments concerning daily life (such as *tallit*, *tefillin*, prayer, *birkot nehenin* (blessing for everyday experiences), Grace after Meals, and so on), or festivals (Passover, Jewish New Year, Sukkot) and the Day of Atonement, joyous days (Purim and Hanukkah), and fast days (Tiša^c be-Av). The second part deals with issues involving the dead (ritualistic washing of the body, eulogy, funeral), laws of mourning, modesty, and family purity. The third part deals with issues of *kašerut* (cooking by non-Jews, mixtures, meat and milk, non-*kašer* meat, salting, immersion of vessels, and so on); it also deals again with family purity (immersion in the *miqwe* prior to marriage, menstruant's immersion, and so on) as well as issues of interest and even issues concerning magic, to which only one paragraph is dedicated. Under the entry "magic" the author describes the *indulko* ceremony "that the women perform for the demons". In the ensuing, the description will be quoted extensively and analyzed.

25 E. S. Papo, *Mešeq Beti*, Sarajevo 1871/72. The book is an alphabetical collection of Sabbath laws. Under the entry *hole* (ill person), par. 23, is the description of a *espanto de la miel* ([treatment of] fear [by means of] honey) ceremony. This ceremony takes place on set days, namely, the days of public Torah reading (Monday, Thursday, and the Sabbath), so the author needed to respond to the question as to whether it is permitted for this treatment to be performed on the Sabbath or not: *Para demander de los sidim, loke es mutar en semana es mutar en Shabat* (Šulḥan ^cAruḥ, # 307, paragrafo 18). *I ansi es mutar de aprikantar en Shabat prikantes en los ojos i en la kavesa* (Šulḥan ^cAruḥ, paragrafo 301, subparagrafo 57 i responza de MoHaRaM bar Baruh 55). *I ansi es nuestro minag de ayer el espanto de la miel en Shabat, i siendo es muy provechozo eskrivire su nusah...* (Dealing with demons, what is permitted on a weekday is permitted on the Sabbath (see Šulḥan ^cAruḥ, *Oraḥ Hayyim*, # 307, par. 18). Likewise, it is permitted to use an incantation on the Sabbath for eye diseases and headaches (see Šulḥan ^cAruḥ, *Oraḥ Hayyim*, # 301, par. 27; and also Responsa by MoHaRaM bar Baruh, # 55). Moreover, it is our custom to perform treatment of fear by means of honey on the Sabbath, and since we are speaking of a very effective healing method, I shall write the formula).

Also worthy of mention here is the fact that this was the first book printed in Hebrew letters in Sarajevo. The title page states: *At the new press here in Sarajevo*. Also of note is a detail not cited before in the research into the history of the Sarajevo community or in research into the *halaḥic* endeavor of Ribbi Eliezer ben Santo (Šem-Tov) Papo: the fact that the obtaining of Hebrew letters and the printing of Jewish books at the district printing press of Ottoman Bosnia should be attributed precisely to this *Haḥam*. According to the instructions of the *Tanzimat* from 1865, district rulers throughout the Ottoman Empire were obliged to establish in the capital of their districts a printing press that would print a newspaper in the local language and in the letters customarily used in it. The Bosnia *wazir* at that time, Topal Šerif Osman Pasha, applied the law, and in April 1866 the first printing press was opened in Sarajevo. The rabbi turned to the *wazir* in the name of the Jews of Sarajevo with a request that the new printing house obtain Hebrew letters so that the Jews, too, could enjoy it. We learned of this detail from a critical article published in installments in *El Korreo de Viena*, issues 8, 9, and 10 (1872), against the first booklet of *Mešeq*



Papo;²⁶ the essay by Dr. Isak Izrael on the folk medicine of Bosnian Jews;²⁷ the article by Jakov Maestro²⁸ on “superstitions” among Sephardic Jews;²⁹ the Romancero³⁰ by Samuel Elazar;³¹ and the quoted work of Weich-Shahak.³²

The scarcity of texts from Sarajevo stems from a number of reasons:

- A. Resistance of the rabbinic establishment to magic rituals,
- B. Aversion of the educated classes towards irrational concepts and practices,
- C. Concealment of information on the part of the healers owing to two main motives: distribution of the text might invalidate its magic power; its dissemination might create competition that would be

26 About this man and his *halahic* work, see D. M. Bunis, “Elements of Hebrew and Balkan Origin in the Terminology of Foodways in R. Eliezer Ben Sem Tov Papo’s *Sefer Damesek Eliezer* - Judezmo Rabbinical Literature as a Linguistic and Folkloristic Resource, Part One” [Hebrew], *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Folklore* 5-6, (1984), 151-195.

27 И. Израел, “Нешто из народне медицине Јевреја у Босни”, *Spomenica o proslavi tridesetogodišnjice sarajevskoga kulturno-prosvetnoga društva La Benevolencija*, Beograd 1924, 56–61. In this article there are eight *prikantes*, seven of them were registered apparently through field work, while one of them, *espanto de la miel* ([treatment of] fear [by means of] honey), was copied from the book *Mešeq Beti* written by Ribbi Eliezer ben Santo (Šem-Tov) Papo.

28 J. Maestro, “Praznovjerje kod sefardskih Jevreja”, *La Benevolencija: Godišnjak*, Sarajevo-Beograd 1933, 110–16. As a part of the description of the folk beliefs, the author quotes a slightly different version than the one listed by Izrael for the simple incantation against the evil eye performed by every mother, when necessary – and in the continuation also the incantation that accompanies the *echar los livianos* (melting lead in water).

29 The article has a general title but the author based himself mainly on the tradition of his community.

30 S. Elazar, *El romancero judeo-español*, Sarajevo 1987.

31 Elazar’s system is unclear and the title of this important anthology is somewhat misleading. Elazar does not register only romance but rather the various types of poems and songs of Sephardic Jews in Bosnia and Herzegovina, from oral song to written poetry. The book has twelve sections: old Spanish ballad, Ladino poetry, the poetry of the Sephardic poets in Bosnia for the Sabbath and festival poems, songs for pilgrims to the Land of Israel, poems with religious or biblical motifs, patriotic songs, congratulatory songs, lamentations, sorcery and medical folklore. In the eleventh section *Sortilegios* (sortileges), there are ten *prikantes*, only one of them registered by Elazar himself (as heard from Moric Kabiljo), four were written down his sister, Sara Elazar, from two informants (three from Tia [Aunt] Merkada Papo, and one from Ribbi Menahem Romano), one was copied from an old manuscript, dating – in Elazar’s opinion – to 1720, and four were copied from the list of Dr. Isak Izrael that was already mentioned, while he noted the source.

32 See n. 13 above. On p. 106 appears an incantation against usagre (a skin rash), which was registered as heard from a Sarajevo-born informant. The differences between this version and the one written down by Isak Izrael are minor, as we will see in the ensuing.



detrimental to their professional monopoly.

D. Annihilation of the community in the Holocaust period.

One may learn of the attitude held by the Bosnian rabbinic elite to rituals of this kind from the emotional opening by Ribbi David Pardo to the description of the indulko mentioned above:

No matter what, I will not refrain myself from expressing my sorrow, for from the day I came to the lands of Ishmael I was shocked daily by acts that the women here performed for the ill.³³

The attitude of the Sephardic intellectuals in Bosnia to magic beliefs and practices common among the Sephardic community is well illustrated by the confession of Moshe David Gaon. His article “The Fetters of the Indulko”³⁴ has a subtitle that reads “Memories and Revelations of Iniquities”. The iniquity Gaon is confessing to is personal as well as public. Personal, because when he was young, he allowed beliefs of this kind to influence and frighten him: Since I came in contact with the topic noted above and all its ramifications, I felt as if I were caught in the net of some evil spirit that incessantly dogged my steps, despite my desire and attempt to stand on my own and to escape from its corruptions,³⁵ and public, because the Sephardic public holds beliefs and practices of this type and perpetuates them: When still a lad, they taught me, that wherever I turn I must be careful, because ‘they’ are lying in wait for my steps, and being extremely sensitive to bad happenings, I did not cease thinking about them night and day, lest I fall in their net---.³⁶ Gaon’s tone is critical, yet apologetic. He castigates the magic beliefs and practices common among Sephardic Jews and calls them empty beliefs that have not yet stopped damaging and ruining every good thing, while those holding them, in his opinion, have lost their way and lost their discernment, seeing in them a life preserver. According to Gaon, these beliefs and practices are an affliction-but this affliction is embedded in the consciousness of every mortal whoever he may be, and is not particular to Sephardic Jews. Moreover, all these negative revelations were called in Mosaic Law abominations of the gentiles, but the fear led them all to unfathomable chaos, caused them to fail in their twisted paths. Since the physicians did not have the power to provide salvation, the confused sought advice and wisdom from the dwellers of the dark

33 *Sifre de-Ve Rav*, vol. 3, p. 386, Perašat Šofeṭim, par. 172.

34 M. D. Gaon, “Ḥaršuvot ha-Indulko” [Hebrew: Chains of *Indulko*] *Yed’a ‘am* V (1958/59), 29 – 34.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

36 *Ibid.*, in the continuation.



and their lackeys.

In short, according to Gaon, these beliefs and practices contradict normative Judaism and are to be seen as the fruit of the influence of the non-Jewish environment. Gaon treats the topic of Sephardic folk medicine in an additional article,³⁷ and again his statements bare an apologetic tone:

The aspiration to be rid of the evil, to distance oneself from his visage and to be purified from his filth, led the simple, uneducated and unsophisticated person, to grasp superstitions, to cling to their defilement, and to seek defense and refuge in the shadow of rafters of spirits that lead one astray, who do their deeds in the dead of night. The fact that Godfearers were drawn into the net of these evil men and put themselves at the disposal of their arbitrariness, ready to attest and prove how great the influence of these beliefs were among the Jews of the Eastern communities, who inadvertently were mired in the Exile of Arabia and Turkey, and in their distress saw in every type of magic and incantation a way out of their complications. Even today the power of these useless customs among the groups mentioned is tremendous, although their value has decidedly declined, the more that those who believe in them come closer to civilized cultures.

It turns out, therefore, that both Sephardic elites, the traditional rabbinic elite, as well as the modernistic, enlightened and westernized elite were reviled to the same extent by the magic beliefs and practices current among the common uneducated masses, albeit for different reasons: the rabbis owing to *halahic* considerations (such as: fear of idol-worship and the customs of the gentiles), and the enlightened modernists because they felt that these beliefs and practices contradicted common sense and gave a putrid reputation to the Jews among the cultured, progressive nations.

The issue of concealment of information by the healers themselves is also directly attested to from Gaon's statements about his unsuccessful attempts, during the time of his youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to stimulate the female folk healers to talk so that he could draw from them knowledge about the healing practices invoked by them: Wherever I turned in that period toward understanding the mystery, I came to be humiliated, I discerned that I was surrounded by a tendency to purposely hide the nature of the issue, which would be harmed by the

37 M. D. Gaon, "Milḥemet Sefaradim ve-Aškenazim be-Indulko" [Hebrew: Sephardic and Ashkenazi war against the indulko] *Edot*, I (1945/46), 104–107.



shedding of light, and when I asked for details about it, they easily rebuffed and mocked my questions and my modest request.³⁸

The first three reasons we enumerated above serve as well for the entire Sephardic community,³⁹ but the fourth reason (Extermination of European Jews during the Second World War) does not apply to the Jews of Turkey or old Bulgaria, since these are the only two Ladino-speaking Jewish communities that were saved from the Holocaust. Almost 90 percent of the Jews of Bosnia and Herzegovina were annihilated by Croat Ustasha government or its German sponsors. According to the study by Aleksandar Stajić and Jakov Papo, in 1941 there were 14,500 Jews (some 10,500 in Sarajevo itself) in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Only 1,600 of them survived the Croat occupation of the country.⁴⁰

In the search for Sephardic *prikantes* in Bosnia, we examined two manuscripts of medical works that were kept by the Sarajevo Jewish community,⁴¹ in

38 Ibid., p. 105.

39 On the opposition of the rabbis in other Sephardic centers, see Ben-Nach (above, n. 13) 103–8.

40 A. Stajić & J. Papo, “Ubistva i drugi zločini izvršeni nad Jevrejima u BiH u toku neprijateljske okupacije”, *Spomenica 400 godina od dolaska Jevreja u BiH*, Sarajevo 1966, 205–247. On the Holocaust of the Jews of Yugoslavia (and the Jews of Sarajevo and Bosnia and Herzegovina among them), see M. Shelah, *History of the Holocaust: Yugoslavia* [Hebrew], Jerusalem 1990. On the Holocaust of the Jews of Sarajevo and elsewhere in Bosnia and Herzegovina, see Z. Levental (ed.), *Zločini fašističkih okupatora i njihovih pomagača protiv Jevreja u Jugoslaviji*, 1952, 64–70. On the mass flight of the Jews from Sarajevo that was occupied by Croatian Nazi, the Ustaša, to the area of Italian occupation and their survival there, see М. Ристовић, *У потрази за уточиштем: Југословенски Јевреји у бекству од холокауста 1941 – 1945*, Београд 1998. On the organization of the resistance movement among the Jewish refugees in the Italian concentration camps, see A. Kamhi & M. Levinger, “Pokret otpora među Jevrejima Bosne i Hercegovine interniranim na Lopudu i Rabu”, in *Spomenica 400 godina od dolaska Jevreja u BiH*, Sarajevo 1966, 255–261. On the founding of the Jewish battalion and its dissolution with its members joining the partisan army, see J. Romano, “Jevreji u logoru na Rabu i njihovo uključivanje u narodnooslobodilački rat”, *Zbornik Jevrejskog istorijskog muzeja*, 7 (1973), 1–69.

41 One manuscript consists of 20 pages, written on both sides, with a format of 20.5 x 15 cm, while the other has 63 pages, written on both sides, and a format of 18.5 x 13.5 cm. Both are missing title pages, but according to their inventory listings it turns out that the first was written by the pharmacist David Papo, and the second by the pharmacist Tiotia (uncle) Avram Papo. They belonged to a family of pharmacists that had a pharmacy in the very heart of the Sarajevo for three hundred years. After the Holocaust the story was transferred to the Sarajevo City Museum – and today it is exhibited in the city’s Jewish museum. The first manuscript is dated to about 1818/20, and the second to about 1839/40. In the manuscript attributed to David Papo, along with *piyyuṭim* (religious poems), prayers, *komplas* (para-liturgical poems), *kansiones* (secular songs), and *romansas* (romances), there are dozens of recipes of folk medicine. The manuscript attributed



the hope that more *prikantes* would be found in them. It turned out, however, that it is quite futile to seek women's healing texts in medical books written by men. In neither of the two manuscripts did we find even one Ladino *prikante*.

There are three types of Sephardic folk healing: *prikantes*, *lprikantes*, *lehašim*⁴² and *segulot*. The *prikantes* and *lehašim* are set verbal formulations that accompany healing rituals. The prominent difference between the two types is the language of the utterance and the gender of the performer. The *prikantes* are always recited in the vernacular of the group, that is, in Ladino; while the *lehašim* are recited in the group's ritual language, that is, Hebrew or Aramaic. Also, the *prikantes* are almost always performed by women, while the *lehašim* almost always by men. In no text written in Ladino did we find the term *prikantero* (in the masculine). In contrast, its feminine counterpart: *prikantera* is attested numerous times in both: literature and historical documents.

. Dr. Izrael⁴³ who registered 7 *prikantes* which are included in our corpus (Ex. 1, 3, 7, 8, 11, 12, and 13) attests that the first two (Ex. 1 and 3) can be recited by any mother, while the remaining five (Ex. 7, 8, 11, 12, and 13) need an elderly woman who is an expert in the field. That is, not only does he limit this form of

to Tio (Uncle) Avram Papo includes hundreds of *segulot*, cures, and recipes for medicaments, and along with them also a number of amulets and folktales – but not one single *prikante*. The dating of the first manuscript is based, apparently, on a jotting on page 57 that states:

Kuando fue el anyo 5600, avia salido boz por el mundo ke ya es anyo de geula, i vieron siertas sinyales, i se metieron en moto los hahamim, i izieron derushim i limudim kon apanyamiento de djente, i izieron tefilot i sedakot i taaniyot – i kon todo no meresimos, bavonotenu arabim, i sierto el Ashem Yitbarah save sus sekretos, porke se detardo i kalu kol akisin vehu, i sierto no se ulvido de nosotros---

During the year 5600 (1839/40), a voice rang out over the world that this was the year of Redemption, and they saw certain signs, and the *Haḥamim* began to act and give sermons and give lessons to mass audiences, and they also conducted prayers and performed charitable acts and fasts – but for all this we were not rewarded, owing to our many sins. And God, may He be blessed, certainly knows the secret of why (the Redemption] is tarrying and all forecasts of the time of Redemption were proved false and so on, but for sure he has not forgotten us---

42 This genre was particularly common among the Sarajevo Jews. The only Hebrew incantation that we found in the tradition of this community (see Fig. 5 in this article) appears in the book *Bet Tefilla* by Ribbi Eliezer ben Isak Papo – but it, too, came to him from Jerusalem. The first edition of *Bet Tefilla* was published in Belgrade in 1860, by his son, Ribbi Menahem Papo. This edition was incomplete. Moreover, the ethical statements by the author and his directives, which were originally written in Hebrew, were given in Ladino translation. In 1928 Rabbi Yehiel Weisfish published a revised edition of the book in Jerusalem, according to the first edition but the selections translated into Ladino were translated back into Hebrew. Recently, in 1983, the *Pele Yo'eš* Foundation published a complete edition of the book, according to the author's autograph edition, in which the ethical statements and directives were given in Hebrew, as written by the author. The incantation under discussion appears in this edition on pages 177–82.

43 See above, n. 28.



healing solely to women, but there is an additional distinction involving the age of the healers. Actually, all the information we found about the traditional female Sephardic healers from Sarajevo indicates that the professional prikantera was an older or elderly woman, frequently a widow.⁴⁴ When a woman aged, she retired from daily life and marital relations. This was especially true if she was a widow. This retirement from sexual activity grant her a status similar to that of nuns in other cultures.⁴⁵ Like the later, the elderly Sephardic widows who devoted their lives to curing others, were perceived by their communities as possessors of special powers. Young women were busy fulfilling their obligations to their household and to their husbands and children. Moreover, according to the group norms, it was unbecoming for a young woman to go about among people's homes, and closing herself up alone with the ill person (as required by the *serradura* ritual, which will be discussed in the ensuing) would be scandalous. Only in old age and widowhood, when the women was from free of the dependence upon her father and, in turn, her husband, could she acquire independent skills for herself.⁴⁶

Three additional prikanteras (Ex. 4, 8, and 9) in our corpus were transcribed from statements by a professional prikantera of the type mentioned by Dr. Izrael, namely, from Tia (aunt) Merkada Papo, called La medika di lus Salomis (the healer of Salom family). We shall see that even the Sarajevo rabbis acknowledged the authority of these elderly women in the area of healing, for good and for bad. Thus, for example, at the end of a description of the *espanto di la miel*⁴⁷ ritual, Ribbi Eliezer ben Santo (Šem-Tov) Papo reiterates (this time in Hebrew) that a remedy under discussion has proven itself, and to reinforce his statement, he relies upon information he was told directly from the elderly women in his community:

This is what I have heard from the old men and *old women*, and this is what I have found in an ancient manuscript as noted previously, letter by letter, and that it has been tried and true for a number of ills.⁴⁸

44 See S. Starr-Sered, "Women 's Spirituality in a Jewish Context" [Hebrew], in Y. Atzmon (ed.), *A View into the Lives of Women in Jewish Societies* [Hebrew], Jerusalem 1995, 245–257.

45 Tambiah, see n. 7 above.

46 See R. Elijor, "Present but Absent, Still Life and A Pretty Maiden who has No Eyes: On the presence and absence of women in the Hebrew Language, in Jewish Culture and in Israeli life" [Hebrew], E. Reiner and R. Livneh-Freudenthal (eds.), *Streams into the Sea: Studies in Jewish Culture and its Context, Dedicated to Felix Posen* [Hebrew], Tel-Aviv 2001, 191-211.

47 This is the term as used in Sarajevo — and sometimes with the elision of the vowel *e* at the beginning of the word *espantu*. In other dialects, the ritual's name occurs as *espanto de la miel*. A literal translation of the term is "fear of honey", but it refers to treatment of fear by means of honey.

48 E. S. Papo, *Mešeq Beti* (see n. 25 above), entry *holeh* (ill person), par. 23, at the end of the





Fig. 1

Tia Merjama Hajon del Romero (*Aunt Miriam Hayon of the Rosemary*), a well-known midwife and *prikantera* in Sarajevo at the turn of the XIX century, wearing the typical headdress of widows

paragraph.



Usually, traditional Sephardic rabbis did not quote women (young or old) as the source of reliable information. However, though, in the question of healing on the Sabbath,⁴⁹ as well as in case of differentiating between healing methods

that had been proven as effective (and therefore excluded from the prohibition of following *darḥe ha-Emori*⁵⁰ i. e. religious beliefs of the nations of the world)⁵¹ the female medical traditions were taken into consideration and seriously dealt with. Rabbinic law, as a rule, relies upon the opinion of experts in different non-legal fields, and being the fact that in the area of folk medicine the opinion of women professionals is considered authoritative, their traditions are mentioned honorably. It should be stressed, however, that elderly men were added to the women as a source of information, and their appearance even precedes that of the women. In the negative context, however, of the *indulko* ritual, Ribbi Eliezer ben Santo (Šem-Tov) Papo imputes the phenomenon exclusively to women. Moreover, he terms the phenomenon as *aznedades de mujeres* (asinine deeds of women). Ribbi David Pardo also begins his description of the *indulko grande* by ascribing the phenomenon to the women, saying: I was astounded daily by deeds that the women perform here for the ill...⁵²

In the continuation, Dr. Izrael himself stresses the distinction between the activity of the women and that of the men in this context:

Healing the evil eye is not the exclusive bailiwick of these grandmothers, elderly rabbis or God-fearing rabbinic sages are versed in this as well—but then the ceremony is not based on any formulas—but rather on reading scriptural verses and prayers, especially from Psalms.⁵³

49 See *Šulḥan ʿAruḥ, Oraḥ Ḥayyim*, # 301, pars. 25–27.

50 The term *Darḥe ha-Emori* refers to the customs of other nations that have no elements of idol worship but at the same time are not considered as *wisdom of the non-Jews* (rationally acceptable things) but rather belong to the realm of their religious beliefs. They are prohibited owing to *You shall not copy the practices* (Lev. 18:3) or *You shall not follow their practices* (Ex. 23:24). For further explication of the term, see *Talmudic Encyclopedia*, vol. 7, entry *Dereḥ ha-Emori* [Hebrew].

51 For example, see *Šulḥan ʿAruḥ, Oraḥ Ḥayyim*, # 301, par. 27; # 605, par. 2; # 448, par. 1; and also *Yore Deʿa*, # 450.

52 The end of the sentence is written in Aramaic.

53 See n. 27 above.





Fig. 2

Tia Hana Ruso, called Tia Hana de la Ruda (*Aunt Hannah Ruso of the Rue*), a well-known *prikantera*, Sarajevo, at the close of the XIX Century, wearing the typical headdress of widows

Indeed, the only existing testimony there is of a *prikante* (Ex. 15) performed by a man, Mr. Salomon Kabiljo, a teacher of religious studies,⁵⁴ presents a *prikante* written in the style of a supplication to the Holy One, blessed be He, as befits a religion teacher, and only at the end appears a line typical of a traditional *prikante*. Two other *prikantes* in our corpus (Ex. 14 and 16) were recited by men—but with no reference at all to the issue of from whom the informants (Moše Kabiljo and Ribbi Menahem Romano) heard the formulation that they gave to the interviewers (Sara Elazar and Susana Weich-Shahak). However, though, one should assume that these, too, were recited by their mothers and grandmothers; that is, that we are actually dealing with *prikantes* that were registered from men who heard them from women. Even the pictures from Elazar's *Romancero*,⁵⁵ which depict two women from Sarajevo as *prikanteras* and one male as traditional pharmacist,⁵⁶ reflect the traditional division of functions by gender. If *prikanteras*

54 He is the father of the informant Moric Kabiljo. Elazar (see n. 30 above) notes on p. 345: *el mismo proceso lo empleaba el Sr. Salomon Kabiljo, el año 1912 – 1913 profesor de religión del autor* (this process was employed by Mr. Salomon Kabiljo, too, who in 1912/13 was the author's religion teacher).

55 See n. 30 above, 350 and 380.

56 See previous note, p. 356.



are always female, then *prikantes* are a female genre. Consequently, the first of the three genres of Sephardic popular medicine, the one typical of women (a group whose only language is the vernacular, that is Ladino) also has a Ladino name: *prikantes*. The other two genres, typical of men (a segment of Jewish population that received traditional Jewish education and was familiar with the canonic Hebrew texts) have Hebrew names: *leḥašim*⁵⁷ and *segulot*.

While *leḥašim* can be considered to be an exclusive male practice, sealed-off for women because they were to be said in Hebrew and/or Aramaic, the *segulot* which do not necessarily include verbal formulations could sometimes be performed by women also. However, when verbal formulations do appear in *segulot*, they are usually based on the quotation of biblical verses in Hebrew, and that in itself was sufficient to exclude the women from performing them, who did not have command of the Holy Tongue.

The fact that the *prikantes* and the ceremonies accompanying them are the almost exclusive venue of Sephardic women raises the question of the place and role of the woman in this society and in this context.⁵⁸ Highly significant for this issue are the writings of Laura Papo “Bohoreta”,⁵⁹ an important intellectual and public figure, who was active in the community between the two World Wars.⁶⁰ The majority of the literary opus of “Bohoreta” deals with Sephardic women in Bosnia. Thus, for example, the sketches that she published in the Jewish press in Sarajevo were aimed at memorializing *old types*, that is: *the old women of earlier days*.⁶¹ In the atmospheric scenes she puts on stage, “Bohoreta” tries to revive life as it used to be, but here too she concentrates mainly on female figures and faithfully depicts the Sephardic, intrafamilial, domestic environment of Bosnia

57 This genre is well rooted in the ancient tradition of Jewish magic. For an example from Sephardic tradition see Fig. 5 in this article.

58 About the relations between a man and a woman in traditional Sephardic society, as reflected in the folktale, see T. Alexander, *The Heart is a Mirror: The Sephardic Folktale*, Detroit 2008, 59–77. About these relations as reflected in the Sephardic proverb, see T. Alexander, *Words Are Better Than Bread: Study of the Judeo-Spanish Proverb* [Hebrew], Jerusalem-Beersheba 2004, 83–92.

59 For the biography of “Bohoreta” and a current list of her writings and publications, see E. Papo, “The Life Story and the Literary Opus of Laura Papo ‘Bohoreta’, the First Female Dramatist Who Wrote in Judeo-Spanish” [Hebrew], *El Presente*, 1 / *Mikan*, 8 (2007), 61 – 89.

60 About the ideological debate among the Jews of Sarajevo in that period and the position of Laura Papo “Bohoreta”, see E. Papo, “Ethnic Language in an Age of Nationalism: Bosnian Judeo-Spanish in Modern Times” [Hebrew], *Pe’amim*, 113 (2008), 11 – 51; and E. Papo: “The Linguistic Thought of Laura Papo ‘Bohoreta’” [Hebrew], *Pe’amim*, 118 (2009), 125 – 175.

61 So she said in one of the sketches published with the title “Por esto akea vieža no se kižo murir” [Ladino: Therefore, that old woman did not want to die], in *Jevrejski glas* no. 30 (1929), p. 10.



during Ottoman rule. Her social plays and sketches have a definitely feminine-social agenda, such as the struggle to abolish the custom of the dowry⁶² or the advocacy of women working.⁶³ Laura Papo–Bohoreta’s most important writing on this issue is the essay *La mužer sefardi de Bosna* (The Bosnian Sephardic woman).⁶⁴ Not only is this the first anthropological study written on this topic, but it is also a study written declaredly and consciously⁶⁵ from a decidedly feminine standpoint.

From this essay, like from the other writings by “Bohoreta”, a picture is drawn in which the Bosnian Sephardic woman, similar to Sephardic women elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire,⁶⁶ lived within their homes, surrounded by children and women. The sons who reached the age of education (six years and up) spent most of their days in the *meldar*, that is, in the traditional school,⁶⁷ while the

62 Such as, for example, in the sketch *Dotas* [Ladino: The Dowry], five typewritten pages, format 34:21 cm, held in the Sarajevo City Archive. At the end the date appears: 12 January 1927.

63 As, for example, in the play *Esterka*, handwritten text held in the Sarajevo City Archive, 131 notebook pages, format 34:21 cm. The play was written between July 1929 and July 1930.

64 Recently, Nezirović published in facsimile two versions of this essay and translated the second one into Bosnian: L. B. Papo, *Sefardska žena u Bosni*, edicija rukopisa i prevod: Muhamed Nezirović, Sarajevo 2005.

65 See, for example, her statements in the introduction to the essay (ms., p. 4): *Si todos los autores ke se eskrivieron por tema a la mužer, su alma, su ideologija, sus vistas, su evolucion, si eos savian, kuantos jerados estan en mučos puntos – i si uno de eos, rekožia estos livros ke tratan todo loke apartiene al ser de la mužer, los amontonavan uno enriva del otro, alkansava este monton la altura de la Begova đamija – la mas alta meskita de Saraj. Ken kere vinir a saver algo de sierto sovre las ižas de Hava, ke melde ovras i livros eskritos por manos de mužeres! Ea a si, se konese muy bien. Ken tiene interes ke melde El Alma de la mujer por Gina Lombroso, i vera ke no me jero! Guaj ke la mužer tiene una makula! Ea no es bastante sinsera – no avla lo ke pensa – en kurto es falsika! Si ea avlava la vertad su analiza seria mučo mas mas gjusta ke la del psiholog el mas valido...* (If all the authors who wrote on the subject of the woman, her soul, her ideology, her point of view, her development, would only know how wrong they are on many points, and if one of them would gather all the books dealing with the nature of the woman, and put them one on top of the other, the mountain that would grow would reach the height of the Gazi Husrev-beg mosque, the tallest mosque in all of Sarajevo. Anyone who really wants to know something about the daughters of Eve, let him read books written by women! She, the woman, knows herself well. Whoever is interested in the topic, let him read the book by Gina Lombroso, *The Soul of a Woman*, and he will realize I am not wrong. It’s just too bad that a woman herself is handicapped! She is not candid enough, she does not say what she thinks — in short: she is a hypocrite. If she would state the truth, her analysis would be more precise than that of the greatest psychologists...)

66 On the status of the Jewish woman in the Ottoman Empire, see Y. Ben-Nach, “Feminine Gender and Its Restrictions in the Ethical Regulations of Ottoman Jewry”, *Pe’amim*, 105-6 (Autumn 2006 - Winter 2006), 49—127.

67 For a description of the teaching methods and the atmosphere in the *meldar* (Jewish traditional elementary school) of Sarajevo, see J. Maestro, *Naš stari meldar, Spomenica o proslavi*



heads of the family and the older sons returned from their shops only at the end of the day.⁶⁸ If so, it turns out that care of the home and the raising of the children, including responsibility for their health, was the exclusive domain of the women. It is no wonder then that these women perpetuated folk medicines that their mothers had brought with them from Spain, while absorbing the beliefs and practices common among local women's groups. From the entirety of the texts from Sarajevo, one receives the impression that most of the prikantes were intended for the treatment of children or, at the most, vulnerable women (pregnant ones or those who had recently given birth). Apparently only the indulko and the espanto de la miel ceremony were also performed for mature males.

The term prikante derives from the infinitive prikantar (or prekantar)—to perform sorcery. In modern Castilian there is a similar infinitive: encantar, which means to perform sorcery or to enchant. Thus, prikante is sorcery, that is, a magic formula invoked through sorcery.

These prikantes, which are common among Sephardic women, are literary texts in every way, with salient characteristics that distinguish them as a separate, independent genre within Jewish folklore. Underlying the infinitive prikantar is the Ladino infinitive cantar, meaning “to sing”, which also attests to the literary nature of the prikantes as metered, rhymed texts.

4. TRADITIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS OF THE GENRE

That being the case, it is worthwhile to take textual considerations into account in their internal classification. Previous classifications completely ignored the texts accompanying the ceremonies and were based on other criteria. Gaon's list,⁶⁹ for example, contains thirteen healing ceremonies,⁷⁰ which, as he

tridesetogodišnjce sarajevskoga kulturno-prosvetnoga društva La Benevolencija, Beograd 1924, 103–106.

68 The feminine Sephardic proverb: *Bendicho ke uzo, fijos al rubi i marido al charshi* (Blessed is the one who instituted [the custom of] children in school, men in the market), expresses the way of life common among the group. For the proverb's context, see D. M. Bunis, *Voices from Jewish Salonika*, Jerusalem–Salonika 1999, p. 464.

69 See n. 34 above, 30–32.

70 In this list, the noun indulko appears as a general name for the healing ceremonies wherever they may be. Apparently, Molcho (n. 21 above) too calls any healing ceremony by the term indulko. Yet, in the rabbinic literature for the various healing ceremonies there are synonyms — and the term indulko occurs only for a specific healing ceremony.



says, were collected in part by the Ḥaḥamim and Rabbis of Great Kuštandina (Istanbul), and they were published as a letter to the editor in an Istanbul Sephardic newspaper, *Nasional*,⁷¹ in which classification is made according to different criteria, such as the objects of the healing (indulko for the purification of an affected house or pit), means of healing (indulko with glowing embers, of a mummy, of refuse, of incense, of an egg), the location of healing (indulko of the mezuzah, of the Holy Ark, of the bathhouse, of the cemetery), the time of the healing (indulko of Sabbath eve), and the purpose of the healing (indulko of security and strength). This division is too detailed and it results in over-congruency that in effect cancels out the distinctions, for each ceremony includes means of healing, location, time, and purpose.

Firestone⁷² proposed another classification. The criterion that he suggested is a ranking of the harm and its severity. According to this model there are three levels of harm (a. evil eye⁷³; b. anxiety attacks; c. serious illnesses) and three methods of healing: (a) aprecantar (healing by incantation); (b) espantu (treatment for fear); (c) cerradura (ritual of closure)). This division, too, is not based on the texts accompanying the ceremonies. Moreover, it also ignores the fact that the healing ceremony called espanto is based on a prikante⁷⁴ (an entity that contains something so as to cancel the distinction between the first healing method and the second) and the indulko ceremony, too.⁷⁵ Likewise, from the Sarajevo texts we see that the anxiety attacks treated by the espanto ceremony may be caused

71 Vienna, yr. 1, issue 47, 8 September 1867, p. 376; issue 51, Dec. 4, 1867.

72 See n. 22 above.

73 According to the Sarajevo texts it turns out that prikantes are also used for treating skin diseases. Thus, for example, four of the seven prikantes appearing on Dr. Izrael's list were intended to treat skin diseases such as kulverica (herpes that breaks out on the lips as a result of high fever); spindža (lichen planus); usagre (abscesses on the face and near the ears that are often a side effect of the eruption of milk teeth); and rospila (rose) – and regarding none of them is there mention of the evil eye as the cause of the disease.

74 Firestone himself cites the formula of the prikante accompanying the espanto ceremony as it was performed in Seattle. In his article, the formulation does not appear in its entirety, so one cannot know whether it included the words *te aprikanto i te diskanto* (I will whisper to you and I will release the incantation), which appear in one of the versions of this prikante registered in Sarajevo (see below Example 6), which leaves little doubt that the formula accompanying the ceremony was perceived among the community as a definite prikante. The second version of a prikante accompanying the espanto ceremony, which was registered in Sarajevo (see Example 15), is a supplication to the Holy One, blessed be He, and contains no magical terms, but Elazar gives an unequivocal title, *prikanti para espantu di la miel*, so that once again it turns out that the set verbal formula accompanying the healing ceremony is perceived among the Sephardic group as a prikante.

75 See below, Example 17.



by the evil eye as well (which cancels the distinction between the first two levels of harm).⁷⁶

Other researchers, such as Patai⁷⁷ and Levy and Levy-Zumwalt⁷⁸ distinguish between: a) the evil eye, b) espanto and c) indulko. This division mixes the type of harm with the means of treatment.

5. PROPOSAL FOR A LITERARY CLASSIFICATION OF THE GENRE

We wish to propose a model that characterizes the prikantes according to the location and function of the prikantera (the professional healer). According to this criterion, one may distinguish between two basic categories:

- A. The healer operates under her own powers and alone.
- B. The healer turns to higher powers with a request for aid.

Each category is further divided into two sub-categories. The subdivision of the first category is based on the distinction between activity in ordinary reality and activity in an imaginary reality and on the method by which the healer operates.

A1 The healer grapples with the illness in ordinary reality and directly (Ex. 1–9 and 14)

A2. The healer grapples with the illness in imaginary reality and indirectly, by means of simulating it a wild beast or natural phenomenon (Ex. 10–13)

The subdivision of the second category imputes to the addressee a request for help:

B1. The healer grapples with the disease with the aid of holy powers and turns to the Holy One, blessed be He (Ex. 15 and 16)

⁷⁶ The prikante that appears in Eliezer ben Santo (Šem-Tov) Papo's work (below, Example 6) also includes the words *te aprikanto*, *te diskanto*, *por aire*, *por viento*, *por ayin ara*, *por kayentura* (I will whisper to you and I will release the incantation: for the wind and for swelling, for the evil eye). Undoubtedly, they had recourse to the espanto ceremony in cases of more severe harm—but this does not mean that the damage was not caused by the evil eye.

⁷⁷ See n. 16 above.

⁷⁸ See n. 1 above.



B2. The healer grapples with the disease with the aid of impure powers and turns to demons (Ex. 17).

5.1. *PRIKANTES* IN WHICH THE HEALER ACTS IN ORDINARY REALITY AND DIRECTLY

In sub-category A1, direct confrontation in ordinary reality, there are two types of healing rituals: simple and professional. The simple rites are available to all. Since they do not require the operation of special professional skills, any woman can carry them out at any given place. In general, the issue concerns mild harm caused by the evil eye. Rituals belonging to the other sub-categories are secret and are performed only by expert female healers.

The boundaries between the secondary categories are not precise and movement from one group to another is possible. For example, an identical ceremony can be accompanied by entirely different verbal formulations that belong to two different categories, as in the case of a *prikante* that accompanies the *espanto de la miel* rite. In the version appearing in Ribbi Eliezer ben Santo (Šem-Tov) Papo's work (see Example 6 below), the name of God is not mentioned at all, while the version registered by Elazar, as heard from the informant Moric Kabiljo (see Example 15 below), is entirely a prayer of supplication to God. The only similarities between the two versions are the circumstances of recitation (both of them are recited as part of the *espanto* ceremony) and the words *smaṭro sumaṭrina ṭabuna*, which open Ribbi Eliezer ben Santo (Šem-Tov) Papo's version and close the Kabiljo version.

It must be stressed that a portion of the texts are enigmatic. Their lack of clarity may, perhaps, be intentional since that enhances the magical power of the texts. Below are examples of the four secondary categories.

EXAMPLE 1

La vaca lambe la vitelica,
por lavar, por penar,
por quitar el ojo mal.

The cow licks the calf
to wash, to comb,
to cast out the evil eye.



This *prikante* was written down by Dr. Isak Izrael.⁷⁹ It is a simple *prikante* that does not require special professional skill for recitation. The mother licks the face of the child from right to left, and each time spits three times. Through the licking, she eradicates the basic daily activity of the cow, which is identified as the “most maternal” animal.⁸⁰ The evil eye usually stems from jealousy, and it dries out the fluids in the body of the harmed target, whether speaking of a person, an animal, or a plant (milk dries in the cow’s udder, fruits wither, and a person loses blood, saliva, and sperm). Thus, one of the most common techniques for protection against the evil eye is spitting, symbolizing that the action of the evil eye was unsuccessful, as the presence of abundance of fluids in the body shows its vitality and strength. In the example under discussion, the proof of the existence of bodily fluids is twofold, both through spitting and through licking.⁸¹

This *prikante* has a parallel formula in the Sarajevo tradition itself, which appears in the following example:

EXAMPLE 2

<p>Te lambo, te lambo, Komo lambe el bezero a su biserik’o; No te lampo por lamber, Otro ke por kitar el ožo malo i ajin raa, I mandar a las profundinas de la mar.</p>	<p>I lick you, I lick you, Like a heifer licks her little calf, I don’t lick you just to lick But to cast out the ožo malo and the evil eye, And to send them to the depths of the sea.</p>
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This version was registered by Jakov Maestro.⁸² The image of the cow, from the version previously cited above, is exchanged for that of the heifer, but this is an insignificant change. We are dealing with the same maternal picture, a domesticated animal caring for her newborn. In the present example, greater stress is given to the issue of imitation and it is formulated explicitly: I lick you, like

79 See n. 27 above, p. 56.

80 The identification of the cow with maternity is a common motif in folktales as for example in many versions of the Cinderella story, the dead mother helps her daughter by means of a wondrous cow. See T. Alexander (n. 58 above).

81 For a broad discussion of this topic, see A. Dundes, *The Evil Eye – A Folklore Casebook*, New York 1981.

82 See n. 27 above, p. 113.



a heifer licks her little calf. The main change here is in the area of the activity's purpose. In the previous example there was a threefold aim: *to wash, to comb, to cast out the evil eye*, while in this example the prosaic goal of licking as washing is forgone and only the magical aim remains: casting out the evil eye.

The infliction is mentioned twice in this formulation, once in Ladino (*ožo malo*) and once in Hebrew. Bilingual tautologies of this type are not rare in Ladino literature.⁸³ Usually the word or phrase is recited in one language (Ladino, Hebrew, or Ottoman Turkish) and then translated into another language (Ladino, Hebrew, or Ottoman Turkish).⁸⁴ Doubling the expression or concept grants the Hebrew part an additional meaning due to its usage contexts in the canonical Hebrew texts.⁸⁵

According to Dr. Izrael's description,⁸⁶ if the recitation of the *prikante* did not help, they then moved on to another act. They would dissolve salt in a vessel containing water, smear the solution three times on the patient's forehead, following which the patient spits three times into that vessel. In conclusion, the mother pours out the water in a desolate place and says:

EXAMPLE 3

**Todo el mal se vayga
a las profundinas de la mar.**

**All the evil will disappear
in the depths of the sea.**

In many cultures,⁸⁷ salt is a symbol of male vitality (that is, sperm) and thus acts as a deterrent against demons and ghouls.⁸⁸ Dissolving salt in water grants the

83 Isak Papo feels they were intended to intensify the expression. See I. Papo, *Hebraizmi u govoru sarajevskih Sefarada / Hebraisms in the Vernacular of the Sephardim in Sarajevo*, Sarajevo, 1981 (ms.), p. 14.

84 We will suffice with two common examples from daily speech: *prove-ani* (*prove* = poor in Ladino + *ani* in Hebrew) or *kolay i liviano* (*kolay* = easily in Ottoman Turkish + *liviano* = easily in Ladino).

85 See, for example, the analysis of the double concept *el behor / el primer ijo* in the story of the Weasel and the Well in Ladino, T. Alexander, "The Weasel and the Well: Inter-textual Relationships between Hebrew Sources and Judeo-Spanish Stories", *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 5 (1998), 1-15 and also T. Alexander, *Words Are Better Than...* (n. 58 above).

86 See n. 27 above.

87 About salt and its symbolism in our classic sources, see I. Löw, "Das Salz", *Jewish studies in Memory of George A. Kohut*, New York 1955, 429-469. On the symbolism of salt in Jewish folklore, see B. Kohlbach, "Das Salz", *Jubilee Volume in Honor of Bernard Heller*, Budapest 1941, 200-202.

88 See T. Alexander, "The Fashioning of the Genre of Demon Stories" [Hebrew], in Y. Atzmon



healing waters the quality of saline sea water and thus the magic act functions with triple strength: salt, water, and saliva. Also the *pricanti por ožu malu* (prikante against the evil eye) to which they had recourse in the case of a child who cries at night,⁸⁹ which was registered by Sara Elazar as heard from Tia Merkada, a well-known, renowned *prikantera*, and published by Samuel Elazar,⁹⁰ is based on the use of a saline solution:

They take a vessel that contains half a liter of water, dissolve a bit of salt in it, a bit of bread, and three branches of *ruda* (common rue). First they put in the bread and the *ruda*—and afterward, while adding the salt to the water they say:⁹¹

EXAMPLE 4

**Komu si disfazi esta sal en la agua,
ansina si disfaga el ožu malu in esti kuerpu,
a las profundinas de la mar ki si vaiga,
i ki no si torni mas in esti kuerpu.**

**Just as the salt dissolves in the water,
So will the evil eye dissolve in this body,
To the depths of the sea it shall go,
And not return to the body.**

After the recitation of the *prikante* the following instruction should be exercised:

Wash the hands and the face (of the patient) with this water and wet his limbs with them, his hands and legs. After that the vessel is emptied into a corner of the garden, the water is poured out and the vessel turned upside down—and it is forbidden to get up until the next morning or until evening.⁹²

Here the salt has a homeopathic (imitative) function.⁹³ The healer carries

(see n. 44 above) and also E. Jones, Psychoanalysis and Folklore, in A. Dundes (ed.) *The Study of Folklore*, Inglewood Cliffs, N. J., 1965, 88–102.

89 The subtitle of the *prikante* is *Kuandu jora muchu la krijatura de nochi*.

90 See n. 30 above, p. 249

91 The source is the following: Si toma un atuendu kun 1/2 l de agua, si meti un poku di sal i un poku di pan, trez ramas di ruda. (Prima se meti el pan i la ruda) i polvoriandu la sal in el agua si dizi:

92 The original is as follows: *Dispues di esta agua si lava la kara i las manus, i si moža il eirvu (= niervu?), las manus i lus pies. Puez il atuendu si vazja en un kanton di la quarta, si vazja la gua i si aboka il atuendu, i no si alivanta fin la manjana o oras di tardi.*

93 J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, New York 1922, proposes examining the magic act according to two criteria: homeopathic magic that deals with the like and sympathetic magic that deals with touch and closeness. The first type acts on the principle of imitation; for instance, to make rain they pour water. The second type operates according to the principle that that which was unified will return to being unified, so part of the body, such as fingernail, garment, or knowledge of one's name may influence the person to whom they belong.



out the act of dissolving the salt because she wants to melt the evil eye. While the previous example refers only to the salt, which is a definite symbol of virility (as explained there), in this example there are three components: salt, bread, and rue. The bread is decidedly a symbol of femininity.⁹⁴ The rue is a defensive plant against the evil eye and other pests because the shape of its leaves is reminiscent of the hand with its five fingers. As known, in the system of folk beliefs the number five is amulet of defense (*ḥamsa*). The fact that the public by-name-or, perhaps, the professional name of one of the famous prikanteras active in Sarajevo at the end of the XIX century, Hana Ruso, called Tia Hana de la Ruda (Aunt Hannah of the Rue),⁹⁵ was derived from this plant attests well to the centrality of rue in Sephardic folk medicine. Interestingly, this magic act combines masculine and feminine elements from the human world with those from the world of the flora. If this action was also ineffective, the mother would turn to a professional female healer. Similar to physicians, the professional healers, too, often began by making a diagnosis. This was done through a ceremony which the Jews of Sarajevo called *livianos*. This ceremony had two stages: diagnosis and healing.

Like many healing ceremonies, the *livianos* ceremony, too, has to be tripled for it to produce the desired result. The recommended time for the performing of the ritual is in the morning, before the sun becomes too strong - or evening, before sunset. The healer takes three pieces of lead (the number three in folk culture is a formulaic number with magical properties),⁹⁶ and melts them, one after the other, in a spoon held over the fire. The solution is trickled, above the head of the patient, over a bowl containing cold water. Upon contact with the water, the lead hardens and makes crackling sounds. According to the shape that the drops of the solution take, the healer determines the source of the harm. The second time the solution is dripped over the heart of the patient, and the third time over his legs. Each time the body part over which the lead is trickled is covered with red cloth, which is the color that intimidates harmful entities. Now, the stage of healing begins: salt is dissolved in water, and the healer washes the patient's forehead, face, hands, and feet, while reciting the following *prikante*:

94 J. Nacht, *The Symbolism of the Woman, A Study in Folklore*, [Hebrew], Tel-Aviv 1959; entry *Lehem* (bread).

95 See Fig. 2, above.

96 See A. Olrik, "Epic Laws of Folk Narrative", in Dundes (see n. 88 above), 129–41.



EXAMPLE 4

La kara te lavo, Todo el mal te sako, No te lavo por lavar Otro por kitar el ožo malo i ajin raa	I am washing your face, Removing all evil from you, I am not washing you for cleansing, But to cast out the ožo malo and evil eye.
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This version, too, was listed by Maestro.⁹⁷ Just like the modern-day physicians, the Sephardic traditional folk healers also had a way for treating wide spectrum of symptoms when diagnosis was not successful, and when the real cause of the health problem is still unknown. To that end, there are especially complex rituals, such as *espanto de la miel* rite, written down by Ribbi Eliezer ben Santo (Šem-Tov) Papo.⁹⁸ According to the rabbi's description, *kale enpesar de dia de djueves i Shabat i lunes – i davka antes de medio dia, dira el ke lo aze* (One should begin [the treatment with the honey] on Thursday and continue on the Sabbath and Monday, right before noon (these are the days that the Torah scrolls are taken out of the ark during prayer services in the synagogue) and the person [who gives the treatment] should say):

EXAMPLE 6

Smatro sumaṭrina ṭabuna, ‘Uf, ‘uf, ‘uf, Te aprikanto, te diskanto,	Smatro sumaṭrina ṭabuna, and sweet; ‘Uf, ‘uf, ‘uf (be gone, be gone, be gone); I shall whisper to you, I will release the incantation;
Por aire, por viento, Por ayin ara, por kayuntura, por hazinura,	Pass away wind and pass away swelling, Pass away evil eye, pass away fever, pass away illness,
Por kevrantamiento, por baldamiento, Por todo modo de mal del kuerpo, De aki lo kito, A las profundinas de la mar lo echo	Pass away fracture, pass away paralysis, Pass away all evil of the body From here I will take it— And to the depths of the sea I will throw it.

The very selection of the days of public Torah reading as the treatment days already introduces the ritual into the context of holiness. The *prikante* is directed against two possible causes of the disease: evil eye (aimed against it are the words *te aprikanto*-I will whisper to you) or magical harm effected against the

97 See n. 29 above.

98 See n. 25 above.



ill person by a hostile element (aimed against it are the words *te diskanto*-I will release the incantation or the sorcery). Simultaneously, the *prikante* treats a wide spectrum of symptoms: wind, swelling, fever, illness, fracture, paralysis, and any evil in the body. One of the two causes of the disease (evil eye) in this *prikante* appears in the list of symptoms-but usually the *prikantes* distinguish between causes and symptoms, as we shall see in the next example. Ribbi Eliezer ben Santo (Šem-Tov) Papo continues to describe the treatment as follows:

Ansi dira kada dia tres vezes, i en kada vez ke eskapa de dezirlo tomara tres dedadads de miel kon el dedo ke se yama ama i le untara en su paladar, despues en su frente i detras de la ureja i en la foyika de la garganta, en la boka del korason, en la planta de la mano derecha i en la estierda – i ansi en los pies. I dormira un poko el ĥazino. En despertandose le alinpiara la miel---

Every day he should recite this formula three times-and each time after the recitation he should take three fingers of honey, with the finger called the middle finger, and spread it on the palate of the ill person, on his forehead, behind the ear, and in the hollow beneath the Adam's apple, at the top of the sternum, on the right and left palms-and similarly on the feet. Afterward, the ill person should sleep a bit-and when he awakens the honey should be cleaned off him---

That means the ceremony must be repeated nine times. As it is already known, the number nine has a special meaning in exorcism. Ribbi Eliezer ben Santo (Šem-Tov) Papo writes: *And whoever wants to cure the person injured by the demon should recite the incantation nine times.*⁹⁹ He links the number nine to the walnut tree, since *on the spot where the nuts are hanging, there are nine leaves, as the harmers drench him — and demons join together nine by nine.*¹⁰⁰

The first line of the *prikante* declares that we are dealing with a rite of treatment with honey. As early as the *talmudic* period, to this product, which is not man-made and which harms no animal, special healing virtues were attributed.¹⁰¹ In Jewish culture honey is a symbol of a woman, both positively, the sweetness

99 E. I. Papo, *Ya'alezu Hasidim* (see n. 2 above), p. 361..

100 Ibid.

101 Such, for example, the healing honey: *Talmud Bavli*, Beraĥot 45b, and enlightening the eyes: *Talmud Bavli*, Yoma 83b, and even Torah thoughts are compared to honey: *Šir ha-Širim Rabba* 1:2.



of the woman, and negatively, the woman as temptress. In numerology the letters of *devaš* (honey) are equal to the letters of *iša* (woman). If the honey is chosen for dealing with fear, that not only attests to its healing qualities but is interwoven compatibly with the world of the Sephardic *prikantes*, which is, as noted, a feminine world.¹⁰² The recitation of the text is accompanied by the act of smearing with honey. Precise instructions are given regarding the amount of honey (three fingers), the finger with which to smear (the middle finger), and the locations on the body (mouth, forehead, ear, throat, heart, palms and feet).

The link to the magical ceremony is framed in the opening and closing rows. Similarly, this formulation incorporates the Hebrew word *ʿuf*, which is repeated three times in the imperative at the beginning and at the end. The very use of a word in Hebrew, which is considered the holy tongue and the language of the group elite,¹⁰³ grants the formula additional validity. Beside the literal meaning of the word *ʿuf*, that is, *be gone*, there is an onomatopoeic connotation of calling for driving away and expulsion. Likewise, in Sephardic tradition there is a special significance in the morpheme *fe* at the end of the word. Ribbi Eliezer ben Isak Papo writes:

Since the letter final f occurs in the name of the destructive angels, such as: af, zaʿaf, šešef, kešef, negef, rešef-you will not find a final f in any prayer except in musaf (the additional prayer on Sabbaths and holidays), since you have no choice but to say et musaf yom peloni (the additional prayer of day X). (And for this reason there is no final fe in the Grace After Meals. And therefore one must take care with the text of Reše we-haḥališenu (May it be G-d's will to strengthen; recited on the Sabbath) not to say We-afʿal pi še-aḥalnu we-šatinu (and even though we ate and drank) but We-gam še-aḥalnu we-šatinu (and we also ate and drank).¹⁰⁴

That is, in a place where no harmful agents are found, they should not be invited by pronouncing words that contain a final *fe*. But in a place where they are already located, the very identification of them by their name (or, at least, by a letter typical of their names) grants the male or female healer magical power and control over them.¹⁰⁵

102 See n. 94 above, 90–92.

103 See S. Morag, “Hebrew Elements in Jewish languages – Some General Aspects” [Hebrew], *Mi-Qedem u-mi-Yam*, 5 (1992), 59–66.

104 E. I. Papo, *Yaʿalezu Ḥasidim* (see n. 2 above), p. 361.

105 For example, in Jewish culture only the identification of the *dibbuq* by name allows



The following example illustrates more forcefully the ability of the female folk healer to treat a wide spectrum of causes (and their sources) and a wide spectrum of symptoms by means of one *prikante*. In the present example, just like in the previous one, there are two possible causes for the disease, *ojo malo y ograma* (evil eye and black magic), with the *prikante* also paying attention to the possible sources of the evil eye and detailing them. Yet, in contrast to the preceding example, in the one we are now dealing with the distinction is between the causes of the illness and their sources on the one hand and its symptoms, on the other, is sharper and clearer.

EXAMPLE 7

**Que ojo malo que tenia,
que es un mal que le venia.
Tres de scossa, tres de sposa,
tres de bívda, tres de quita,
y tres que passan por la puerta de la vida.**

**Asnicos passan y asnicos vienen,
les encargo toda carga:
de ojo malo, y ograma,
y se vaygan a la profundina de la mar.
Ti aprecanto i ti
discanto:**

**Por aire por viento,
Por callentura, por hazinura,
Por quevrantamiento, por baldamiento,**

**Por todo modo de mal,
que hay en este cuerpo.
Todo el mal se vayga
a la profundina de la mar.**

**The evil eye that had harmed her,
is the evil that she had had.
Three as virgin, three as a married woman,
three as a widow, three as a divorcee
and three times as ones passing the gate of
life.**

**Asses go, asses come,
I will load upon them all the baggage:
of the evil eye and of the black magic
all of them will disappear in the sea
I will whisper to you and release the
incantation**

**Pass away wind and pass away swelling,
Pass away heat and pass away illness,
Pass away fracture and pass away
paralysis,**

**Pass away all evil
that is in this body.
All the evil will disappear
in the depths of the sea.**

This *prikante* was registered by Dr. Izrael.¹⁰⁶ The text is composed of three parts that consist of 15 lines. In the first two lines the healer makes the diagnosis. In this case it is the harm from the evil eye. *The evil eye that harmed her, is the*

for its exorcism. See G. Nigal, *Dibbuk Tales* [Hebrew], Jerusalem 1983; for illustration of the phenomenon in international folktales, see "Rumpelstiltskin" in J. Campbell (ed.) *The Complete Grimm's Fairy Tales*, New York 1944.

106 See n. 27 above, p. 57.



evil that took up dwelling in her. As noted, the patients treated by means of *prikantes* were mainly children (both boys and girls) and women, two groups that spent their time together and were the most vulnerable groups. Yet, according to the traditional *weltanschauung*, women also have high capacity for causing harm. However, since the identity of the woman with the evil eye is not clear, the healer's statement covers all the possibilities related to the personal status of women, while using the typological number three: *Three as virgin, three as a married woman three as a widow, three as a divorcee.*

These last lines have a parallel in a long, masculine *lahaš* recited in a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic, which was written down by Ribbi Eliezer ben Isak Papo¹⁰⁷ and determines: *Eye of a virgin, eye of a woman who has had intercourse, eye of a widow, eye of a married woman, eye of a divorcee.*¹⁰⁸ The masculine version is more expansive and includes yet another possible feminine status: a woman who has had intercourse but is not married, nor a widow, nor a divorcee. Moreover, since this is a ceremony performed by a man, and it is reasonable to assume that the patient is also male, there is a possibility that the harm came from the direction of some male figure. Therefore, in the male *lahaš*, on the list of those causing harm are masculine figures alongside feminine ones, *the eye of a male, the eye of a female, the eye of a man and his wife, the eye of a woman and her daughter, the eye of a woman and her female relative, the eye of a young man, the eye of a young woman, the eye of an elderly man, the eye of an elderly woman.* It also seems that at times the evil eye is (a conscious or unconscious) act of joint entities (such as a man and his wife, a woman and her daughter, or a woman and her female relative) and not only of individual factors.

The meaning of the following line of the female *prikante*, which reads: ones passing the gate of life is not definitively clear, but it seems to be speaking of female demons, which are never to be mentioned by their real name (as explained at the beginning of the article), as only demons are perceived as those who can pass through the gate of life and return. The second part of the *prikante* supplies the solution when described as an act of the healer demonstrating great faith in her ability. Against demons, the evil eye, and goblins that dwell outside of residential and civilized areas (in the terms of Levi-Strauss),¹⁰⁹ the healer calls upon ordinary, domestic animals that symbolize life in human dwelling places.

The asses arrive in caravan, they come and they go-and the healer loads them all with the mighty baggage of the evil eye and black magic (as an alter-

107 E. I. Papo, *Bet Tefilla* (see n. 42 above), 177–182.

108 For the complete text of the *lahaš* see Fig. 5 in this article.

109 C. Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, New-York 1967, 208–28.



native cause for the disease, which enters the picture only at this point). In the third, final part: the healer specifies through escalation the types of illnesses the evil eye or black magic have caused: swelling, fever, fractures, paralysis, and as a safety measure she adds that her action will succeed *against all the evil that is in this body*. The entire final line of the *prikante*, *All the evil will disappear in the depths of the sea*, precisely reiterates the closing line of the second part. This line appears quite frequently in *prikantes*.

The depths of the sea are the place to which evils and demons are sent. The sea in Jewish mythology represents the chaotic, anti-divine force that vainly attempts to rebel against God who has set its eternal borders.¹¹⁰ Like the sea, the demons and goblins represent the *Sitra Aħra* (The Other Side), the opposite of the Divine Order; and they, too, therefore are penned in the depths of the sea.

The *prikantes* were intended to distance the demons and goblins from humans and from approaching them, so they have to be sent to a place where no human foot trods. Most often, they are banished to the sea, but at times in *prikantes* appears a list of places that are fitting for these creatures, places that are far away from mankind, as we will see in the following *prikante*, which was intended to treat fear and sorcery.

110 At the time of creation the abyss threatened to overwhelm the deeds of God's hands. Yet, He traversed the ways, smote the sea monsters, Raba, Tanin, and Leviathan, dried the waters of the Abyss, and poured the water that remained into the basin of the sea, around which He placed hills of sand as eternal boundaries. See Robert Graves and Raphael Patai, *Hebrew Myths* [Hebrew], Masada Tel-Aviv 1967, 17–29.



EXAMPLE 8

Todo spantu i ainara,
Kvalkel modu di mal,
La tomu in un ventel,
Lu eču a la mar,
Al monti,
Al dizjartu,
Lugar dizoladu,
Tjera no povlada,
Ondi ni gaju kanta,
Pašaru no bola,
Paru no majuja.

Di ti lu kitu,
A Azazel lu eču.

Kešamnas Merinas Astematas.

All fear and evil eye,
all form of evil,
I take into an apron,
and throw into the sea,
to the mountain,
to the desert,
to a desolate place,
uninhabited land,
A place where the rooster
does not crow,
no bird flies,
and no dog barks.
From you I will take them,
to Azazel I will send them.

Kešamnas Merinas Astematas.

This prikante was published by Elazar.¹¹¹ It was registered by his sister, Sara Elazar, in 1935 from a well-known prikantera, Tia (Aunt) Merkada Papo. The final line ends with three nonsense words. This means, too, is typical of magic ceremonies and has already been encountered in Example 6 that opened with the words *Smatro sumatrina tabuna*. This combination of words also appears in Example 15 but in the closing line. The very lack of meaning and the fact that these words are uninterpretable contributes to the mysteriousness of the text and the ceremony; reinforcing the impression of the addressee that powers invoked by the prikantera are beyond comprehension and beyond his understanding. The most obvious function of language is to create communication and understanding. The language of prikantes disrupts this function. The scholar Stanley Tambiah¹¹² proposes a model of three possible situations for the performance of magic prikantes: (a) The words aired are heard and understood (as for example in dedication rites); (b) the words aired are recited in a whisper, but if they would be heard they would be understood (as for example in magical healing ceremonies); and (c) the words aired are heard but cannot be understood. If so, in the genre of prikantes the latter two situations apply.

The following prikante, which is intended to deal with all types of illnesses,

111 See n. 30 above, p. 247; see also *ibid.*, 345n.

112 See n. 7 above.



provides further clarification. It turns out that the sea is the border between two worlds, the world of human beings and the world of demons and spirits. The land of the demons is found beyond the sea.

EXAMPLE 9

Aja vajas mal, De la parte de la mar, Donde non canta gallo ni gallina, Ke no pares en esta kaza, Ni en este logar. A los endos de la mar te echare, Donde ni gallo canta, Ni buey ni vaca brama, Fuye mall, allende el mar.	To there, take yourself O evil, beyond the sea, In a place the rooster does not crow, nor the hen Do not tarry in this house, Nor in this place To the wave of the sea I shall throw you, To a place the hen does not crow, and neither ox nor cow bellow, Go you, O evil, beyond the sea.
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This *prikante* was registered by Sara Elazar in 1930 as heard from Merkada Papo and published by Elazar.¹¹³ In this example too, the brave *prikantera* is working against the evil all by herself, throwing it beyond the sea, to a place where no domesticated animals, identified with human settlement, live.

Sometimes the banishing of the demons and goblins to the depths of the sea is not immediate but rather gradual: first to the threshold, from the threshold to the stair, from the stair to the street, and from there to the depths of the sea, as we shall see in the following example, in a *prikante* for treating *rosipila*, that is, a skin disease appearing in a rose shape. The description of the gradual expulsion intensifies the power of the healer. It turns out that it is impossible to overcome the evil easily for these are particularly strong forces. The healer's victory is, therefore, greater.

113 See n. 30 above, p. 247; see also *ibid.*, 345n.



EXAMPLE 10

Con el nombre del Dio el Santo Bendicho,
que de rey Alejandra,
que de verde calzava,
de verde vestia,
de verde cavallo servia,
todos los males conbido,
de la rosipila se olvido,
por ser sarnoso,
por ser lamproso,
todo el mal de aqui lo quito
al pokun lo echo,
del pokun a la piedra
de la piedra a la calle,
de la calle a las profundias de la mar.

In the name of the Lord, the
Holy One, blessed be He,
And in the name of King Alexander,
of green shoe,
of green garment,
who rode on a green horse,
who invited all the evils,
but forgot the rose,
because of it the boils,
because it the leprosy,
All evil from here I have taken,
to the threshold I have thrown,
from the threshold to the stair,
from the stair to the street,
from the street to the depths of the sea.

This *prikante*, too, was registered by Dr. Izrael.¹¹⁴ The healer places a kerchief on the head of the patient and places her hand on it while whispering the *prikante* cited above. The *prikante* opens with the words *In the name of the Lord, Holy One, blessed be He*, but in the continuation the healer employs her own powers: *All evil from here I have taken*. She does not turn to God to ask for assistance, but rather only declares that she operates in His name (perhaps also through His strength). Yet, it is still she who acts and brings about the healing.

Right after the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, she calls out the name of King Alexander. In Jewish literature, canonic as well as folk, King Alexander is not only a great conqueror but also a great wise man and a person who during his wanderings throughout the world saw the strangest phenomena and acquired magical powers.¹¹⁵ In this *prikante* Alexander's personality is blended with that of Khidr or Al-Khidr (روض خلد) "the Green One", mentioned in XVIII chapter of the Qur'an, the Islamic counterpart of Eliyahu ha-Navi (Prophet Elijah), a righteous servant of God, who possessed great mystic knowledge. Al-Khidr was a contemporary of Moses; but, similarly to Eliyahu, he never died. At least among Sunni

114 See n. 27 above, p. 60. It also appears in Elazar (n. 30 above), p. 249, while noting the fact that the text was taken from the list of Dr. Isak Izrael (see Elazar, 345n).

115 See, for example, W. van-Bekum, *A Hebrew Alexander Romance according to MS London Jews' College no. 145*, Leuven 1992.



Sufis, who have had deep influence over the folk concepts in the Balkan area, there is almost a consensus that al-Khidr is still alive; and many respected figures, shaykhs and prominent leaders, claim having had personal encounters with him. Al-Khidr also figures into the Alexander Romance as a servant of Alexander the Great. Al-Khidr and Alexander cross the Land of Darkness to find the Water of Life. Alexander gets lost looking for the spring, but al-Khidr finds it and gains eternal life. Interestingly, in our prikante Al-İskender (Ottoman Turkish name for Alexander) and Al-Khidr are merged into one entity, whose name is Alexander, but his garb is green, his shoes are green, and even his horse is green, just like Al-Khidr's.

In the Balkan folk culture, Alexander is granted supernatural powers that enable him to assemble all the evils in order to free mankind from them. But just like the fairy in the tale of the Sleeping Beauty, he forgets to invite the rose, who besides being a skin disease also causes two other extremely severe illnesses: boils and leprosy. Here the female healer intervenes and rectifies the forgetfulness of the King Alexander. She seduces the rose to leave the body of the ill person. She is very careful to maintain the dignity of the rose and does not want to anger it for that might cause harm to the sick person. So she emphasized that the absence of the rose from the party was not intentional. The king simply forgot to invite her. If so, the rose's presence in the illness of the patient, at a time when she is supposed to be elsewhere, at much more interesting place, is superfluous. The healer gradually moves her from the home of the ill person to the depths of the sea. The description of the exorcism is detailed and vivid, and one can follow the way the evil is ejected outside from the inside of the house to the threshold, the step, the street, and the depths of the sea.

To this point, we have demonstrated the first sub-category in which the healer operates in ordinary, daily reality, from which she chases out the evil to the parallel reality, the uncivilized and the inhuman.

5.2 .PRIKANTES IN WHICH THE HEALER ACTS IN IMAGINARY REALITY AND INDIRECTLY

Uncivilized space as an inhuman one is even more striking in the second group of prikantes, in which the healer sets out on a journey to imaginary reality and acts against wild animals (such as a snake or a lioness) or against natural phenomena (a burning mountain). The virtual journey of the prikantera and her war



against the evil forces is, to a certain extent, reminiscent of the Shamanic battle journeys for the purpose of healing that have been documented in anthropological research.¹¹⁶ This is a most dangerous journey that begins with an ecstatic trance and continues with grappling with evil forces; it is not always clear whether the shaman will return safely from this contest. Similar to the prikantera, the main aim of the Shaman is healing. Moreover, like her, he is charged with maintaining harmony in the world. Lack of harmony, including disease, plague, and tragedy, is the basis for all evil. Both the prikantera and the shaman see themselves as linked to nature, acting by means of it, and preserving it. This group, which contains three prikanteras registered by Dr. Izrael¹¹⁷ (Ex. 11–13) and one that was written down by Weich-Shahak¹¹⁸ (Ex. 14) is characterized by the set opening formula *Andando por un kaminiko eskontri un...* (“I was walking along the way, [when] I met...”). A ceremony of this type constitutes a more intensive stage in the healing process. It is necessary only if the simpler rites described above, failed. Of course, only professional, experienced healers can employ it. In this ceremony the healer enters a different reality, an imaginary one, in which she operates as a heroine with the masculine traits of a fighter. These rituals enable the women to play a masculine role, even if only in an imaginary reality, in complete contrast to their traditional role in the ordinary existence. That is, precisely by means of the prikanteras, the woman can express her voice.

In this group, in distinction to the other groups, the prikantera includes a kind of a short story. This is reminiscent of the *historiola* which was common in various magical literatures, such as in Babylonia, Egypt, Greece, and even in Christian culture. As for its content, the *historiola* story is a mini-myth that creates a link between the mythic reality of the past and the current human reality in which the incantation is being performed. Every such story contains figures, a description of the situation, and application to the present condition in which the incantation is performed. These conditions reflect a situation of crisis, disease, or tragedy. Victory in the mythic dimension (besting the beast) is also a victory in the human dimension (overcoming the disease). The mention of the myth serves as a type of precedential story, and therefore is employed as a guarantee for the success of the current struggle described in the prikantera. The scholar David Frankfurter¹¹⁹ dis-

116 See, for example, M. Eliade: *Shamanism, Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, Tennessee 1964; as well as N. Megged, *Portals of Hope and Gates of Terror, Shamanism Magic and Witchcraft in South and Central America* [Hebrew], Tel-Aviv 1998.

117 See n. 27, p. 57. The three *prikanteras* also appear in Elazar (see n. 30 above), p. 250, with the source noted.

118 See n. 13 above, p. 106.

119 D. Frankfurter, “Narrating Power: The Theory and Practice of the Magical *Historiola* in Ritual Spells”, in *Religions in the Graeco/Roman World*, vol. 129, ed. M. Mayer & P. Mireck,



tinguishes between historiola that functions only by the virtue of the story of the plot, and historiola that is integrated into a directed incantation and subjugated to it. A historiola of this type is called Clausal historiolae.

EXAMPLE 11

**Andando por un caminico,
escontri un culebro bivo con su pie.
Achapilo sin mano,
degollilo sin cuchio,
englotilo sin paladar,
ansi mere y cresca cuanto disse verdad.**

**I was walking along the way,
A snake on legs I met.
Without hands I caught it,
Without a knife I slaughtered it,
Without a palate I swallowed it,
Just as I spoke truth—so may you
merit
and so may you grow.**

This prikante is intended to treat kulevrica (lit., little snake), that is, herpes that breaks out on the lips owing to a high fever. The healer passes a knife above the herpes, while simultaneously whispering the formula of the prikante. In the imagined reality described in this version, the healer encounters a snake that walks on legs, like the primal Snake before the expulsion from the Garden of Eden. The link to the ancient snake is rooted in an ancient Hebrew myth.¹²⁰ Just as the primal snake was vanquished in the mythic narrative—so the snake in the prikante, symbolizing illness, will be vanquished. The choice of a snake fits the name of the disease and functions here as an imaginary realization of the metaphorical name. The snake is the one who tempted Eve—while at work here is a woman who not only does not tempt through weakness but even does away with the snake. The fighting forces of the healer are revealed as supernatural powers, she grapples with it without hands, with no knife, and with no palate.¹²¹

Three violent verbs appear in the description of overpowering the snake:

Ancient Magic and Ritual Power, 457–76.

120 This legend is common in midrashic literature. For example, see Brešit Rabba (edition Theodor-Albeck), ch. 20: “On your belly you shall crawl”; at the time the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him, “On your belly you shall crawl”, the ministering angels descended and cut off his arms and legs and his voice rang out from one end of the world to the other.

121 This motif appears in Sephardic riddles, such as, for example, in the conundrum about snow that was recorded in Monastir (today Bitola, Macedonia): *Un pašaru sin ales abulo, in un arvul sin rames apuzo, vini un ombri sin pies, sin manus lu tumo* (One bird, without wings, landed on a tree without branches; along came a man without legs, without hands and took it.). For an analysis of this riddle, see T. Alexander, “Komo puede ser: The Judeo-Spanish Riddle” [Hebrew], *El Prezente*, 1 / *Mikan*, 8 (2007) pp.123–148.



catch, slaughter and swallow. In distinction from that which was described in the previous group of prikantes, where the prikantera operates by means of distancing the evil from her and from the human space (such as, for example, in Example No. 18: All fear and evil eye, every form of evil, I take into my apron, and throw to the sea, to the mountain, to the desert, a desolate place, an uninhabited land...), in this prikante a totally opposite way of action is described, one of containment and internalization of the evil. The healer swallows the snake and thereby eliminates the evil. Even the shaman can act in these two opposing ways: containment and journey. He allows the foreign entity to enter him, and he contains it and works by means of it. Or he operates in a contrasting manner, going out on a journey to another world or another dimension to perform the healing act.

When the healer victoriously completes her struggle with the snake, she turns to the anthropomorphized illness in the subjunctive mood and says to it: Just as I spoke truth—so may you merit and so may you grow. The integration of the subjunctive into the mythic story in the basis of the prikante is parallel to Frankfurter's Clausal *historiola*. The form of the imperative Just as ...—so... creates an analogy between the two phenomena. This analogy is typical of the structure of the *historiola*, a structure termed *similia similibus*. This analogy, from the aspect of its function in this literary text, is a surprising row that turns the meaning upside down and restores the addressee to actual reality. That is, despite the departure to the other reality, it is clear to those present in the room that this is an imaginary reality and not the normative truth.

A parallel version also appears in Serbian Orthodox tradition,¹²² in which the prikantes are called *basma* (басма).

Usov presov pres polje,
Vide ga ovčar bez oči,
Potrča bez noge,
U'vati ga bez ruke,
Zakla ga bez nož,
Ispeče ga bez oganj,
Izede ga bez usta...

The evil eye was going up a field,
One shepherd saw it,
Without legs he ran,
Without hands he caught it,
Without a knife he slaughtered it,
Without a fire he fried it,
Without a mouth he ate it.

122 The incantation appears in the previously mentioned article by Vidaković-Petrov (see above, n. 10), p. 289, while citing the source, Lj. Radenković, "Urok ide uz polje: narodna bajanja", Gradina (1993), p. 70.



The great similarity between these texts attests, as argued by Krinka Vi-daković-Petrov, to the intercultural reciprocal that prevailed between the Jews and their environment precisely in the folklore channel. However, though, unlike the Jewish text, the Serbian text is not uttered in the first person. Moreover, the protagonist in the Serbian text is a man. Yet, it must be stressed that in Serbian culture, too, folk-healing was perceived as a feminine profession. In any event, it seems that in the Serbian context, a violent struggle is understood as the bailiwick of men—and the women of the group, even in imagined reality, have a need of a male figure who will deal with a disease aggressively. But even the shepherd fries the evil eye (the cooked item symbolizing civilization) while in the Jewish text the healer swallows the snake alive (a raw item symbolizes primal nature).¹²³

The second prikante in this group is intended to treat *spindža*, which is also a skin disease called *lichens planus*.

EXAMPLE 12

**Andando por un caminico,
escontri una leona,
que gritava y bramava
y la spindža se llevava.**

**On a path I was walking,
I met a lioness
She roared, she growled,
The spindža she took away.**

The healer passes a knife or a safety pin over the affliction and whispers the prikante given above. In contrast to the previous example, in this prikante there is no nullification row at the conclusion. Moreover, even the fashioning of the image of the healer is less aggressive. The healer, to be sure, encounters a terrifying, frightening beast, but she does nothing to fight against it. The lion is considered the king of the animals, but here the prikante chooses to refer to the female, to the lioness. This usage befits the feminine context of the prikantes and their recitation. The lioness takes the evil of her own free will, without direct intervention on the part of the healer. Passing the knife or the safety pin is related to the folk belief that metal intimidates goblins and demons. A safety pin symbolizes closing and capturing; a knife symbolizes attack and aggression.¹²⁴

123 C. Lévi Strauss: *The Raw and the Cooked*, New York & Evanston 1969.

124 In comparison, the Jews of Morocco customarily place a knife under an infant's pillow to ward off goblins. Among Sephardic Jews it is common to stick a safety pin into sheets folded in a cabinet so as to intimidate the demons from using them. Yellow stains on sheets attest to the



In this prikante, as with the others in this group, the healer encounters the supernatural entity in an undefined way. In the text the path (*caminico*) is accompanied by an indefinite article (*un*) rather than a definite article. This path is located in a different time dimension and in the space of another world. The choice of “a path” rather than some other place emphasizes the shift from one point to another or between one dimension and the other. That is, the path, according to the terms of Victor Turner,¹²⁵ is a liminal area fraught with many dangers.

The third prikante in this group is intended to be used for treating *usagre*, namely, abscesses on the face and near the ears which are a side effect of the eruption of milk teeth.

EXAMPLE 13

**Caminado por caminico,
escontri un padre y un ijo.
Le demanda el ijo al padre:
Mi padre, loque arde su(to) el monte?
Le dice el padre al ijo: *Usagre!*
Demanda el ijo al padre:
Con loque se atabafa?
Responde el padre:
*Con sal y vinagre y tierra de la calle!***

**On a path I was walking,
a father and son I met.
The son asked his father:
*My father, what is burning under the
mountain?*
Said the father to his son: *Usagre!*
The son asked his father:
With what can one put it out?
Replied the father to his son:
*With salt, with vinegar, with the dust of the
street!***

In this example, too, the healer acts as an observing witness, but here she listens. She meets a father and his son (apparently supernatural figures). The son looks at a natural phenomenon (burning fire) and seeks, as a curious child, an explanation from his father. The father’s answers are surprising and do not belong to the world of nature from which the questions came. The father explains that the fire is a disease and tells how to treat it. The healer listens to their conversation and from it learns the diagnosis of the illness (*usagre*), as well as how to deal with it (with salt, with vinegar, with dust of the street). The metaphor of an abscess as a burning mountain is obvious. The healer treats the illness through

demons having used them.

125 V. Turner: *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*, London 1974.



common materials whose magical power derives from information given to her through the figures from another world.

Weich-Shahak¹²⁶ recorded a slightly different version of this prikante.

EXAMPLE 14

**Pasí por un caminico,
y vide un padre y un hijo,
y le dimandé:
¿Lo que tienes aquí?
y me dijeron:
Uzagre.
¿Y con lo que se amata?
Con sal y vinagre
y tierra de la calle.**

**I was walking on a path,
father and son I met,
I asked him:
What do you have here?
They said to me:
Usagre.
How can it be extinguished?
With salt, with vinegar,
with the dust of the street.**

This version was recorded from the informant Moshe Kabiljo,¹²⁷ a resident of Givatayim, Israel, and a native of Sarajevo. In this version, the healer is more active. She initiates the conversation with the father and son and asks them about the nature of the disease and the way to cure it. In contrast to the other prikantes in this group, in which only two figures have a role, the healer and the supernatural beast, in these two versions additional figures, in human form, take part: a father and a son who are carrying on a dialogue. Quoting the dialogue in a prikante turns it, from the literary aspect, into a minor theatrical scene.

This prikante also has a Hispanic parallel that appears in the protocols of the Inquisition Tribunal in Castilla la Nueva.¹²⁸ The prikante is quoted in the protocols as incriminating evidence during the course of a trial against a woman accused of sorcery.

126 See n. 14 above, p. 106.

127 It may be that this Moshe Kabiljo is none other than Moric Kabiljo, Elazar's informant (see in the ensuing, Example 15 and its accompanying text), since in Bosnian Sephardic tradition the Hebrew equivalent for the name Moric is Moše. In religious texts (Torah reading, signing as a witness to a ketuba, and so on), Moric, Isidor, and Albert become Moše, Isak, and Avram, respectively.

128 C. Estopañán, Sebastián, *Los procesos de hechicerías en la Inquisición de Castilla la Nueva: Tribunales de Toledo y Cuenca*, Madrid 1942, p. 90.



El rey Egre en el campo estaba,
A Agueda su fija la marienda le llevaba.
E le dixo padre:
los montes e los valles arden.
E dixo la fija:
No es fuego ni arde,
Mas es colebro e colebrilla,
E usagre e fuego salvaje.
Con que lo mataremos?
Con el unto sin sal,
E con la ceniza del hogar,
E con el polvo de la casa barida.
Fía, fía, fía,
En la Virgen, Santa María.

The king Egre was in the field,
To his daughter Agueda he used to bring
a meal.
Her father said to her:
The mountains and valleys are burning.
And the daughtered replied:
This is neither fire nor burning,
This is herpes and shingles,
Abscesses and brutal fever.
With what shall we put it out?
With oil without salt,
With the ashes from the hearth,
With dust form a swept house.
Have faith, have faith, have faith,
In the Virgin, Saint Mary.

The Hispanic version befits Example 13 better. As in it, where the dialogue was internal, between a father and his son, without the intervention of the healer, here too, the dialogue takes place between King Egre and his daughter, Agueda. The two Sephardic versions begin with a simple question, the first (Ex. 13), with the son's question, and the second (Ex. 14), with the healer's question, and they continue with the father's reply. In contrast, in the Hispano-Christian version, there is a reversal of roles. The text opens with a declaration by the father that the mountains and valleys are burning, while the daughter points out her father's error and reveals the actual situation to him: This is neither fire nor burning, This is herpes and shingles, Abscesses and brutal fever.

In the continuation, the father asks her the question that appears in the Ladino version as the second question of the son/healer, that is: With what shall we put it out? The means of treatment proffered in the Hispano-Christian version differ slightly from those proposed in the Sephardic versions. In the Sephardic versions, salt and vinegar are called upon, in the Hispano-Christian version, oil without salt. In the former: dust of the street; in the latter: ashes from the hearth and dust from a swept house. Salt and vinegar are an aggressive means of attack against the goblins, while the oil is a palliative given to the goblins as a bribe. Undoubtedly, the bluntest difference is the decidedly Christian closing line of the Hispanic version: Have faith, have faith, have faith, in the Virgin, Saint Mary.



5.3. PRIKANTES IN WHICH THE HEALER TURNS TO GOD FOR HELP

Both of the prikantes below refer to the ceremony *espanto de la miel*, which was described in the discussion of Example 6. In this prikante, recorded by Ribbi Eliezer ben Santo (Šem-Tov) Papo, there is no to God, while the prikante below (Ex. 15) is entirely a supplication to the Holy One, blessed be He. Consequently, one can't but wonder whether this supplication in the Example 16 is a later interpolation.

EXAMPLE 15

Jo ago el espantu de la miel a ditu hazinu, (si li menta el nombre),	I will carry out the treatment with honey against fear for this ill person, (mention of the ill person's name)
Para ki si sani,	So he will be cured,
La avodato kon fuersa de Akadoš-Baruh-U,	His 'avoda (service) with the power of the Kadoš Baruh Hu (Holy One, blessed be He),
I por sehud de sus Cadikim los santos,	And by the merit of his holy Saddikim (Righteous people).
Jo rogo delante del Šem-Etbarah,	I shall pray before Ha-Šem Yitbarah (God, may He be blessed),
Ke lo milisini al ditu hasinu refua šelema,	That He will grant this ill person <i>refua šelema</i> (total recovery),
Si maṭrono sabuna.	Si maṭrono sabuna.

This version was registered by Elazar,¹²⁹ as heard from Moric Kabiljo.¹³⁰ In addition to the text of the prikante, a description of the rite is given. This description is similar to the one we saw by Ribbi Eliezer ben Santo (Šem-Tov) Papo (Ex. 6 above), but the verbal formulation underwent editing and adaption to halahic consensus, since most of it is an ordinary supplication to God that He should provide a cure. As noted, the only similarity between the two versions is in the words *Si maṭrono sabuna*, with which Ribbi Eliezer ben Santo (Šem-Tov) Papo's version begins and Kabiljo's ends.

129 See n. 30 above, 247 and 248.

130 The following is Elazar's note at that location: *Me lo recitó el Sr. Moric Kabiljo de Jerusalén, que vivió anteriormente en Buenos Aires y en Derventa, hijo de mi profesor de la doctrina Salomón Kabiljo, por los años 1960* (as recited to me by Mr. Moric Kabiljo of Jerusalem, who had previously lived in Buenos Aires and Derventa, the son of the religion teacher, Mr. Salomon Kabiljo).



An intermediate version that combines turning to God with an ordinary prikante is found in the following example:

EXAMPLE 16

**En nombri de el Bindičo,
Jo metu la mano
i el Bindiču ki meta la milizina.
Vengu kon esti kučiju,
Komu si parti el pan,
I todū loke si azi di minister,
Kortu nuevi modus di malis,
Nuevi modus di hazinuras,
Nuevi modus di baldamientus
i kivantamjentus,
Di esti kuerpu la kitu
I a las profundinas de la mar
lu eču, Amen!**

**In the name of the Lord, blessed is He,
I shall place my hand
and the Holy One, blessed be He, will place
the cure.
With this knife I shall come,
like slicing bread with it,
And everthing that has need,
I will cut nine types of evil.
Nine types of ills,
Nine types of paralyse
and fractures,
From this body I will remove them,
and to the depths of the sea
I shall throw them, Amen!**

This version was transcribed by Sara Elazar as heard from Ribbi Menahem Romano in 1946, and published by Elazar.¹³¹ The prikante begins with a conventional invocation of the Allmighty: In the name of the Lord, blessed is He, but it continues with a description of the aggressive activity of the healer, who cuts nine types of evil with a knife, so as to ultimately throw all of them into the depths of the sea. The number nine maintains the magical number tripled, since it contains three trios of three. We already noted the supernatural significance of this number in the Example 6 above.

The three prikantes that accompany the espanto ceremony (Examples 6, 15, and 16) illustrate well that there is no imperative connection between the type of ceremony and the type of prikante and the role of the healer in it. As stated, in a single ceremony, one may use prikantes belonging to different categories and sub-categories. Thus, for example, we saw that in the espanto ceremony, one can use a prikante that is entirely a supplication to God (Example 15), a prikante that is entirely the work of the healer (Example 6)-or a prikante that mixes a supplication to God with the action of the healer (Example 16).

131 See n. 30 above, p. 249.



5.4. *PRIKANTES* IN WHICH THE HEALER TURNS TO DEMONS FOR HELP

In severe situations, when no other ceremony is of help, the healers have recourse to a most extreme ceremony that aroused the rage of generations of rabbis, namely, the *indulko* ceremony, which involves a direct appeal to the demons and the intentional sequestering of every sacred object from the home in which the ceremony is performed. Below is a description of the ceremony as given in Ribbi David Pardo's commentary:

I was astonished by the acts occurring daily as performed by the women for the ill, [those] who close themselves into the house and bring in various kinds of incense and types of sweets, and remove all numbers and even *mezuzot* and prevent people from entering there and burn grasses and pour honey into the corners of the house, and they perform them kinds of incantations to join the demon or demons and call him il *indulko* grande (great sweetness) ...

Even though we are dealing with a complex, complicated ceremony that requires a great deal of preparation, Ribbi David Pardo himself attests that these are frequent acts carried out every day. The “great sweetness” described above contains another stringency. The healer shuts herself up alone in the house with the patient, and no one has permission to enter. Sometimes, the ceremony even involves keeping the neighbors far away, so that the shadow (*solombra*) cast by the demon doesn't also reach them by mistake. In Ladino this process is called *serradura* (seclusion). Apparently, only the great *indulko* involves the intentional sequestering of sacred objects (to the point of taking off the *mezuzah* from the doorpost). The other components of the ceremony are identical to the lesser *indulko*: the burning of the herbs as incense and the dripping of the honey in every corner of the house. In the description of the ceremony in *Sefer Dameseq Eli'ezer*,¹³² there is a number of other components: slaughtering of chickens, sprinkling of salt water, breaking eggs, and lighting candles in honor of the demons.

132 See n. 24 above.



Induluko ke azen las mujeres al ĥazino para los sidim, i les degoyan gayina, i les tenplan miel i agua kon sal, i les parten huevos para los sidim, i les dizen: Esto ke sea a vozotros por korban, i les ordenan meza kon kandelas i modos de espesias i se enkorvan i se arodian a los sidim – i non enmentan el nombre del Šem Yitbarah, non las ke azen el induluko i no los ĥazinos, i se engrasian a los sidim ke milizinen el mal de los ĥazinos i simijante de aznedades de mujeres---

Indulko that the woman do for the demons, for the ill person, that they slaughter hens for them, and drip honey and salt water for them, and break eggs for the demons and say to them: “This will be a sacrifice for you” and they set a table for them with candles and different kinds of incense and bow their heads and bend their knees to the demons and do not mention the name of the Lord, may He be blessed, not they who perform the indulko-and not the ill people, and they try to find favor in the eyes of the demons so that his disease will be cured and the like in these asinine acts that the women perform---

Even though in the lesser indulko one does not remove the mezuzah from the house, it is still forbidden to mention holy names or to address God during the ceremony.

The ceremony works counter to the way all the other rituals do. While the aim of the other rites, such as the *espanto de la miel* and the various *prikantes*, is to banish the demons and goblins and to create a defense system surrounding the patient, in this ceremony the healers “invite” the demons to the house. Well, to be honest, this invitation is given only when demons are anyway already in the house and the folk-healers recognize that their penetration is so deep that they can be removed only voluntarily. Consequently, they try to pacify them with sweet things that they like, they offer them a sacrifice (slaughtering hens and breaking eggs), set a table with sweets (that are especially loved by the demons), scents, and candles, for them - and they even kneel and bow,¹³³ turning to them in supplication. Obviously this is a very dangerous ceremony that requires great self-confidence and skills, not only because the responses of the demons cannot be anticipated and might harm the ill person or the healers, but also because these actions might bring the healer Divine Retribution, here and now – or, even worse, in the Eternity.

It is to be noted that Ribbi Eliezer ben Santo (Šem-Tov) Papo’s approach

133 Note that bowing before the demons grants them great power even if the bowing is not intended to do so.



is compromising and far less rigid than that of the other rabbinic arbiters. He, of course, hates the idea of turning to the demons for help, but after all, if the ceremony does not include incense offerings and sacrificing to the demons, he allows it to take place, even if it is to include the dripping of mummy and sugar, as long as these are accompanied by a supplication to God, may He heal the ill person.

Enpero, si non azen dingun degoyamiento i ningun saumario ni ordenan ninguna meza salvo ke toman mummy i tsukar i lo esparzen por en kaza i por el lugar ke se kayo i ke se espanto i azen tefila al Šem yitbarah, el milizinan hazinos, ke lo milizine al hazino de su hazinura – esto es mutar.

But, if they do not perform any slaughtering or burning of incense at all, or do not set a table—but take *mummy* and sugar and scatter them in the house or the place where the person fell ill and when he became afraid and people pray to the Lord, may He be blessed for it is He who is the Healer of the Ill, then he will cure the ill person of his illness—that is permissible.

This mummy is the strangest of the medical materials of the premodern world. As noted, these are remains of bones that were preserved. The dried bone (foot or hand) must be ground and beaten. For certain ceremonies, one must mix the mummy powder with honey and spices. The belief in the medical attributes of this powder was a matter of consensus and it crossed cultures and societies; it was accepted throughout the Middle East, the Balkans, and Europe.¹³⁴

The verbal formulation that accompanies the ceremony is usually considered a secret text. Paradoxically, these texts were preserved precisely in halahic literature, in which, of course, they were cited in a negative context, as a forbidden act.¹³⁵ Thus, for example, one of the only versions of the supplication to the demons is found in the book *Kenesiya le-Šem Šamayim* (Gathering in the Name of the Heaven) by Ribbi Menaše Sitton of Safed (end of the XIX century). The book was written in Hebrew by choice, so as to turn the attention of the sages of that generation to the disaster called *indulko*, and to rouse them to act toward uprooting it from the Jewish community. The following is the text of the supplication to the demons (with the author's explanations interpolated):¹³⁶

134 For a summary of the history of this drug, see the chapter “Mummy as a Drug”, in W. R. Dawson, *The Bridle of Pegaus*, London 1930, 162–73.

135 Cf. Y. Ben-Naeh, (n. 20 above) p. 90.

136 Sitton, M. *Kenesiya le-Šem Šamayim*, Jerusalem 1874, p. 2.



Please, we pray of you, you who are our masters,
That you will take pity, and have mercy, and deal kindly with you ill
servant,
So-and-so son of your maidservant so-and-so, and take away his
guilt,
And if he sinned or acted badly toward you, take pity on him and
forgive him for his sin,
And give him his soul and his strength and his health
(and for sterility: Open the wombs and return to them fruit of the
womb,
and free them from their bondage)
(and to bereaved mothers: resuscitate for them the souls of their sons
and daughters)
May this honey be for you to sweeten with it your mouth and palate
And wheat and barley as feed for you cattle and sheep
And the water and the salt for preserving love and comradeship and
peace and friendship
As a covenant of salt forever between us and you
After that she breaks the eggs in front to them and says:
Slaughtered as a soul to you, this sacrifice a soul for a soul
(since the egg would have developed into a chick
it should be considered as a thing that has a living, breathing soul)
So that you should return to us this soul of the ill person and his
thoughts
or the soul of his children and his sons
or his mind
or the light of his eyes
and the like according to the object sought and its concerns”

The status of the demons in this supplication is parallel to that of God in regular supplications: they are called masters from whom forgiveness of sins is sought; sacrifices are offered to them; the reciters kneel and bow, even kissing the floor. The offerings proffered (honey, wheat, barley, water and salt) are intended to maintain a permanent covenant called here the covenant of salt. A covenant of salt is considered eternal because the salt does not rot nor become odious (Num. 18:19). This is the covenant between the Jewish people and its God, so all offerings are presented with salt: *You shall not omit from you meal offering the salt of your covenant with God, with all your offerings you must offer salt* (Lev. 2:13). That is, the characteristics of holiness and of the connection with God are remo-



ved from the house, and the accepted terminology between people of Israel and its God is transferred to the demons.

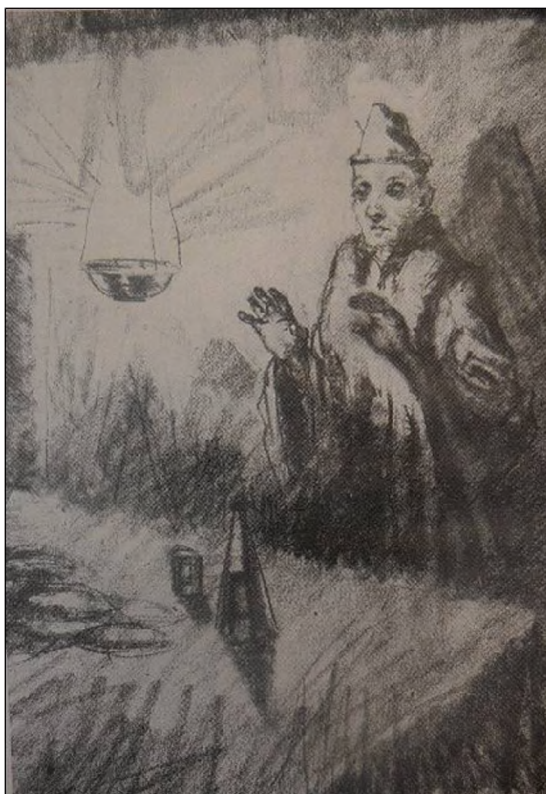


Fig. 3

**A Bosnian Sephardic woman lighting the Sabbath candle
drawing by Danijel Kabiljo “Danilus”**

The three rabbinic sources quoted attest that this ceremony was conducted by woman, and all three of them were careful to describe it in feminine language. Generally traditional Jewish sources reflect reality from a male point of view. The idea of equality between the sexes is alien to them. In traditional society the women were thrust aside from established religious life. They were excluded from rabbinic academies and religious courts. They were unacceptable as witnesses, forbidden from any senior positions in *halahic*, judicial, or public leadership. Even their place in the synagogue was rather marginal. In traditional Jewish thinking a clear distinction existed between the public sphere and the private sphere, between society and home. In addition, women were perceived as closer than men to the demonic world. First, because of the menstrual impurity, which is of



the essence of their being-but also because of the original sin of Eve. Thus, for instance, Ribbi Menaše ben Israel writes in his book *Nišmat Hayyim*:

And it said *You shall not suffer a witch to live*¹³⁷, but it did not say a wizard because sorcery is more common among women and this derives from the impurity resting upon them. And it is also written in the *Zohar*, *Wayera*: *And there appeared to him-that the woman sorcerer in her menstrual days will succeed more with her magic than in her pure days*. And it says there Ra[bbi] s[aid] that all the instruments of magic and spells are found only with women. He s[aid] to h[im]: *That is what we learned: when the serpent came to Eve he threw foulness on her. He threw it on her and not on Balaam.*¹³⁸

The linking of the woman to nature and the demonic world gave her a cloak of danger. A danger that society (that is, the men ruling it and dictating its rules) had to cope with. Like nature, of which the woman is an inseparable part, the woman needs taming and domestication.¹³⁹ Sovereignty and autonomous standing are negated from her, and she is subjugated to the guardianship of the civilizing factor. At first the role of guardian is assumed by her father-and after that, to her husband. Like other people whose issues are handled by a guardian (young orphans, unstable people, and so on), the women were also excluded for the public sphere. Yet, some of them were clever enough to turn the disadvantage into an advantage. By performing magical healing ceremonies related to nature, they found a place for themselves in which they could redefine themselves. In a time of trouble that befalls an individual or the community, the men deal with it actively through fasts, prayers, and ceremonies held in the synagogue, such as taking out the Torah scroll and blowing the *šofar*. Yet, the magic rituals enable the women to cope with evil in an active manner, to defend themselves and their loved ones in a practical way.

137 The reference is to a negative commandment in Ex. 22:17.

138 M. Ben-Israel, *Nišmat Hayim*, Stettin 1851, Section III, chap. 23, p. 58.

139 See Elior, n. 46 above.





Fig. 4
Bosnian Sephardic women, end of the XIX century

This process of exclusion was two-directional, the Jewish male world excluded the women from the religious establishment, and even pushed them toward the world of folk beliefs and rites related to demons; conversely, the women knew how to effect positions of power and influence the family and the community precisely from the marginal regions to which they had been displaced.

6. CONCLUSION

To sum up, the *prikantes* accompanying Sephardic healing ceremonies are a literary genre in all regards. In this article we proposed a literary-cultural analysis of texts of this type. These are set, meticulous formulations widely distributed among Sephardic communities, that have parallels in Christian Iberian culture (the land of origin of the community's members) and in Ottoman culture, both the Muslim and the Christian (which was the residential environment of the community's members). The limitation to one single city (Sarajevo) and region (Bosnia and Herzegovina) allowed us to discern more sharply among the



different sub-genres and even to propose a model for future categorization and analysis of incantations as such. The more research into Sephardic culture gains depth, broadens, and branches out, the more opportunity there will be to focus on certain regions or communities so as to elaborate what is different as well as similar between different communities within the general Sephardic *ethnium*.

We chose to categorize the *prikantes* according to the standing and role of the female healer who performs the ceremony. From the sampling we made within the tradition of the Jews of Sarajevo (and all of Bosnia and Herzegovina), the most common formulations are also the simplest, in which the female healer operates in ordinary reality (13 texts). Working in an imaginary reality that empowers the image of the female healer and grants her supernatural powers is rarer (4 texts). We found only three mentions of God, two of them in two of the three *prikantes* registered from male informants: the first in the *prikante* phrased as a supplication and prayer (Ex. 15) and the second, at the beginning of the *prikante* as recorded from the recitation of Ribbi Menahem Romano (Ex. 16)—and it may be that one should ascribe the interpolation of the name of God into the opening as an attempt on the part of the informant to Judaize and convert the practice. In *prikantes* recorded from the recitation of women, there is only one mention of God (Ex. 10), which opens with the words, *In the name of the Lord, the Holy One, blessed be He (Con el nombre del Dio el Santo Bendicho)*—but it immediately continues with the citing of the magical figure of King Alexander (*que de rey Alejandra*). This mixture of religion and magic turns this lone invoking of the name of God into quite heterodox practice. Aside from these few examples, there is no reference at all in the *prikantes* to established Jewish sources. This even more strongly reinforces our conclusion that the world of healing ceremonies is that of women and that it was conducted in the marginal, oppressed branch of established religious life. Indeed, the extreme ceremony of *indulko*, which includes addressing demons, is described as the exclusive realm of the women. The exclusion of women from formalized religious life led to the creation of a world of concepts and ceremonies parallel to the normative, masculine tradition. At times they exist in its shadow, and more than once in direct confrontation with it. In contrast to the marginal, obscure role of the women in traditional society, in the magical world the woman plays a pivotal role. These ceremonies enabled a reversal of roles, in which the woman becomes the main figure: she conducts the ceremony, she is an expert in its secret details, and it is to her that people turn for salvation. The centrality of the woman is expressed both in the body of the *prikante*'s text and in the social context in which it is performed. There is great significance to the secrecy of the ceremonies and the texts of the *prikantes*. Control of esoteric information of this type awards power to those who possess it.



These healing ceremonies were perceived by the women healers as a proper, ancient Jewish tradition. Therefore expertise in this area awarded them the status of *ṣaddiqot* (righteous women) both in their own eyes and in the opinion of the traditional community. Sometimes the rabbis recognized their status, while at other times they were against a portion of the healers' practices for reasons of Jewish law. This opposition, however, did not lead to the abolishment of these ceremonies and did not threaten the standing of the healers in the traditional Jewish community. In contrast to the picture gained from the texts written by the male elite (at first by the rabbis and then by those with secular education), these women did not consider their actions *superstitions* or a deviation from the righteous path, and even more so did not see them as *asinine acts*. From their point of view, this was the only Judaism they were familiar with. Similar conclusions were reached by the scholar Susan Sered in her study of elderly women of eastern origin in Jerusalem¹⁴⁰As in her test case, also in the view of the Sephardic female healers from Sarajevo, religion is perceived as focusing on the interpersonal sphere, as a way to improve the lot of others. A religious woman is a woman who behaves ethically in relations between one person and another in contrast to a man who is concerned with observing the religious laws, even on the account of disrupting systems of personal relations. Paradoxically, the same cultural system that granted a low status to women also enabled them to consolidate perceptions and values befitting their experiences. This reality was the result of a traditional concept that makes obligatory separation of the sexes and determines different behavioral norms and treatments for men and women.

This status of women is characteristic of the totality of traditional societies, the Jewish as well as the Christian and the Muslim. The common exclusion of women from religious studies led to the creation of sisterhoods of women, based on an open communication channel, especially in the sphere of folk beliefs and ceremonies. The male ceremonies have a clearly ethno-religious identity (the holy tongue of the group: Hebrew/Aramaic, Arabic, Latin, or Church Slavic; addressing the saints of the group). The feminine texts are largely devoid of distinct religion characteristics, which made them more universal, and as a result more fluid. It is hard to imagine a Christian or a Muslim having recourse to a Jewish religious ceremony (or the opposite). Despite that, women's healing ceremonies passed easily from one ethno-religious group to another. This is a kind of personal-feminine religion that crosses borders between religions and cultures, borders so carefully set and so meticulously guarded by men.

140 S. Sered Starr, *Women as Ritual Experts: The Religious Lives of Elderly Women in Jerusalem*, Oxford 1992.



לחש לעין הרע

כשם יתנה אלחי ישראל נעשה ונעליה, ויהי נעם
ארצי אלהינו עלינו, ומעשה ידיו פוננה עלינו, ומעשה
ידיו סוננהו, משביע אני עליכם, כל מין עינא בישא,
עינא אקמא, עינא צהובא, עינא תכלתא, עינא דרוקא,
עינא ארקה, עינא קצרה, עינא רחקה, עינא צרה, עינא

ישרה, עינא עקמה, עינא עגלה, עינא שוקעת, עינא
בולקת, עינא רואה, עינא מפטת, עינא בוקעת, עינא
שואבת, עינא דרכורא, עינא דנקבא, עין ראיש ואשתו,
עין ראשה וכתה, עין ראשה וקרוכתה, עין דבחור, עין
דבחורה, עין דזמן, עין דזמנה, עין דבחולה, עין
דכעולה, עין דאלמנה, עין דנשואה, עין דגרושה, כל
מין עינא בישא שיש בעולם, שראתה (הביטה) דפרה
בעין הרע על [פלוני בן פלוני] ועלי [פלוני בן פלוני],
גורנא ואשפענא על פלהון כההיא עינא עלאה, עינא
קדישא, עינא חדא, עינא חנרא, עינא דהיא חנר גו חנר,
עינא דכליל כל חנרי, עינא דכלה מינא, עינא פקיתא,
עינא דאשגחותא הדירא, עינא דכלא רחמי, עינא דכליל
כל רחמי, עינא דאיתי רחמי גו רחמי, עינא דלית עליה
גבניני, עינא דלא נאים ולא ארמיד, עינא דכל ענין
בישין אתכפון ואטמון גו בפין מן קדמוהי, עינא דנטיר
לישראל לעלמין, כדכתיב: "הנה לא יבום ולא יישן
שומר ישראל", וכתיב: "הנה עין יתנה אל גראי",
כההיא עינא עלאה גורנא ואשפענא עליכון, כל מין
עינא בישא וכל מרעין בישין, שסתורי ותדקקין ותערין
ותערקין מעל [פלוני בן פלוני] ומעלי [פלוני בן פלוני],
ולא יתנה לכם פת לשלט בפלוני בן פלוני ולא בי [פלוני
בן פלוני], לא ביום ולא בלילה, לא בקיץ ולא בחלוט,
לא בשום אקר מאכרינו ולא בשום גיד מגירינו, מהיום
ועד עולם, אמן. ויהנה [פלוני בן פלוני] [אני [פלוני בן
פלוני], שמורים הנצורים והנפרדים והמלטים בכל יתנה
אלחי ישראל מפל מין עינא בישא ומפל מרעין בישין,
דכתיב: "אסה סחר לי סצר הצרני וני פלט הסרבני

Fig. 5

A male *lahas* in Hebrew, from the book *Bet Tefilla*
by Ribbi Eliezer ben Isak Papo



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ТАМАР АЛЕКСАНДЕР & ЕЛИЕЗЕР ПАПО

О МОЋИ РЕЧИ: ИСЦЕЛИТЕЉСКЕ БАЈАЛИЦЕ БОСАНСКИХ СЕФАРДСКИХ ЖЕНА

Унаточ све већем напредовању сефардских студија, извјесни аспекти сефардског фолкора још увијек нису довољно истражени. Такав је, рецимо, и случај прикантес, басми сефардских жена. За разлику од мушких басми, тзв. лехашим, који не само да имају хебрејско име – него се и изводе на хебрејском, Светом језику свих Јевреја (те су, као такви, разумљиви и доступни само мушкарцима), прикантес се изводе само једино и искључиво на Ладину, народном језику сефардских Јевреја; те, као такви, представљају готово ексклузивно наслијеђе сефардских жена. Аутори чланка виде у овим римованим магијским формулама виде аутономни књижевни жанр, те их и анализирају књижевно-фолклорним методама. Сужавајући корпус на традицију само једне сефардске заједнице, сарајевске, аутори покушавају да изоштре разлике између појединих поджанрова, као и да понуде модел релевантан за класификацију и анализу басми уопште. Речени модел заснива се на опсегу аутономности бајалице, те простору њеног дјеловања. Тако се ритуали који зановани на прикантес могу прво подијелити у двије велике групе: они у којима бајалица дјелује потпуно аутономно и властитим снагама, те они у којима се бајалица обраћа вишим силама. Ритуали прве групе, у којима бајалица дјелује суверено, дјеле се на двије подгрупе: у првој бајалица дјелује у обичној, свакодневной и свима познатој реалности – док у другој групи ритуала она, попут шамана, прелази у паралелни свијет, у свијет иза огледала, и у њему изводи радњу (која има повратно дејство на свакодневну реалност); или стиче знање неопходно за третирање здравственог проблема у обичној реалности; или, ако ништа друго, присуствује догађају који доноси рјешење за проблем због кога је сефардска бајалица кренула на своје шаманско путовање. Друга група ритуала, они у којима се бајалица обраћа надљудским силама, не би ли јој исте помогле у ношењу са здравственим проблемом у питању, и сами се дијеле на двије подгрупе, у зависности од адресата бајаличиног зазива: на ритуале у којима се најалица обраћа Богу, те на ритуале у којима се бајалица обраћа самим злодусима. Ова посљедња група је уједно и најпроблематичнија из перспективе рабинског Јудаизма, и аутори цитирају многе рабине који су настојали да искоријене ову магијску праксу као крајње непримјерену. Народне љекарке нису посизале за оваквим ритуалима осим у случајевима када су сматрале да је “зло” у толикој мјери



продрло у тијело болесника и његову непосредну околину, да их је могуће одстранити само пактом, приволом и договором – а никако конфронтацијом. За разлику од мушких егзорцистичких ритуала који су засновани на директној конфронтацији између љекара (рабина или мистика) и злих сила које су запосјеле тијело болесника, женски ритуал (сходно психолошкој конституцији традиционалне жене) далеко је мање агресиван, и заснива се на споразуму са нечистим силама. Уопште посматрано, за разлику од мушких ритуала који су битно обиљежени светим језицима различитих босанско-сарајевских етно-религијских група: хебрејским и арамејским (у јеврејском случају), старословенским (у случају БиХ православних Срба), арапским (у случају БиХ муслимана Бошњака) или латинским (у случају БиХ католика, Хрвата), те као такви губе много на атрактивности у очима других конфесија, које за истим не би могле посегнути без довођења у питање властитог идентитета; женски ритуали готово да су лишени печата “велике традиције” (мушке институционализоване традиције), и стога лако прелазе из једне културе у другу. Тиме “мала традиција” доводи у питање религијске и културолошке границе на успостављању којих тако помно ради велика традиција. Тиме се универзално женско магијско сестринство нуди као алтернатива исцјепканом мушком свијету, размеђених и завађених религијских традиција.



