

SEPHARDIC MUSIC WITHIN THE CULTURE OF BOSNIAN JEWS

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It is well-known that Jews emigrated from their original land or, rather, were taken out of their land and became slaves or half-free subjects in other countries.

They mostly traveled in the eastern and western direction from their country, settling in almost all the countries of the world known at that time.

Jews who went east to the territories of today's western and eastern Europe (Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland and others) came to be known as Ashkenazi (*Ashkenaz* is the Hebrew word for 'east', more particularly Germany).

Those who went in the western direction, to the Mediterranean region (the Iberian peninsula) and some European countries, such as Holland (especially Amsterdam), France (especially Provence), Italy, and Africa (especially Morocco) were called Sephardim. *Sephard* is the Hebrew word for the West.

In the ancient world there was hardly one Mediterranean country without significant and strong Jewish colonies, especially around estuaries. The towns in which Jews settled include Athens, Corinth, Thessaloniki, and later Skopje. After the fall of Jerusalem (in 70 A.D.) and the crushing of the great Jewish rebellion in 135 A.D. the number of Jews in the above mentioned towns increased enormously. After the First Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D., when they refused to convert to Christianity, the fate of Jews was marked by persecutions for centuries to come.

The number of Jews settling in the Balkans was considerably increased after the East-West Schism, which divided the Roman Empire into two parts and created Byzantium. After the institutionalization of Christianity as the state religion, Jews in Byzantium became *corpus alienum* (foreign body). The *Corpus Juris Civilis*, a collection of laws issued by the Eastern Roman Emperor Justinian I, treats Jews as *possessio imperii* (possession of Empire). Jews were also referred to as *servi camere regis* (servants of the royal chamber), which meant that the ruler had the right to tax them. Regardless of its inferior political status, Judaism attracted a number of distinguished persons and many new followers. At this point we need to remind ourselves of the appearance and the demise of the Khazars, whose leaders converted to Judaism (they were called *kagans*, a word derived from Hebrew *kohen*). The Khazar state existed from the 7th to the 12th

century. It is interesting to see the influence of the Hebrew alphabet on the Glagolitic alphabet, which adopted five letters from the Hebrew alphabet (*b, k, t, š i ě*), as well as on the Cyrillic alphabet, which adopted the Hebrew letter *š* (called *shin* in Hebrew).

In addition to accounts of Jews living in Thessaloniki in the 12th century, there are travelogues about Jews who inhabited Skopje (Skub, Ušćup), Bitola (Monastir in Ottoman Turkish), and some other cities. We don't have accurate information about the first appearance of Jews in the Pyrenean Peninsula – they probably arrived there with Phoenicians, either before them or a little later. They don't seem to have attracted much attention by the locals. The arrival of Visigoths to the territory of today's Spain and Portugal marks the beginning of the persecution of Jews by their Christian clergy. More important for Jewish history is the new wave of Jews settling in the Pyrenean Peninsula together with Arabs, from the 7th to the second half of the 8th century.

Immediately upon arriving in Spain, Jews became a very important factor. Arabs were culturally more advanced at the time, so that Jews were encouraged to work on their own cultural advancement. Soon after Arab academies were founded, Jews set up their own academies to study religion and philosophy. In Cordoba and some other cities the subjects studied included mathematics, astronomy, medicine, grammar as part of philology, poetics, and especially languages: Arabic and Hebrew, as well as Latin and classical Greek. Under Arab influence, Jews adopted the neo-Platonic view of the world. Beginning in early 13th century the by now largely mixed Arab-Jewish culture gradually moved to other Spanish cities, such as Barcelona and Toledo. That period in the history of Spanish Arabs and Jews is called *El Siglo de Oro* – the Golden Age. This is the era of great men of science, philosophy, and theology, such as Majmonides and Moses ben Nachmanides, as well as poets such as Ibn Gabirol and Halevi.

The fact that the Jewish folk tradition in music was very open to Arab influences is of the utmost significance; this gave rise to songs resembling Arab qasidahs and sahels. All the products of the intertwining of Arabic and Jewish culture – which existed in all spheres of life – were later built into the Spanish *romancero* (El romancero espanol).

The fourteenth century is ominous for both Arabs and Jews. It was at this time that antisemitism became rampant and introduced massive Christianization of Jews and Arabs, as well as the appearance of Neo-Christians and crypto-Jews. Slowly but surely, Spain was becoming a theocratic country in which the Catholic religion was dominant in every aspect of human life.

The edict on the banishment of Jews and Arabs from Spain in 1492 and later from Portugal too brought a lot of evil to both these peoples because they had become assimilated with the local people by this time; it also resulted in the creation of a new Jewish diaspora. It was also a painful parting for both peoples from a country which they had come to consider their new homeland in every respect.

The largest number of banished Jews found refuge in the great and powerful Ottoman Empire. A smaller number went to Europe (Amsterdam, Provence in France). Spanish Jews settled in the Ottoman Empire on three continents – Europe, Africa, and the Near East. They can be divided into two large groups: the first group is made up of those who went to countries with West-European culture (Amsterdam, France, and later England and Italy), and a second one consisting of those who settled in countries with a Near-East culture. The latter group can be subdivided into two smaller groups, the western and the eastern one. The western group is made up of those who settled in North Africa (who still maintain a connection with Spain) and the eastern one made of the Sephardim who settled in the Near East and the Balkans. The Jews who settled in the Balkans broke away from Spain almost completely.

It is interesting to observe the ambivalent relation, lasting for centuries, of the banished Sephardim and the ones later burnt on the stake to their banishment from Spain. Throughout history, and to this day too, they carry in them an underlying bitterness and a boundless sorrow resulting from that barbaric act of the Spanish kings known as „Catholic“ kings. Their decision to banish Jews and Arabs was made under a great influence of the Inquisition, especially of the Grand Inquisitor, cardinal Torquemada, who – how ironical – was himself descended from a Jew who converted to Christianity. On the other hand, those same Sephardim have never felt any hatred towards the Spanish people and the culture shared with Arabs and Catholics, who were their neighbors. This is proved by the following poem

written in the first half of the 20th century by the grand rabbi, poet and teacher Avram Kapona. We give its Spanish original and an English translation:

A ESPANA

**A Ti, Espana bienquerida,
Nosotros „madre“ Te llamamos
Y mientras toda nostra vida,
Tu dulce lengua no dejamos.
Aunque Tu nos desterraste
Como madrasta de tu seno,
No estancamos de amarte
Como santisimo terreno,
En que dejaron nuestros padres
A sus parientes enterrados
Y las cenizas de millares
De tormentados y quemados.**

TO SPAIN

**Beloved Spain, we call you „mother“
and never abandon your sweet language
for our entire life.
Although you rejected us
as a step-mother from her bosom would,
we never stopped loving you
and that holy soil
where our fathers left their next of kin buried**

in the earth together with thousands of others
tortured and burnt.

Jews in the Ottoman Empire

Turkish sultans showed great respect and benevolence for Jews even before their banishment from Spain. Sultan Murat I admitted them to the Turkish Army as a foreign legion, and they fought on his side with great success in the battle of Jedren in 1361. It is well known that several sultans, after the conquest of Istanbul, invited Jews to make their home in what was now the capital of the Turkish Empire. Moshe Kapsali, the then leader of the Jewish community in Istanbul, wrote that Sultan Mehmed had sent the following message to all Jews living in his Empire:

„ Oh you, descendants of Judeans, who live in my country; let each of you come to Istanbul and settle here“.

An interesting case in point related to this period is the invitation by Jichak Carfati to German Jews to come to Turkey. He had emigrated to Turkey because of the harassment and torture Jews suffered in Germany. He invited Jews to come to Turkey, a „country of abundance“. He said that destiny itself had sent him to Turkey so that he could bring salvation, by God's grace, to Jews in Germany. He also said that “the best and the shortest way to Jerusalem was through Turkey.”

At the end of a long and arduous journey to their new homelands many Sephardic Jews perished. Merchants from Dubrovnik played an important role in transporting Jewish refugees from the Iberian Peninsula because they had had a long-standing tradition of ship travel to and from that Peninsula. Towards the end of the 15th century and in early 16th century we find Jews in nearly all big cities of the vast Ottoman Empire. The arrival of Jews in Istanbul and in the entire Empire was of mutual benefit to Jews and to the Turkish administration. Jews were welcomed with sincere hospitality because the Sultan knew that they would contribute to the general advancement of his country, especially in trade, arts and crafts, and in science; most importantly, they were well connected throughout Europe. They were valued for their trading skills, as bankers, and as manufacturers of weapons and ammunition, which was of enormous importance to the Ottoman Empire.

Jews in Sarajevo

Jews are known to have lived in Sarajevo even before the arrival of the Sephardim from Spain. They were called Romaniotes; there could have been other Jews in Sarajevo too. This is also proved by the frequent family name Romano. When the Sephardim colonized Sarajevo, they quickly „Sephardized“ these Jews. It is very hard to give the year of the arrival of Romaniotes in Sarajevo, but it probably coincides with, or is close to, the arrival of first Jews in the Balkans. We don't know the exact date of the arrival of the Sephardim in Sarajevo. Researchers in the field of Sephardic studies differ in this regard by about 15 to 20 years.

A manuscript in the Gazi-Husrefbeg Library in Sarajevo gives the year 958 of the Muslim era, or 1551 of the Christian era, as the time of the arrival of the Sephardim in Sarajevo. We owe this information to Hadim Ali-Bey, the then governor of Bosnia. According to him there were about 40 to 50 Jews in Sarajevo at the time, mostly engaged in trade; they did not, however, live permanently in Sarajevo (they probably kept coming and going). The chief rabbi of Sarajevo, Dr. Moris Levi, the writer of the major work about Bosnian Jews *Die Sepharadim in Bosnien*, Sarajevo, 1911, takes the year 973 of the Muslim era, or 1565 of the Christian era, as the time of the arrival of Jews in Sarajevo. He found this year in two Turkish court documents in the same Library. About 20 Jewish families lived permanently in Sarajevo at the time. This year is taken as the date of the arrival of Jews in Sarajevo also because it was the year in which Sarajevo Jews were first organized in the *Jewish Community*. The other dates quoted as times of the arrival of Jews in Sarajevo are not credible.

In his book *Die Oesterreichisch – Ungarische Monarchie in Wort und Bild* Dr. Glück claims that the Sephardim arrived in Sarajevo in 1604, and M. Franco in his *Jewish Encyclopadia* gives the year 1575 as the time of the arrival of the Sephrdim in Bosnia; he was a nephew of Don Josef Nassi and Donna Gracia, who provided this information for him. The year 1565 is now generally accepted as the year of the arrival of Jews in Sarajevo. Jews came to Sarajevo from different cities and regions of the Ottoman Empire, but mostly from Istanbul, Thessaloniki, Skopje, and from small towns of today's Macedonia, Monastir (Bitola), or Bulgaria (Sofia, Rushchuk).

Tradition has it that the Salom family came from Skopje, the Ovadia and Alevi families from Monastir (Bitola), while the Pintos and the Kajons came via Rushchuk in Bulgaria; the Kamhi family and some members of the Levi family traveled through Albania (probably via Valon) to come to Sarajevo.

Once they came to Sarajevo, Jews formed several groups dividing themselves according to their Spanish geographical provenance and the synagogues they used to worship in. The theories which claim that they came to Sarajevo, the political and economic center of the Bosnian Pashaluk, from Dubrovnik and small city-states in Italy are partly true. Dubrovnik, just like the Adriatic ports of Split, Šibenik and Zadar, were not part of the Ottoman Empire. Exiles from Spain could settle in Istanbul and Thessaloniki, and in other port cities that belonged to the Ottoman Empire and are located south of the ports mentioned above.

Immigrants from the port cities gradually settle in the interior of the Balkans, including Sarajevo, mostly using the existing caravan routes from Thessaloniki through Jedren, Sofia, Niš, Belgrade, Monastira, Novi Pazar and Višegrad. From Sarajevo roads lead to Dubrovnik, Split, Zadar, and Šibenik. At that time Sarajevo was one of the biggest transit centers in this part of the Ottoman Empire, as well as a big crossroads.

The Sephardim happen to be in the right place at the right time, and were integrated very well into the economic and commercial transactions of the city of Sarajevo. If we take into account all that has been said so far, we can say that the direction of migratory movement of the Sephardim was from east to west, and less in the opposite direction. This also indicates that the different dates given about their arrival in Sarajevo are correct, both 1551 and 1565. The period of 15 years of adjustment to the new environment was sufficient for a permanent Sephardic community to be made from occasional visits by individual Jewish entrepreneurs.

In the beginning the Sephardim lived in different parts of Sarajevo. It is interesting that Shaw in his book *Jews of the Ottoman Empire* claims that, in 1577, Jews were allowed to build their own city quarter as a reward for their contribution to the Ottoman state.

But we know from reliable sources that in 1580 or 1581 Siavush-Pasha, aka Atik (who later became the Grand Vizier), ordered the construction of a *han* (type of hostel) to be called „Ćifuthana“ with 46 to 50 rooms, mainly

for poor Jews. This han is popularly called „Siavush-Pasha's Daira“, and the Sephardim call it *kurtižo*. The han is located in what was then the very center of Sarajevo, only a hundred meters from the most beautiful and the largest mosque in Sarajevo, called the „Begova Mosque.“

The Language of Bosnian Sephardim

As in the other parts of the Balkans, the type of Spanish spoken by Bosnian Sephardic Jews was based on pre-classical Spanish of the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries (*español anteclassico*). Since the Sephardim were expelled from different parts of Spain, they spoke different regional varieties of Spanish. It is obvious that this created a problem in finding a common language because no standard Spanish with common linguistic features had been formed by that time.

Therefore, the Judeo-Spanish idiom (also called Ladino) used by Bosnian Sephardim contained many forms originating from various dialects of Spanish. This means that Bosnian Judeo-Spanish was in fact a mixture of all those dialects. But that is not all. Their language also contained many words borrowed from the languages of the Balkan peoples, with whom they had been in contact. They are words from Turkish, Greek, various Slavic languages, Italian and its dialects, especially the dialect of Venice.

This mixture of languages that we have talked about gave rise to sub-idioms of Judeo-Spanish, not only within the country but even within the city of Sarajevo, where we can distinguish three sub-idioms:

1. Written Ladino used in writing religious texts, originally written in Hebrew, later transliterated in a Latin alphabet (it was the language of religious books (*mahazors*), of rabbis' responses, etc.) This type of Judeo-Spanish was never spoken.
2. The spoken language of educated people, similar to the previously described idiom, but not the same.
3. The language of the Jewish uneducated poor, with a large number of words borrowed from the language of the local non-Jewish population.

It can be said that one idiom of Ladino was spoken by the Jews living in low-lying areas of Sarajevo, along the communication lines and near the

Miljacka river, while the Jews living on the hillsides of Sarajevo, especially those on Mejtaš and Bjelave, spoke a slightly different idiom.

The Sephardim of Sarajevo called their language „Jidio“, „Spanjol“, „Judesmo“, and, incorrectly, Ladino. The name „Judeo-espanol“ was brought by students who had studied in Vienna, Berlin, and Prague. They called the current language of Spain „Spanjol muevu“, and also „Spanol di lus Spanjolis di Spania“.

Resemblances and Differences between *El Romansero espanol* and *El Romansero Judeo-Espanol*

Music played a very important role in the culture of the Bosnian Sephardim, both as a great artistic expression and as part of their cultural heritage, as in all societies.

Music is divided into secular and spiritual music. There is a great difference in music forms of the Sephardim and the Ashkenazi. It is natural that the creative potential of Bosnian Jews depended on the general culture of the people they lived with. Ashkenazi music, especially the music played in synagogues, had reached a high level of sophistication and could compete with similar music of other peoples because it had adopted some forms of modern music, especially of modern European music. The Sephardim, however, developed very different forms in music.

Primarily, the Sarajevo Jews developed nearly all forms of traditional folk music. The value of this kind of music is in the fact that it is originally Jewish and is characterized by beautiful Near-Eastern melodies. This happened because of the isolation in which Ottoman society lived, with the consequent absence of any outside influence.

A consequence of this situation is a certain primitivism in the monodic melody, and especially the lack of polyphony. The Sephardim had a wide range of both secular and religious songs. In religious songs the original lyrics were almost completely preserved from biblical times, while the lyrics of secular songs are almost entirely based on oral tradition. The melodies of secular songs changed rather frequently as a result of changing fashions and, most importantly, to suit the possibilities of individual interpreters. The lyrics often contained episodes from Jewish history related to the life of Jews in diaspora, but also elements of contemporary life.

Having lived in the Iberian Peninsula for a very long time, especially in Spain, Bosnian Sephardim sang songs whose lyrics and tunes were largely based on Spanish romantic songs, which form part of an enormous number of songs that make up the so-called „El Romancero español“, i.e. cycles of epic, heroic, and other songs created between the 13th and the 16th centuries. They described events from the lives of kings, noblemen of higher and lower ranks (*hidalgos*), and often their relations with Jews and Marranos.

The love songs of the Bosnian Sephardim sometimes have happy ends and sometimes not. As a music form they are closest to ballads created in other European countries. There are also romantic songs with biblical themes. The parts of Spain where romantic songs were first created are Castilla la Mancha and Castilla la Vieja. In Bosnia the Judeo-Spanish „Romancero“ was strictly divided into romantic songs and cantigas. They were created by ordinary people as immediate reactions of the human soul to any significant event in the life of a Sephardic family and sometimes of the entire Jewish community.

As compared to romantic songs, cantigas are uniquely lyric songs in every sense of the word. It is interesting that there were sometimes several versions of the same romantic song or cantiga which described an important event. Individual passages from those versions were later used to create new songs in a new tradition of folk singing, adapted to individual singers and the instrumentalists who accompanied them.

In the beginning the accompaniment was quite modest but still made up an ensemble, which often changed as the song changed. But it almost regularly consisted of a lute and a *bandero* (drum). Love songs and cantigas were mostly sung by women, more often older women rather than young ones; there were also men who sang them, but much less than women. Young women tended to sing cantigas with a love content, while older women sang epic songs. In her book *The Sephardic Woman in Bosnia* Laura Papo Bohoreta writes: „Our grandmothers did not avoid singing romantic songs and on the basis of their melodies created a philosophy of life. They enjoyed doing that“.

Many scholars who have studied Sephardic culture have been very explicit about this interesting phenomenon in Sephardic life. We will quote a

sentence from an article by Moshe Shaul, entitled „Romancero Sefardi“, published in a September 1985 issue of the Madrid newspaper *ABC*: „The romantic song was for centuries almost the sole source of spiritual food for the Sephardim, which offered explanations for both sorrow and joy“.

In early 19th century the Sephardic romantic song became a focus of interest of philologists and musicologists, both professionals and amateurs. Each group of scholars treated this traditional Sephardic treasure in its own way and from its own point of view. We will mention a Spaniard, who is really a competent researcher of Jewish culture; his name is Ramon Menendez Pidal. His main interest was the relation between romantic songs which were sung in Spain at the time, and the Sephardic songs he researched in the Balkans, especially in Bosnia. After long and careful research he wrote a very important book entitled *A Catalogue of Judeo-Spanish Romantic Songs*. He called the songs which he discovered outside of Spain „romances judios“.

The most prominent among the Bosnian Sephardim who researched this aspect of Jewish culture are the philologist and hispanologist Dr. Kalmi Baruh and Dr. Moric Levi, Sarajevo's chief rabbi and, especially, Laura-Luna Papo Bohoreta. Dr. Baruh wrote about this topic in great detail in his doctoral dissertation *Die Lautstand des Juden – spanischen in Bosnien*, obtained at the University of Vienna in June 1923, as well in his numerous articles, treatises and essays, published in the Sarajevo scholarly journal *Pregled*, in the yearbook of the Jewish Society *La Benevolencia*, which appeared both in Sarajevo and Belgrade, and in many Jewish newspapers published throughout Europe. In his major work *Die Sephardim in Bosnien* (The Bosnian Sephardim), first published in 1911, Dr. Moric Levi described in great detail all aspects of Sephardic history in Bosnia, both the daily life and the culture at large. He was also a passionate collector of Sephardic romantic songs, folk stories, proverbs, and other products of folk culture.

Laura Papo Bohoreta is the best-known writer in the Judeo-Spanish language. She wrote short stories, essays, and plays; she also composed songs and collected all types of Sephardic cultural treasure. Other important authors who dealt with the same topic include Dr. Samuel Kamhi, Dr. Samuel Elazar, Dr. Samuel Pinto, and Prof. Avram Pinto. We should also mention texts on the same subject by Regina Kamhi i Jakov

Papo, published under the title *Sačuvano od zaborava* (Preserved from Oblivion) by the Jewish community of Zagreb in the year 2000. Of a number of non-Jews who researched the life of Bosnian Sephardim the most important work was done by Ešref Čampara and Prof. Muhamed Nezirović.

The collectors of the philological and music heritage mentioned above were not the first compilers of Sephardic folk music. It is interesting that a tinsmith from Sarajevo by the name of David Kamhi was the first to collect folk songs, and not only Sephardic ones but also songs of Turkish, Muslim, Catholic, and Orthodox inhabitants of Sarajevo. He did this in the first half of the 19th century, even before Vuk Karadžić, the founder of modern literary Serbian. This was reported in an article by Jovan Kršić, published in the journal *Pregled* in 1934. This passionate collector wrote down 16 Serbian folk songs, which he called „kantigas serpeskas“; his collection contains several folk songs very popular at the time and coming from different religious communities.

Sephardic traditional musical and philological heritage, romantic and other songs can be thematically divided into the following types:

1. Original Spanish romantic songs sung in Bosnia and Hercegovina
2. Bosnian Sephardic romantic songs and songs about love, family and social life, with didactic and other similar content
3. Religious-biblical, parareligious, and patriotic songs and melodies
4. Toasts (Brindis)
5. Laments (Endechas)
6. Fairy tales (Pregantis)

Traditional and other kinds of music performed by Sephardic Jews depended to a great extent on the conditions in which they lived and on the limits placed on them by the Ottoman authorities. In Sarajevo Sephardic Jews had complete religious freedom – they were free to carry out their rites both in synagogues and at home. In liturgical and paraliturgical rites music played a very important role. Sephardic forms of music were mainly vocal. This refers to music performed on both major and minor holidays (Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Purim, Passover, Shavuot, Hanukkah, and others) as well as to all religious activities at home.

In their musical expression in religious contexts, as in all other musical forms, the Sephardim were obviously greatly influenced by the social environment in which they lived; they were particularly receptive to Turkish-Muslim influences, which were dominant for a very long period of time. It is interesting to note that these influences were stronger on Jews than on Christians. This should come as no surprise if we bear in mind that Sephardic music, because of centuries of life on the Iberian Peninsula, was partly based on characteristically Arabic-Islamic expression.

Sephardic music, just like the music of other Jews, was very adaptable, not only because of the influence to which it was subjected but also because adaptability was preached by religious leaders, since it was believed to contribute to the preservation of Jewish religious and ethnic integrity. In fact, Talmud tells Jews to be adaptable; this is clearly stated in the section „Bava“: „Everything should be according to local customs“.

For many years – in fact up until the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia - Bosnian Sephardim lived as a totally closed community, especially in the religious sense, but music forms, particularly songs of urban Muslims, reached them, and they adopted their form and pattern, consciously or unconsciously; this was true of both sacral and secular music.

This did not happen as a result of some pressure by religious or state authorities; it was mostly the result of shared music tradition from the time of their life together with Muslims on the Iberian Peninsula and of the shared influence of Near-Eastern music. This was aptly described by Dr. Samuel Maestro in his article published in the 1921 Yearbook of *La Benevlencija Charity*, entitled „On Sephardic secular and synagogal music“; he writes: „Sephardic songs, nearly always sung in unison, contain Near-Eastern, Turkish, and mostly Arabic motifs. When one listens to them, one cannot help being transported into the realm of Near-Eastern romance, carefree peace of mind, of relaxation and enjoyment of this matchless music“.

The influence of Muslim music on the music of Bosnian Sephardim was not always of the same nature. Only some elements of Muslim songs were found in Sephardic prayers. This primarily relates to patterns of *Mekam*, which is the Arabic word for 'place'. It can also refer to a note on a musical scale or

to the modal essence of a tune, its stylistic and musical forms in relation to its tonal variants, melismas, dynamics, rhythm, timbre, tempo, but also the voice quality of the interpreter.

We can distinguish the Bosnian or specifically Sarajevan mekam from the one imported from the Orient. We find clear influence of elements of Turkish and Bosnian Muslim singing on Jewish lyrical songs, which were „flat“ songs and were characterized by a wide ambitus, rich melismatics, frequent use of alteration, repetition of entire sentences or their parts, and very frequent insertion of the exclamation *Aman*, which is sung syllabically and melismatically.

These compositions were also performed in another way characteristic of Bosnian Muslim love songs. It is obvious that the „flat“ songs in their melismatic realizations are the same as Muslim love songs, and they always talk about love. On the other hand, the diatonic character and free rhythm are closely tied with the Sephardic manner of singing love songs, although there were other ways of singing, especially when older love songs were sung.

Those music forms were performed in a more even way, with a moderate rhythm, and without breaks, but also with more modest melismatics. There was a clear difference in the performance of Sephardic romantic songs between the western and the eastern area inhabited by the Sephardim. The latter was characterized by a diatonic approach to the tune and the „rubato“ style, i.e. a freer treatment of rhythm in the actual performance of the song and phrases said in recitation, usually introducing ornamental melismas characteristic of older Sephardic love songs sung mostly in the Turkish style.

Later Sephardic love songs were thoroughly influenced by Bosnian Muslim love songs. They were full of *dert* (love sickness), which expressed the deep suffering resulting from unrequited love. This new way of singing Sephardic songs was also characterized by different stanzas corresponding to definite melodic patterns: a stanza of four 8-syllable lines, sometimes extended with a refrain, was continued with two 8-syllable lines, which are sung twice in the second half of the tune, along with the first half.

A characteristic of this style of singing is regular use of Turkish exclamations „Aman“ and „Janum“ as part of the refrain (as in Bosnian

folk poetry). The Sephardim „Aman“ is in fact a later version of the Arabic word „Amanu“ found in an occasional “harche” and „maoshahe“ from the medieval Andalusian tradition. According to another explanation, proposed by Armistat and Silvermann in their article „Exlamaciones turcas y otros rasgos orientales en el romancero judeo-espanol“ (pp. 177 and 179.), this Arabism was taken over from Turkish.

Basic characteristics of Bosnian Sephardic romantic songs, as well as of their other music forms typical of the entire Sephardic music tradition, were a wide melodic range, with the tune always embellished with melismas. This made it possible to perform the songs not only in unison but also in small choruses accompanying the main interpreter. The free rhythm, which could be changed by the performer, and an expressiveness specific to each interpreter were the qualities of these songs highly appreciated by the broader Sephardic audiences.

The quality of a singer was judged on the basis of the elasticity of his throat, i.e. of his natural ability to adjust his voice and the manner of interpretation to the particular song. This can be heard by listening to romantic songs like „Arvoles“ (Trees) and „Sekretos“ (Secrets). Sephardic songs were sung in different scales, with numerous augmented seconds and a certain rhythmic delay, often preceded by a drum hit. This tradition in the interpretation of Arabic-Spanish-Jewish love songs was transferred to the new area in which Sephardic Jews settled. It is interesting to note that these characteristics influenced two dominant styles of music in Spain itself, first in folk music and in composed music too; they are „canto hondo“ and „canto flamenco“.

Even before the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, noticeable differences appeared in the performance of Bosnian Sephardic music; this was coincidental with a division of value judgements of the different forms, which had previously been equally popular. Members of higher layers of the Sarajevo Sephardic community, mostly educated abroad, preferred romances and cantigas with preserved elements of Spanish music, while less educated Jews were more favorably inclined towards music with Bosnian, more precisely with Sarajevan elements. The two layers of the Bosnian Sephardic population organized debates on the subject, which sometimes touched on the quality of singers who performed the romances and castigas.

The performance of the various forms of Sephardic music differed depending on whether the singer was male or female. For centuries Sephardic women had been excluded from public life almost completely. This changed somewhat towards the end of the 19th century and in early 20th century, soon after the arrival of Ashkenazi Jews in Bosnia. The social life of Sephardic Jews was different from that of the Ashkenazis because the Sephardic man was oriented more toward his own confession rather than to members of other confessions. Contacts with people of other religions were mostly related to business. The range of the contacts was very modest and depended on needs for sustenance and the wish to preserve one's religious, national, and cultural identity. If we bear in mind these facts, it becomes clear that the cultural involvement – and that means musical too – and especially the religious involvement in the Sephardic community differed a great deal depending on gender. Women participated very little in the cultural life, and hardly ever in liturgical matters in the synagogue. We know that women could not make up “minyan” (the quorum of ten Jewish men required for certain religious obligations). In synagogues women were separated from men or were obliged to stay on a different side of the temple. This male-dominated hierarchy was compensated by the fact that the woman was the dominant figure in the smallest social unit, i.e. the family. The woman – the wife, the mother – was the pillar of the family; she transferred the secular tradition of the broader community (especially musical tradition) to the children and to other members of the extended family. Women played the main role in the well-known Sephardic custom of „konecimienta“ (evening of introductions), when the young man and the young woman were introduced to each other and when their families got to know each other. On such occasions women sang songs known as “komple” (wedding songs). One of the best known such songs was “Aj ke es relumbror de novia ermoza“. That song has been incorporated in the world anthology of traditional Sephardic songs. It can be translated as “How beautifully the bride shines.” Another cantiga originating from Sarajevo that is well known in the Sephardic music world and is considered a gem in the women's vocal repertoire is the song “Ja vien al parido”, connected with the birth and circumcision of a male child, eight days after his birth. Many women were present around the child-bearing woman, including singers of folk songs, with hardly any education in music but with a great deal of experience in professional singing on such and similar occasions.

Those singers were often invited to both rich and poor families to help them overcome the pain, or celebrate the joyful moments. They were mostly poor and were richly rewarded for their help, either in cash or in kind. Unlike singers from other religions in Bosnia, they were not morally degraded or had a lower social status.

The Sephardim called them “trias” (aunts) or “nonas” (grandmothers) because they came mostly from the older population. They had a special song for each occasion, and accompanied themselves mainly with a tambourine.

They knew the lyrics of all the songs that they sang by heart. People called them “cantaderas” (female singers) and “taniederas” (music makers). Some of those women had a “subspecialization”: they were paid wailers, who were the first to visit the home of a deceased person.

All forms of Sephardic culture, especially in music, were preserved in ways described above until World War 2, regardless of the fact that most of the female singers were illiterate. The music forms cultivated by the Sarajevo Sephardim partly arose from the Castilian music tradition but also from the local Bosnian tradition.

It is interesting to note that there was a special form of songs highly appreciated by the Sephardim of Bosnia, called “Sephardic *sevdalinka*,” *sevdalika* being the typical love lament of Bosnian Muslims. Such songs go back to late 18th century. An example of this type of songs is the cantiga „Sekretos kero deskuvrir“, which I will quote in its original subidiom of Judeo-Espanol; it will be accompanied by an English translation.

SEKRETOS KERO DESKUVRIR

Sekretos kero deskuvrir

Sekretos de mi alma

Los sjelos kero pur papel

La mar kero pur tinta

Sali a la puerta, ti avlare

**Sekretos de mi vida
Nu lu kerin ni saver
Ni džentis, ni parjentis
Arvoliku di jasmin
In mi quarta insimbradu
Ti infloresi, ti engrandesi
Ti infloresi, ti engrandesi
Otru ti sta guzandu**

I WISH TO UNCOVER MY SECRETS

**I wish to uncover my secrets
The secrets of my soul
I want the sky to be my paper
I want the sea to be my ink
Come to the door, I will tell you
The secret of my life
They don't want to know about it
Either people or relatives
Jasmin trees,
Planted in my garden
You blossom and you grow
You blossom and you grow
And others enjoy you.**

We see that the lyrics of this song are filled with comparisons (sky and paper, sea and ink, tree and pen). Such comparisons are quite frequent in the Talmud.

A special type of Sephardic music is the “complas”. The word itself is derived from Castilian “coplas.” These songs describe various events (joyful or sad, mainly connected to some Jewish holidays), for example “Complas de Purim,” “Complas di Hanuka.” Some of them glorify the courage and fame of Maccabees, or events related to the exodus of Jews from Egypt. The term “complas” is also connected with the songs which describe individual holidays in such a way as to transport the religious content into traditional poetry and a special musical form closely connected with religious rites. These songs are quite different from romances and castigas. Paraliturgic songs, such as „Komplas de las frutas i flores“ (chants about fruits and flowers), sung for “Tubishvat” – the holiday of spring, and others connected with Nature, are also part of the Jewish musical tradition.

Spiritual (Synagogal) Music

Music forms of Sephardic spiritual music in Bosnia, especially in Sarajevo, did not change for centuries for reasons given above: the Sephardic community was closed, and there were even no influences of other groups of Jews. Under such circumstances only creative people through generations could make minor changes in musical expression. Talented individuals – hazzans, cantors, or even members of the congregation changed some songs depending on their own taste in order to adapt them to the current situation in public life, especially in culture. Members of the “kehila” (the Jewish community) did not always welcome such changes.

Every change of the local religious practice relating to the words and the music of a song took a long time and was difficult to introduce, unlike secular music, which was always open to change.

The secular music forms of the Bosnian Sephardim originated partly from Spain, partly from the Near East and Bosnia, especially from Sarajevo, less from the provincial areas. This music is largely based on local songs and chants. Such influences were mostly absent from the music played in synagogues.

The tunes of the prayers offered for Passover, Shavuot, and especially for Rosh Hashana and Yom Kipur contain an abundance of music motifs unrelated to the area in which the Sephardim made their new home. Those motifs probably go back to the ancient history of Jews, i.e. to the time of the prophets.

They represent preserved patterns either of entire ancient prayers or of their parts. This can be compared with the correct pronunciation of the ancient Hebrew language, found in the Bible, which the Sephardim, unlike the Ashkenazis, preserved almost completely. If we accept the fact that the Sephardim preserved many aspects of the old Jewish tradition, this should especially apply to a large portion of music forms. These music forms were inherited, and have almost no connection with the Near Eastern or local influences.

As in other parts of the world, in late 19th century Bosnia was caught in a wind of change in the society at large, including the Sephardic environment. The change affected the synagogal musical practice too.

Even before the arrival of the rabbi (hakham) Avram Kapon from Rushchuk in Bulgaria, there were attempts to introduce reforms in synagogal musical practice, but without major success.

While residing in Sarajevo between 1901 and 1920, Kapon was rather successful in making certain changes in liturgy in the sense of introducing more order in public worship.

He reformed the content of the more important prayers and their mutual order.

In the beginning he met with considerable resistance of some believers, especially of older rabbis and religious functionaries in Sarajevo's synagogues, so he had to do many things by himself or with the help of more educated believers.

The greatest resistance was directed at some important changes that affected the basis of the usual religious practice at the time in Sarajevo and all of the Balkans; one such change was the introduction of a special service for girls on Saturday morning. The service was conducted without the obligatory minyan. He also set up a small girls' chorus with soloists, thereby introducing polyphony in Jewish music.

The practice continued, to a lesser degree, even after his departure from Sarajevo. A lot of the credit for a richer religious but also secular music belongs to the Jewish chorus “Lira,” which was active between 1901 and 1941.

Special credit should be given to its conductors. The chorus performed traditional synagogal and secular Jewish music, with polyphonic arrangements made by well-known composers.

Audiences received this chorus with great appreciation, largely because it performed well-known romances and cantigas. “Lira” was a mixed quire which performed mostly in the newly built temple “Kal Grandi” in Sarajevo, though it did perform in other cities in Yugoslavia. It also went on tours in neighboring countries and traveled to Palestine.

The period between the years 1930 and 1941 is very important for the new approach to performing traditional synagogal music in Sarajevo.

The most merit for this new situation goes to the Sarajevo-born hazzan and cantor Isak Kalmi Altarac (1890-1941), who graduated from a Sarajevan religious school and subsequently studied theology and music at the University of Vienna.

In this period he improved his knowledge of the traditional Sephardic music under the influence of music forms of Ashkenazi synagogal practice, merging the two traditions in a professional way; on his return to Sarajevo, he created new synagogal and secular forms of music. This was manifested mostly in the introduction of modern harmonies and polyphonic arrangements of religious music. He himself composed and conducted such music forms. He founded a boys’ quire on the model of The Quire of Viennese Boys and taught the boys chorus singing.

He sometimes sang along with the boys, and other soloists were invited to perform with the Chorus. In a short time such music performances became very popular and the Jewish and other press often complimented him.

It is interesting that the practice of having the boys’ quire perform on Saturday caught on among other Sephardic communities in what was then Yugoslavia, and even among such communities in other parts of the Balkans. One music specialty was connected to Sephardic Jews in Sarajevo. Many Jewish cultural societies, especially the workers’ society „Matatja,”

had small choruses as well as amateur instrumentalists. „Matatja“ mainly performed pieces which were specially written for them by the well-known writer Laura Papo Bohoreta. In her short plays actors, singers, and instrumentalists accompanied by the chorus, performed the music composed by Bohoreta. All the performers were amateurs.

After the Holocaust two Jewish quires were founded in former Yugoslavia (one in Belgrade, one in Zagreb), but not in Sarajevo, where there were attempts in that direction; still, small choruses were founded lasting for short periods of time. But Sephardic music was frequently performed by non-Jewish amateur quires.

It should be said in conclusion that Sephardic music also influenced traditional Bosnian music, which is multi-layered and multi-national. In the course of time several old Sephardic melodies were taken over by Bosnians and sung with Bosnian lyrics; they were accepted as traditional Bosnian folk songs known as *sevdalinka*. The best known example is the Sarajevo *sevdalinka* “Kad ja pođoh na Bembašu.” Some ethno-musicologists consider that the tune of this *sevdalinka* came to Sarajevo with Turkish soldiers and that it was composed by Rifat Bey as a Turkish march (Vatan Masi) in 1887.

It has been confirmed as a fact that this tune was created a lot earlier and that the Sephardim brought it first to Istanbul, and then to some regions of the Ottoman Empire.

U sefardskim sinagogama se pjevaio i danas se pjeva dio psalma 118 (Mizmor le David) iz „Alela“ koji je dio molitve , a ujedno i dio Hagade za Pesah (Hagada Őel Pesah). Početak ovog dijela molitve na hebrejskom glasi: „Odeha ki anitani, vatei li liŐua“, u prevodu:“Hvalim Te, Őto si me usluŐio i postao mi spasenjem“, kao i paraliturgijska pjesma „Para noće de alhad“ (za nedeljnu noć), koja se pjeva na istu melodiju u predvečerje nedelje.

A part of Psalm 118 (Mizmor le David) from “Alela” used to be sung, and is still sung, as a segment of a prayer and as a fragment from the Haggadah sung for Passover (Haggadah shel Pesah). The beginning of this part of the prayer reads: „Odeha ki anitani, vatei li lishua“, which means “I praise you for serving me and becoming my salvation;” similar to this song is the paraliturgical song “Para noche de alhad” (for Sunday night). which is sung to the same tune on Sunday evening.

One song that was often sung in Sarajevo was the love song „Mi kerido, mi amado“ (My dear, my beloved); it was later sung throughout the Balkans to the same tune. Similarly, the song “Adio kerida” (Goodbye love), popular among Jews all over the world, was sung in Italy in late 19th century. The tune of this song was used by Verdi in his opera “La Traviata”.

CONCLUSION

Sephardic music, as a very important aspect of the integral Jewish culture, has been the topic of numerous writings both in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in the rest of the world. Yet, our knowledge of the subject is still insufficient and inadequate. This important subject requires thorough professional ethno-musicological study, which, I hope, will be undertaken in the future.

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