

ḤAKETÍA: DISCOVERING THE OTHER JUDEO-SPANISH VERNACULAR

ALICIA SISSO RAZ
VOCES DE ḤAKETÍA

“You speak Spanish very well, but why are there so many archaic Cervantes-like words in your vocabulary?” This is a question often heard from native Spanish speakers regarding Ḥaketía, the lesser known of the Judeo-Spanish vernacular dialects (also spelled Ḥakitía, Ḥaquetía, or Jaquetía). Although Judeo-Spanish vernacular is presently associated only with the communities of northern Morocco, in the past it has also been spoken in other Moroccan regions, Algeria, and Gibraltar. Similar to the Djudezmo of the Eastern Mediterranean, Ḥaketía has its roots in Spain, and likewise, it is composed of predominantly medieval Castilian as well as vocabulary adopted from other linguistic sources. The proximity to Spain, coupled with other prominent factors, has contributed to the constant modification and adaptation of Ḥaketía to contemporary Spanish. The impact of this “hispanization” is especially manifested in Ḥaketía’s lexicon while it is less apparent in the expressions and aphorisms with which Ḥaketía is so richly infused.¹ Ladino, the Judeo-Spanish calque language of Hebrew, has been common among all Sephardic communities, including the Moroccan one, and differs from the spoken ones.²

The Jews of Spain were in full command of the spoken Iberian dialects throughout their linguistic evolutionary stages; they also became well versed in the official Spanish dialect, Castilian, since its formation. They, however, have continually employed rabbinical Hebrew and Aramaic

¹ Isaac B. Benharroch, *Diccionario de Haquetía* (Caracas: Centro de Estudios Sefardíes de Caracas, 2004), 49.

² Haïm Vidal Séphiha, “Judeo-Spanish, Birth, Death and Re-birth,” in *Yiddish and Judeo-Spanish, A European Heritage*, ed. Nathan Weinstock, Haïm Vidal Séphiha and Anita Barrera – Schoonheere (Brussels: European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages, 1997), 29-30.

terminology when discussing religious matters, a practice that has been documented.³ The philologists José Benoliel, one of the first scholars to research and write about Ḥaketía, and Isaac Benharroch, author of a Ḥaketía-Spanish dictionary, have mentioned in their research several passages by Spaniards who not only incorporated Judeo-Spanish vocabulary in their work but also inserted expressions that are distinctly *Ḥaketiesque*.

Miguel de Cervantes, for example, implemented the characteristic expression common to all the Judeo-Spanish dialects *des-mazal-ado*.⁴ *Mazal*, means ‘luck’ or ‘destiny’ in Hebrew; however, the characteristic Spanish negative prefix and suffix added to the Hebrew noun convert it into an adjective that means ‘unlucky.’ Another passage in his novella *El Casamiento Engañoso* (The Fraudulent Marriage) characteristic of Judeo-Spanish, and especially to the mode of speech still used in Ḥaketía today, includes the very typical oath *Por el Dio* (in God’s name). It is spelled *Dio* as in Judeo-Spanish, and not *Dios* as in Spanish.⁵ The “s” at the end of the word was erroneously understood by the Sephardim as an indicator of plurality. They seemed to have been unaware that the word *Dios* is singular, having its origin in the Proto-Indo-European concept for God, rather than a pluralistic challenge to monotheism. Yet, typical *Ḥaketiesque* expressions, highlighted by Benoliel, are found in verses written by the Portuguese poet Luis Anríques (cerca late fifteenth to early sixteenth century): *ssaba* ‘Saturday,’ *beraha* ‘blessing,’ *minha* ‘an afternoon prayer,’ *kadoz* ‘holy,’ *guay* ‘woe’ - exclamation of grief and distress, and *defina*- the traditional Sabbath meal of Moroccan Jewry to date.⁶

In addition to Hebrew and Aramaic, some vocabulary from Iberian Arabic, albeit not an extended one, is found in Ḥaketía as well as in the Djudezmo dialects from Turkey, Greece, and the Balkans. For example, the corresponding word in all these vernaculars for *domingo* ‘Sunday’ is *alḥad*, which comes from *wahed*, meaning one in Arabic.⁷ It is the only day of the week whose name derives from Arabic, just as it is the only day of the week whose Spanish name *domingo* makes a clear reference to

³ José Benoliel, *Dialecto Judeo-Hispano - Marroquí o Ḥakitía* (Madrid: Copisteria Varona, 1977), 6. Isaac B. Benharroch, *Diccionario de Haquetía*, 33.

⁴ Isaac B. Benharroch, *Diccionario de Haquetía*, 34.

⁵ Benoliel, *Dialecto Judeo-Hispano - Marroquí*, 5.

⁶ Benoliel, *Ibid.*, 6. *Ssaba* and *kadoz* are phonetically spelled in the verse. It is according to their pronunciation in Ḥaketía, rather than according to their Hebrew pronunciation, which is: *Shabbat* and *kadosh*.

⁷ Paloma Díaz-Mas, *Sephardim, the Jews from Spain*, ed. and trans. George K. Zucker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 72.

Domini – that is, to Christ. For obvious reasons, *alḥad*, a word without any religious connotation has been preferred over *domingo*. Another example is the term that designates either news or current events: *jbar* (in Ḥaketia) and *jaber* (in Judezmo)⁸. The slight disparity in pronunciation is insignificant, and, in my opinion, the common origin of both is irrefutable.

As Yaakov Bentolila and other scholars point out, most of the *megorashim* (those expelled from Spain) who fled to the nearby shores of North Africa settled, by and large, in Morocco and in western Algeria.⁹ It is suggested by scholars that a large number of them assimilated over time as they settled into the local Jewish communities and gradually adopted the native idioms. The gradual replacement of their Spanish vocabulary with the local Judeo-Moroccan Arabic dialect was characteristic to the Sephardim who settled in central and southern Morocco while the communities in northern Morocco have retained their language, which gradually evolved to the Ḥaketia vernacular.¹⁰

In Wazzan, Debdu, and Fez, for example, cities which are not considered part of the Ḥaketia-speaking communities, Judeo-Spanish has been spoken for generations, i.e. since the expulsion of 1492. This is evident in travelers' testimonies and in records the communities have kept. Visitors to Wazzan were greeted with *señores*, *buenos días* 'Gentlemen, good morning' in 1883.¹¹ The Castilian *Takkanot*, the ordinances for the expelled Sephardim in Morocco composed by the Sephardic rabbis of Fez, were initially written in Spanish. But, Spanish vocabulary has been gradually replaced throughout the years with vocabulary from the local Judeo-Moroccan Arabic dialect.¹² The *Takkanot* were instrumental for

⁸ Pronounced as: /x/bar and /x/aber.

⁹ Tamar Alexander-Frizer and Yaakov Bentolila, *La palabra en su hora es oro: El refrán judeoespañol del Norte de Marruecos* (Jerusalén: Instituto Ben-Zvi, 2008), 9.

¹⁰ Alexander-Frizer and Bentolila, *Ibid.*, 9. Also discussed by numerous scholars: Joseph Chetrit, "Judeo-Arabic and Judeo-Spanish in Morocco and their Sociolinguistic Interaction," in *Readings in the Sociology of Jewish Languages*, ed. Joshua A. Fishman (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985), 262. Haim Zafrani, *Two Thousand Years of Jewish Life in Morocco* (Jersey City: KTAV Publishing House, 2005), 5-16. André N. Chouraqui, *Between East and West: A History of the Jews in North Africa*, trans. Michael M. Bernet (New York: Atheneum, 1973), 91. Benharroch, *Diccionario de Haquetia*, 30.

¹¹ Daniel Albo, "The Education in the Jewish Community in Wazzan at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century," *Brit*, Summer (2011): 33.

¹² Even though not all of them came from Castile, the communities of the expelled Sephardim of 1492 who settled in Morocco named their community "The Holy Communities of Those Expelled from Castile." The Sephardim who escaped the

guiding and managing the displaced community whose members had been abruptly uprooted from their birthplace in Spain and forced to relocate to a new and unfamiliar land. Although there were very few Spanish words left in the text of the *Takkanot* by the end of the eighteenth century, it seems that Judeo-Spanish continued to be spoken by the Sephardim of Fez throughout the nineteenth century. Edmundo De Amicis, an Italian author who visited Fez at the turn of the nineteenth century, came across a group of Jewish women at the house of the Italian ambassador. In his description of the encounter, he wrote the following: “They were beautiful women, with brilliant black eyes, fair skin, scarlet lips . . . and they all spoke Spanish.”¹³

While Spanish is no longer spoken by Jews in Fez, nor is it spoken in central or southern Morocco, the Judeo-Moroccan Arabic dialect still contains Spanish and Portuguese vocabulary, although speakers are likely unaware of the Iberian origin of these words.¹⁴ Benharroch estimates the number of Spanish words still in use in Judeo-Moroccan Arabic at a few thousand. Their pronunciation differs from Spanish, e.g. *nigro*, *bandira*, *maistro*, *bestido*, *camifa*. However, the pronunciation of the words, save for the latter one, is similar in Spanish and Ḥaketía, e.g. *negro*, *bandera*, *maestro*, *vestido*, *camisa* ‘black,’ ‘flag,’ ‘teacher,’ ‘dress,’ and ‘shirt.’ Although *camisa* is similarly spelled in both Spanish and Ḥaketía, the pronunciation in Ḥaketía is cami/z/a. *Saya* ‘skirt’ – one of the words in Benharroch’s list – still has the same denotation in Portuguese, Ḥaketía, and the Judeo-Moroccan Arabic dialect.¹⁵

Castilian, “the dialect with the most sociological prestige,” was the dominant language among the Jews in Spain well before the expulsion,

pogroms in Seville, during 1391, and settled in the city of Debdū still refer to their community by the name “The Congregation of the Sevillians.” See Abraham Laredo, *Los orígenes de los judíos de Marruecos* (Madrid: Hebraica Ediciones, 2007), 178.

On the Spanish element in the *Takkanot*, see: Shalom Bar-Asher,

יהודי ספרד ופורטוגל במרוקו (1492-1753), ספר התקנות: סדרי החברה היהודית בפאס, משפחה, הנהגה וכלכלה (Akademon: Jerusalem, 1990), 52. Paloma Díaz-Mas, *Sephardim, the Jews from Spain*, 31-32.

¹³ Edmondo de Amicis, *Morocco its People and Places*, trans. C. Rollin-Tilton (London, Paris & New York: Cassell, Peller, Galpin & Co, 1882), 261-62, accessed on July 15, 2014.

<http://archive.org/stream/moroccoitspeople1882deam#page/260/mode/2up>.

¹⁴ Benharroch, *Diccionario de Haquetía*, 667. Chetrit, “Judeo-Arabic and Judeo-Spanish,” 262.

¹⁵ Benharroch, *Ibid.*, 676-677.

regardless of their provincial origin in the Iberian Peninsula.¹⁶ It is reflected in Ḥaketía whose foundation is a conglomerate of predominantly medieval Castilian and other regional Iberian dialects (to be simplified as Spanish). This foundation, which contained certain Hebrew and Aramaic terminology pertaining to Jewish culture and religion and a limited vocabulary from peninsular Arabic, was the linguistic parcel that the *megorashim* brought with them to Morocco from Spain.¹⁷ The differing realities and life circumstances of the *megorashim* were evinced in their varying dialects. Over time, the detachment from contemporary Spanish language and culture created the necessity for additional vocabulary; as such, words have been consistently borrowed from the immediate surroundings of the *megorashim*. The Iberian “linguistic parcel” described above evolved into Ḥaketía, a fusion of predominantly archaic Spanish mixed with vocabulary from Hebrew, Arabic (mainly the local Judeo-Moroccan Arabic), Portuguese, and, to a lesser degree, French and English. Another linguistic element, contemporary Spanish vocabulary, started replacing its archaic counterparts at the turn of the twentieth century. As a result, Ḥaketía, as it is spoken today, is a mixture of contemporary and archaic Spanish in addition to the previously mentioned components of Ḥaketía.¹⁸

Ḥaketía grammar usually follows standard Spanish grammar. However, archaic patterns are still noticeable in the conjugation of verbs and in the syntax, especially in aphorisms, expressions, and phrases.¹⁹ The Ḥaketía conjugation of the verb *caminar* ‘to walk’ in the simple past tense is *camini*, *caminátes*, *caminímos*, *caminátis* (first person singular, second person singular, first person plural, and second person plural); whereas, in contemporary Spanish it is *caminé*, *caminaste*, *caminamos*, *caminasteis*.

Sounds which are no longer pronounced in contemporary Spanish have been preserved in Ḥaketía, such as the sounds represented by IPA symbols /ʃ/, /z/, /h/ and /ʒ/. According to the recently developed orthographic system for Ḥaketía, the sounds of /ʃ/, /z/ and /h/ are represented by the characters “sh,” “z” and “h” respectively, and /ʒ/ is represented by both ‘j’ and ‘g’.²⁰ Thus, Ḥaketía speakers say *shabón* rather than the contemporary

¹⁶ Benharroch, *Ibid.*, 33. Díaz-Mas, *Sephardim, The Jews from Spain*, 73.

¹⁷ Benoliel, *Dialecto Judeo-Hispano–Marroquí*, 6. Benharroch, *Ibid.*, 35-36.

¹⁸ Benoliel, *Ibid.*, 8. Benharroch, *Ibid.*, 36-37.

¹⁹ Benharroch, *Ibid.*, 49.

²⁰ A group of scholars and activists headed by Dr. Yaakov Bentolila, professor emeritus at the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, of which I was fortunate to be a part, developed an orthographic system. The system is being tested by several Ḥaketía writers. It has most recently been utilized in Nina Pinto-Abecasis’

Spanish *jabón* ‘soap’;²¹ *hiño* rather than *hijo* ‘son’; *gente* rather than *gente* ‘people’; *riza* rather than *risa* ‘laughter.’ The sounds and consonants in Ḥaketía have been further widened, owing to the preservation of the guttural sounds in imported vocabulary from Hebrew and Arabic, hence /h/aketía rather than /x/aketía.

Additionally, the initial /f/ has been usually maintained in Ḥaketía; *forno*, *fuir*, and *ferrero* are part of such vocabulary. Their contemporary forms are *horno*, *huir*, and *herrero* ‘oven,’ ‘to run away,’ and ‘blacksmith.’²² Formosa was the former name of Taiwan, given to the island by the Portuguese and Spaniard inhabitants for the lovely landscape seen from their boats at sea. *Formosa* in Portuguese and *fermosa* in archaic Spanish stand for beautiful. The Spanish pronunciation in the past was *fermo/z/a*. Hence, we can assume that the Spaniards would have named the island today /h/ermo/s/a. The /h/ would have replaced the /f/, and the /s/ no longer would sound like /z/.

The archaic Spanish vocabulary that forms the foundation of Ḥaketía has been conserved either in its original form or with some modification. Examples of the archaic terms are *cuarterón*, *fiel*, and *azedo* as opposed to the contemporary Spanish *cuarto*, *hiel*, and *ácido* ‘quarter,’ ‘bitter,’ and ‘sour,’ while examples with some modification include *nublina*, *faldiquera*, and *escuraña* as opposed to the archaic *niebla*, *faltriquera*, and *escuridad*. The corresponding contemporary words are *neblina*, *bolsillo*, and *oscuridad* ‘fog,’ ‘pocket,’ and ‘darkness.’ Furthermore, there are words that differ in meaning. For example, the verbs *faltar*, *quitar*, and *echar* in Ḥaketía mean ‘to die,’ ‘to divorce,’ and ‘to sleep,’ whereas, in contemporary Spanish, they mean ‘to lack (something),’ ‘to remove,’ and ‘to throw.’

The syntax of Ḥaketía usually follows contemporary Spanish rules with a number of exceptions—archaic patterns that still linger, intentionally spirited sentences with an unconventional word order, old patterns in aphorisms, expressions, etc. For instance, the common greeting to welcome someone in Ḥaketía is *venido bueno*, which is literally

הטווס, המגוהץ וחצי האישה: כינויים, הומור ופולקלור בשיח היום של יהודי טיטואן ודוברי החקתייה

(Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi institute, 2014), 9. The orthographic system is posted on the following website: <http://www.vocesdehaketia.com/haketia/grafia.htm>

²¹ The contemporary Spanish sound of “j,” the jota, is represented by the IPA symbol /x/.

²² However, the extent of its preservation varies from city to city; the initial /f/ is more prominent in the speech of Alcazarquivir than in Tangier or Tetuan. See Pinto-Abecasis, *הטווס, המגוהץ וחצי האישה*, 9.

translated as ‘coming good’ (*bueno* is pronounced *wueno*). The greeting in contemporary Spanish is *bienvenido*, literally ‘well coming.’ It is common in Haketía for sentences to be composed of present participles and simple past forms, which are very rarely used in Spanish, with the exception of literary poetic texts.²³ An example of this would be *Yo leyendo, vino mi amiga* ‘(While) I am/was reading, my friend came.’

Sentences in Haketía may be exclusively composed of Spanish vocabulary, including archaic words that are no longer in use in contemporary Spanish, as illustrated in the following sentence:

Haketía: *La madre y la hija shabonaron todo el ashuar nuevo que se mercó.*

Contemporary Spanish: *La madre y la hija lavaron todo el ajuar nuevo que se compró.*

‘The mother and daughter washed the entire newly bought trousseau.’

Similarly, another common phenomenon is for sentences to contain words, in addition to Spanish vocabulary, derived from other languages. The following sentence illustrates this concept; it is composed of vocabulary from English, Portuguese, Arabic, and Hebrew in addition to Spanish:

Haketía: *El tipad aburacado que se topó en la kaisería fue una berajjá lebattalá.*

Contemporary Spanish: *La tetera agujereada que se encontró en el mercado, fue inútil.*

‘The perforated tea-pot found in the market was useless.’

The borrowed vocabulary in Haketía may sound Spanish due to the method by which the imported words have been hispanicized. This has simply been done by applying the Spanish morphological rules to the non-Spanish words. This group of hispanicized vocabulary consists of stem words in various languages with the typical Spanish prefix and suffix. For example, *muddá*, which means ‘sleep’ in local Judeo-Moroccan Arabic, is joined by the Spanish suffix “-ar” to become *muddear*, meaning ‘to sleep’ in Haketía. Similarly, the word *atornar*, from the English word attorney, means ‘to protect’ or ‘to come to the defense of someone.’ These examples provide only a glimpse into the morphological innovations of Haketía.

²³ Alegría Bendayan de Bendelac, *Voces Jaquetiescas* (Caracas: Asociación Israelita de Venezuela 1990), 20.

Whereas Haketía has been the daily vernacular, the written liturgical language of all of the Sephardim has been Ladino, whose archaic vocabulary has been preserved nearly intact. Ladino, a creative and unique method for translating biblical and liturgical texts from Hebrew to Spanish, was developed during the Middle Ages by the rabbis in Spain. As Haïm-Vidal Séphiha and other scholars have noted, it was devised in order to make the sacred Hebrew and Aramaic texts accessible and more understandable to those whose knowledge of these languages was limited.²⁴ It was a word-for-word translation into medieval Spanish with Hebrew syntax. This linguistic fusion called Ladino is defined by Séphiha as “Hebrew clothed in Spanish or Spanish with Hebrew Syntax.”²⁵ The vocabulary was almost exclusively archaic Spanish, save for religious terminology in Hebrew and Aramaic and for invented hispanicized concepts from Hebrew. *Acuñadear* (derived from the Spanish word *cuñado*, meaning ‘brother-in-law’) is an example Díaz-Mas uses for illustrating this type of calqued creation.²⁶ According to Jewish law, the brother of a deceased childless man must marry his widowed sister-in-law in order to perpetuate his brother's name. *Acuñadear* is the invented verb in Ladino which signifies the act of fulfilment of this religious dictum by the brother-in-law.

Before its formulation to Castilian, the spoken language in Spain during the early middle ages was known as Latino or Ladino, being of course a derivative of Latin. This explains why the rabbis called their translations Ladino. They used to denote their translation process as “doing it in Ladino” or a *ladinar*, which means to “Ladinize.” This unique translation-method has been maintained for generations throughout the entire Sephardic Diaspora. Haïm-Vidal Séphiha, one of the foremost scholars of the Judeo-Spanish languages, Paloma Díaz-Mas, and other philologists have argued that Ladino has never been a spoken language, nor could it be, because of its unique syntactic structure. Moreover, contrary to the almost hermetic character of Ladino, all Judeo-Spanish dialects contain a considerable number of words imported from the

²⁴ Séphiha, “Judeo-Spanish: Birth, Death and Re-birth,” 29-30. A similar view point is expressed in Díaz-Mas, *Sephardim, The Jews from Spain*, 75-77. Gladys Pimienta and Sidney Pimienta, *1860-1883 Libro de actas de la junta selecta de la comunidad hebrea de Tánger* (Paris-Jerusalem: Jem Y Erez, 2010), XXIV, 360. Alexander-Frizer and Bentolila, *La palabra en su hora*, 11.

²⁵ Séphiha, “Judeo-Spanish: Birth, Death and Re-birth,” 29.

²⁶ Díaz-Mas, *Sephardim: The Jews from Spain*, 76. The biblical name that designates such a brother-in-law is *yavam* (יָבֵם). The Hebrew verb that stands for the act of fulfilment with this religious dictum is *le-yabem* [לְיָבֵם].

surrounding communities.²⁷ Ladino has been the liturgical written language of all of the Sephardic communities in the world, and its archaic Spanish vocabulary was the basis of all the Judeo-Spanish vernacular dialects: Ḥaketía from Morocco and Djudezmo from the Balkans, Turkey and Greece. It is no wonder that Séphiha compares these two, i.e. Ladino and the variety of Judeo-Spanish vernaculars, to “*el aguilá de dos cabezas*” ‘the two headed eagle.’²⁸ In recent years, however, the Judeo-Spanish vernaculars of the eastern Mediterranean, such as Djudezmo – also named Spanyolit, Djidio, etc. until the latter years of the twentieth century – have assumed the name Ladino despite a continuous debate on the nomenclature of the language among scholars. Ḥaketía speakers have held on to the original meaning of the name Ladino, and as such, there is strong disagreement with this shift in meaning among Ḥaketía speakers as well as many non-Ḥaketía speakers.

It is worth noting that the *romances* (ballads) of medieval Spain, which have been preserved by the expelled Sephardim, remained very near to their linguistic source. The archaic Spanish vocabulary of the *romancero* (musical compendium) functioned for centuries as a link to the Iberian language and culture of the past, and it has contributed to the preservation of an antiquated lexicon over the course of the last 500 years. In his monumental ballad collection, *Romances de Tetuán*, the renowned Spaniard musicologist Arcadio de Larrea Palacín wrote that Spanish ballads from the fifteenth century, otherwise lost to the Spaniards, have been preserved thanks to the Sephardim.²⁹ Thus, it is no wonder that the musical compendiums of the Moroccan Sephardim and of the Eastern Mediterranean Sephardim consist of many ballads of similar themes, albeit differing in melodies and meters.³⁰ Yet, while the ballads of the Sephardim in the eastern Mediterranean demonstrate musical influences from the Balkans, the melodies of the ballads preserved to date by the Jews of northern Morocco have been more in line with their original medieval

²⁷ Séphiha, “Judeo-Spanish: Birth, Death and Re-birth,” 30; Díaz-Mas, *Ibid.*, 76. There is actually a consensus regarding this by scholars of the Judeo-Spanish languages.

²⁸ Haïm Vidal Séphiha, “Hablas ibéricas de los sefardíes tras de la expulsión (1942) (hispanohablantes, judeo-hispanohablantes y lusohablantes),” in *Los sefardíes de ayer y de hoy*, ed. Richard Ayoun y Haïm Vidal Séphiha, trans. Tomás Onaindía (Edaf: Madrid, 2002), 330.

²⁹ Larrea Palacín, Arcadio de, *Romances de Tetuán, Recogidos y transcritos Vol. I* (Madrid: I.D.E.A. 1952), 7.

³⁰ Susana Weich-Shahak, *Moroccan Sephardic Romancero: Anthology of an Oral Tradition*, trans. Vanessa Paloma Elbaz (Santa Fe: Gaon books, 2013), 26-27.

melodies.³¹ Manuel Ortega, who wrote an extensive volume on the Jews of Morocco, cited the philologist and historian Ramón Menéndez Pidal; he states that the *romancero* of the Moroccan Jewry is “superior” to that of the Sephardim of the Eastern Mediterranean – a statement that refers to the preservation of the original musical elements.³²

As for the name Ḥaketía, there are several theories regarding the origin of the word. Some scholars, such as Jose Benoliel, argue that it stemmed from the Arabic *ḥakka*, which means ‘to chat’ or ‘to tell.’³³ As stated previously, Ḥaketía has served as the vernacular, not the literary language of the community. For this reason, Benoliel’s theory appears to be most plausible. Others, however, especially Isaac Benharroch and Joseph Toledano, reason that the word Ḥaketía alludes to the Hebrew name Is.ḥaq (Isaac), which is a common Jewish name. Since the use of the diminutive form is very characteristic of Sephardic culture, Is.ḥaquito, the diminutive of Is.ḥaq, may have evolved to Ḥakito and by extension to Ḥaketía – that is, the language of the Ḥakitos (referring to the Jewish people who speak the language).³⁴ Though it seems quite extraordinary that a community that avoided mastering the local Arabic language while harboring a strong connection with the Spanish culture and language would choose an Arabic name for its Judeo-Spanish dialect, Alegría Bendayan de Bendelac and other scholars tend to accept Benoliel’s explanation.³⁵

However, not until Manuel Ortega mentioned the name Jaquetía, in his *Los hebreos en Marruecos* (The Hebrews in Morocco) in 1919, was the name recorded or referred to in any source.³⁶ Tetuan and its surroundings remained under Spanish occupation for two years since 1860, following the Spanish-Moroccan war. The Spanish soldiers in Tetuan referred to the language of the local Jews as “*castellano...con un acento particular...distinto del de todas nuestras provincias*,” Spanish for ‘Castilian... with a special accent...different from all our provinces.’³⁷ Years ago it was

³¹ Samuel Armistead, “Una nueva cosecha de romances de Alcazarquivir: Características e interés de la colección,” in *Romances de Alcácer Quibir*, ed. Kelly Benoudis Basilio (Lisboa: Edições Colibri, 2007), 77-80.

³² Manuel L. Ortega, *Los hebreos en Marruecos* (Madrid: Editorial hispano africana 1919), 207-209.

³³ Benoliel, *Dialecto Judeo-Hispano– Marroquí*, 4.

³⁴ Benharroch, *Diccionario de Haquetía*, 38.

³⁵ Alegría Bendayan de Bendelac, *Diccionario del Judeoespañol de los Sefardíes del Norte de Marruecos* (Caracas: Centro de estudios Sefardíes 1995), XXXIV.

³⁶ Ortega, *Los Hebreos*, 203.

³⁷ Pedro Antonio de Alarcón, *Diario de un testigo de la Guerra de África* (Madrid: Ediciones del Centro, 1859), 354.

simply named by its speakers as *español* rather than Ḥaketía. However, it was José Benoliel who first adopted the term in his *Dialecto Judeo-Hispano-Marroquí O Ḥakitía* (a collection of research articles originally published between 1926-1952).

Whatever the origin of the name, Ḥaketía manifests warmth, grace, wit, and laughter – all cultural characteristics of Moroccan Jewry. It is a very colorful language, having been enriched by different cultural and linguistic sources, and Ḥaketía contains a wealth of expressions, aphorisms, and synonyms. Alegría Bendayan de Bendelac noted 47 synonyms used for describing ugliness.³⁸ The number of expressions that illustrate traits, such as endearing, or even blessings and profanities, are numerous: *delgado como un filo* and *flaco como una solombra* describe a very skinny person—‘skinny like a thread’ and ‘skinny like a shadow.’³⁹ *Largo como un día sin pan* and *largo como dolor de muelas en noche de invierno*—‘long like day without bread’ and ‘long like a toothache on a winter night’ are a few of the expressions used for denoting a very long period of time. When sweets or flowers are offered, they are reciprocated with the expression *durse lo vivas* ‘may you live sweetly’ and *florido lo vivas* ‘may you live flowery,’ that is to say, surrounded by beauty.⁴⁰ *Mi reina/rey, mi luz*, and *mi alegría* ‘my queen/king,’ ‘my light,’ and ‘my happiness’ are other commonly used endearments among family members and friends. *Ferazmal* is an interesting synthesis of three words which together create a term that expresses both endearment and blessing: *feraz-de-mal*.⁴¹ The expression stands for the following: ‘(may you remain) outside of calamities/ of evil/ of danger, etc.’ that is to say, ‘(may you remain) protected from all calamities, etc.’ In the past, this expression was exclusively reserved for referring to one’s husband or to a very dear family member. In Tetuan especially, one’s husband was called *ferazmal* rather than by his name.⁴² Naturally, in a society in which the husband was the only breadwinner of the household, his health and well-being were of the utmost importance and led to a host of continually utilized blessings and protective ‘verbal’ amulets. In recent generations, however, depending on the context and tone of voice, *ferazmal* is used in a humoristic and even ironical sense in addition to its original significance.

³⁸ Bendelac, *Voces Jaquetiescas*, 20.

³⁹ *Filo* and *solombra* mean thread and shadow respectively, and their contemporary counterparts are *hilo* and *sombra*.

⁴⁰ *Durse* is the Ḥaketía counterpart of the Spanish *dulce*.

⁴¹ *Feraz* means outside, and its contemporary counterpart is *afueras*.

⁴² Bendelac, *Ibid.*, 89.

Ḥaketía, a humoristic and comical language, allows for grammatical freedom either in the syntax or by the twisting and bending of words and expressions. Solly Levy mentions a similar rebellious spirit that pays no heed to linguistic rules in the dialects of Quebec and Buenos Aires: *Joual* and *Lunfardo Porteño*.⁴³ This “linguistic liberty” garnishes any conversation in Ḥaketía with innumerable witty and comical expressions. For example, *cazzamento* means ‘marriage’ (in contemporary Spanish it is spelled *casamiento*), but *cazzapreto* is the satirical wordplay that suggests a ‘sour marriage.’ *Cazza* is the Spanish *casa*, meaning ‘home;’ *preto* is ‘black’ in Portuguese, but in Ḥaketía it stands for something negative and bad as well as for something dark.

Alongside the colorful Ḥaketía vernacular, a high register of the language was used, especially by the educated upper-classes, in important writings, community records, rabbis’ sermons, and liturgical hymns (e.g. the *piyutim*). Though it contained an archaic vocabulary alongside a contemporary one, attention was given to formal syntax and grammar and to the exclusion of borrowed vocabulary, especially those words from Arabic.⁴⁴ This formal language was intuitively employed as well whenever speaking with strangers. As a child, I remember how members of my family used a slightly different language, which registered distinctively in tone and vocabulary to my ears, when talking to Spanish speaking visitors. This tendency is demonstrated as follows in a note of gratitude written in 1830 by a woman named Jamila Buzaglo.

⁴³ Solly Levy, *El libro de Selomó* (Madrid: Hebraica Ediciones, 2008), 21.

⁴⁴ Yaakov Bentolila, “La lengua común (coíné) judeo-española entre el Este y el Oeste,” in *El Presente, Estudios sobre la cultura Judeo-Española del Norte de Marruecos*, Vol. II, Ed. Tamar Alexander-Frizer and Yaakov Bentolila (Beer Sheva: Centro Gaon, Universidad Ben Gurion del Negev, 2008), 164. This tendency is apparent as well throughout the collected committee-meetings in Pimienta and Pimienta, 1860-1883 *Libro de actas*.

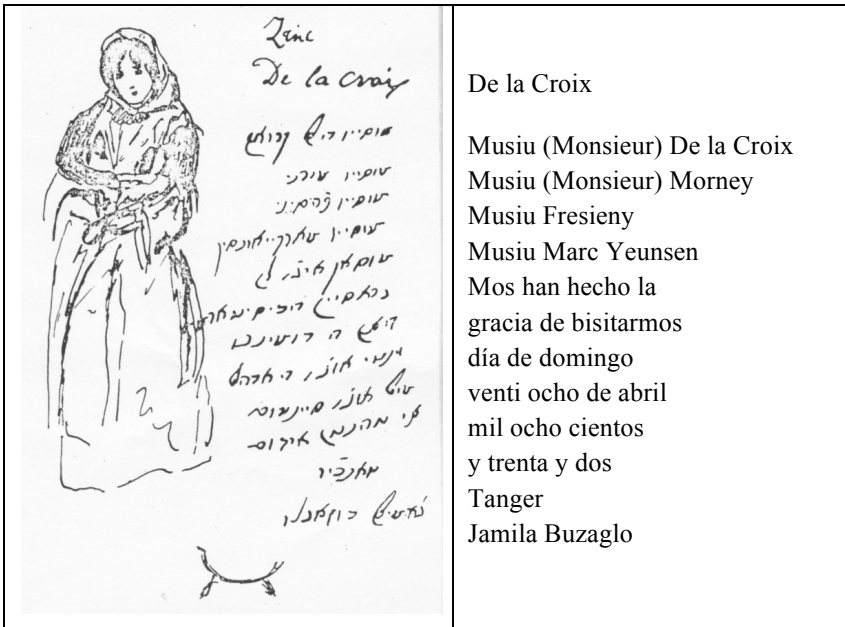


Figure 5.1 Source: The Judeo-Moroccan Culture Center, Brussels (www.judaisme-marocain.org). Transcribed from Solitreo by Professor Yaakov Bentolila and Dr. Jeffery Malka

Jamila's note is written in Solitreo on a drawing by Eugene Delacroix, in which she is depicted standing. Though several words are spelled phonetically, the syntax is normative Spanish and the vocabulary is devoid of borrowed terminology.⁴⁵ In addition, there is a compound sentence, hardly used in *Ḥaketia*: *Mos han hecho la gracia de bisitarmos*, which is an old form of the contemporary *Nos han hecho el honor de visitarnos* 'you have honored us by your visit.' Another interesting detail is referring to Sunday by its Spanish name, *domingo* rather than *alḥad*, as in *Ḥaketia*.

Unlike the Sephardim of the Balkans, Greece, and Turkey, whose geographical distance from Spain accounts for the preservation of most of the archaic Spanish elements in their *Djudezmo* variants, the geographical circumstances of the *Ḥaketia*-speaking community were different in that

⁴⁵ The following words are misspelled because the writer spelled them phonetically as they are pronounced in *Ḥaketia*: *Musiu*, *mos*, *bisitarmos*, *venti* and *trenta*. The correct spelling is as follows: *Monsieur*, *nos*, *visitarnos*, *veinte* and *treinta*. 'mister, us, visit us, twenty, and thirty.'

proximity to Spain has been a major factor. Though most of the Haketía-speaking community lived in relative isolation prior to 1860, the educated upper-classes, the well-off, and the merchants of the coastal towns in particular, maintained some contact with Spanish culture and language throughout the years.⁴⁶ The year 1860 is seen as the turning point in the rehispanization of Haketía, i.e. the readapting of Haketía to contemporary Spanish norms. It was marked by the ending of the Hispano-Moroccan War and the occupation of Tetuan and its surrounding cities by the Spaniards for nearly two years. The rehispanization process, already noticeable by the end of the nineteenth century, accelerated during the twentieth century. Consequently, Haketía has changed drastically in recent generations in which it has become a mixture of contemporary Spanish and Haketía.⁴⁷

An additional contributing factor to the rehispanization process included the sister-communities established in Gibraltar and in South America since the early eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Desperate from the extreme poverty and the severe oppression in Morocco, many young men left and established Haketía-speaking communities in their newly adopted countries. By returning to their birthplace or through communicating with relatives left behind, a modernized Spanish was introduced into the community.⁴⁸ Interestingly, Sephardic Jews from Morocco who immigrated to Argentina were hired by the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA) to serve as Spanish teachers to the newly-arriving Ashkenazi immigrants from Eastern Europe.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ See the paragraph on this by Paul Bénichou from “Observaciones sobre el judeoespañol de Marruecos” in *Revista Filología Hispanica* 7 (Buenos Aires: Instituto de Filología, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1945), 209-58, quoted in Díaz-Mas, *Sephardim, the Jews from Spain*, 87.

⁴⁷ Benharroch, *Diccionario de Haquetía*, 41. Alexander-Frizer and Bentolila, *La palabra en su hora*, 9.

⁴⁸ Juan BTA. Vilar, *Tetuan En el resurgimiento judío contemporáneo (1850-1870)* (Caracas: Biblioteca Popular Sefardí, 1985), 73. Benharroch, *Diccionario de Haquetía*, 41-44.

⁴⁹ Mario Eduardo Cohen “Un ejemplo de integración a través del idioma: Los sefarditas de habla judeoespañola en América Latina,” Cervantes.es, Congreso internacional de las lenguas españolas, 2010, accessed on July, 2014. (The organization JCA was created by Baron Maurice von Hirsch in 1891. It sponsored the emigration of oppressed Jews from Russia, and their resettlement in agricultural communities in Argentina and Brazil.)
http://congresosdelalengua.es/valparaiso/ponencias/politica_economia_sociedad/cohen_mario_e.htm.

Other key instances of a continuous European presence in Morocco that may have influenced *Ḥaketía* include the following: European diplomats representing their countries in Morocco, Spanish enclaves in Ceuta and Melilla in northern Morocco, and the presence of Spaniards and Portuguese in the coastal cities of Mogador, Safi, Larache, Arzila, and Tangier, which were controlled by both countries at various times. The inevitable exposure to Peninsular Spanish, regardless of how minimal, contributed to a certain level of lexical modification. Yet, most of the rehispanization process may be attributed to the establishment of the *Alliance Israelite Universelle*, a school network first created in Tetuan in 1862. At the time, schools opened their doors to secular education, and French and Spanish were included in the curriculum. Some French vocabulary had been incorporated then into *Ḥaketía*, but it was not nearly as substantial as its influence on *Djudezmo* of the eastern Mediterranean. Moreover, the Spanish protectorate in Northern Morocco since 1912 (Southern Morocco fell under the French protectorate) brought about the establishment of a non-Jewish Spanish community who lived side-by-side the Jewish one. Inevitably, this exposure to the contemporary Spanish language was reflected in *Ḥaketía*.⁵⁰

The rehispanization process of *Ḥaketía*, which started in 1860, did not occur concurrently in all the communities of northern Morocco. The communities of Tangier and Tetuan were the first to embrace it, followed by other cities such as Arzila, Larache, and Alcazarquivir; the community of Chefchaouen was considered the least hispanicized. And thus, gradually, *Ḥaketía* kept evolving during the twentieth century, and contemporary Spanish vocabulary usurped its archaic counterparts. Subsequent to the widening exposure to contemporary Spanish and other European languages, *Ḥaketía* became regarded as a colloquial jargon of lesser value. The younger generations and the educated elite abandoned *Ḥaketía* in favor of contemporary Spanish and French, equating these languages with the fashionable European style. The figure that follows of the Benatar family best illustrates this transitional state; the woman is still wearing the traditional *traje de berberisca* (*Keswa Kebira* in Judeo-Moroccan Arabic, meaning ‘the great dress’), but the men are depicted wearing fashionable European suits.

⁵⁰ Benharroch, *Diccionario de Haquetía*, 41-44. There is actually a consensus on these contributing factors by scholars in this field.



Figure 5.2 Source: The Judeo-Moroccan Culture Center, Brussels (www.judaisme-marocain.org). The Benatar family, 1898.

The Jewish community left Morocco, almost *en masse*, following Moroccan independence in 1956, but a nostalgic attachment persists to the language that encapsulates beloved traditions and culture, anchored in both an Iberian and a Moroccan past. Most of the descendants of the Ḥaketía-speaking community have been fluent in contemporary Spanish for generations now. Nevertheless, when conversing with each other, Ḥaketía speakers freely intermix Ḥaketía with modern Spanish without conscious attention to this code switching. This practice is demonstrated in an interview personally conducted: “*Yo no hablo Ḥaketía...Y abuela tampoco hablaba, namás que Español! No, no...de verda, de verda...en caza nada, nada de Ḥaketía...soy andalusa, andalusa...*”.⁵¹ “*Namás*” is the *haquetiesque* elision of the Spanish *nada más*, meaning ‘nothing;’ *verda* is pronounced as in Tetuan, where the last consonant of the word remains typically silent. *Verdad* signifies ‘true’ in Spanish; *de verda* means ‘really’ or ‘honestly.’ *Caza* and *andalusa* were pronounced similar to the Ḥaketía pronunciation of the words.⁵² The typical *haquetiesque* accent and the expressions throughout the dialogue not only produced laughter and

⁵¹ ‘I do not speak Ḥaketía ...nor did grandmother spoke it...only Spanish! No, no...really, really...at home nothing, nothing of Ḥaketía...I am Andalusian, Andalusian...’

⁵² This (video-recorded) interview took place in June 2012.

negated the statement, but also illustrated that, despite rehispanization, Ḥaketía culture and language are deeply rooted.

Cultural characteristics of the Moroccan Jewry include *joie de vivre* and a sense of humor as well as graceful conduct and a passion for singing. For instance, the outbursts of laughter after each phrase, the vigorous self-laughter when “I am Andalusian” was said, the pleasant tone, and good-humored manner during the entire interview are all culturally typical. Equally characteristic of Ḥaketía speakers, as well as Judeo-Arabic speakers, is the tendency to repeat the same word in a sentence.⁵³ The informant repeated the following words: *Nada, nada; de verda, de verda;* and *soy Andalusia, Andalusia*. Delightful singing of a stanza from an old song, accompanied by hand-clapping, followed the monologue. One of many cherished activities that still linger among the Ḥaketía-speaking community is singing. An old ballad will be spontaneously sung in the midst of a conversation in order to illuminate the meaning of an archaic expression or word; singing is a natural part of life, whether at a social gathering or while doing domestic chores.

The geographical distance from the linguistic and cultural birthplace of Ḥaketía, where it was born and spoken for centuries, has affected the vernacular; not many are able to fluently speak it today. Fortunately, many are now Ḥaketía aficionados who strive to recapture forgotten words and preserve the language by using vocabulary and aphorisms from Ḥaketía in their speech. Despite the fact that most of the descendants of the Ḥaketía-speaking community grew up in different parts of the world, Ḥaketía has remained the language of their soul, the language of affection that brings smiles to their faces and warmth to the hearts of its speakers. It is a language that carries on unique traditions and preserves heartwarming memories carried on from one generation to the next.

References

- Alarcón, Pedro Antonio de. *Diario de un Testigo de la Guerra de África*. Madrid: Ediciones del Centro, 1859.
- Albo Daniel. “The Education in the Jewish Community in Wazzan at the beginning of the twentieth century.” 33-50. *Brit*, Summer 2011.
- Alexander-Frizer, Tamar, and Bentolila Yaakov. *La palabra en su hora es oro: El refrán judeo- español del Norte de Marruecos*. Jerusalén: Instituto Ben-Zvi. 2008.

⁵³ As demonstrated in the dialogues throughout Hertzal Cohen’s book *אבני שיש טהור* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2004).

- Amicis, Edmondo de. *Morocco its People and Places*. Translated by C. Rollin-Tilton. London, Paris & New York: Cassell, Peller, Galpin & Co, 1882.
<http://archive.org/stream/moroccoitspeople1882deam#page/260/mode/2up>.
- Armistead, Samuel. "Una nueva cosecha de romances de Alcazarquivir: características e interés de la colección." In *Romances de Alcácer Quibir*, edited by Kelly Benoudis Basilio, 77-88. Lisboa: Edições Colibri, 2007.
- Bar-Asher, Shalom. יהודי ספרד ופורטוגל במרוקו (1492-1753), ספר התקנות: סדרי ספרד ופורטוגל במרוקו. הנהגה וכלכלה. Jerusalem: Nakdimon, 1990.
- Bendayan de Bendelac, Alegría. *Voces Jaquetiescas*. Caracas: Asociación Israelita de Venezuela. 1990.
- . *Diccionario del Judeoespañol de los Sefardíes del Norte Marruecos*. Caracas: Centro de estudios Sefardíes. 1995.
- Benharroch B., Isaac. *Diccionario de Haquetía*. Caracas: Centro de Estudios Sefardíes de Caracas, 2004.
- Benoliel, Jose. *Dialecto Judeo-Hispano-Marroquí o Hakitía*. Madrid: Copisteria Varona, 1977.
- Bentolila, Yaakov. "La lengua común (coiné) judeo-española entre el Este y el Oeste." In *El Presente, Estudios sobre la cultura Judeo- Española del Norte de Marruecos*. Vol. II. Edited by Tamar Alexander- Frizer and Yaakov Bentolila, 159-176. Beer Sheva: Centro Gaon, Universidad Ben Gurion del Negev, 2008.
- Chetrit, Joseph. "Judeo-Arabic and Judeo-Spanish in Morocco and their Sociolinguistic Interaction." In *Readings in the Sociology of Jewish Languages*. Edited by Joshua A. Fishman, 261-79. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1985.
- Chouraqui, André N. *Between East and West: A history of the Jews in North Africa*. Translated by Michael M. Bernet. New York: Atheneum, 1973.
- Cohen, Hertzal. אבני שיש טהור. Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2004.
- Cohen, Mario Eduardo. "Un ejemplo de integración a través del idioma, Los sefarditas de habla judeoespañola en América Latina." *Cervantes.es, Congreso internacional de las lenguas españolas*. 2010. http://congresosdelalengua.es/valparaiso/ponencias/politica_economia_soci edad/cohen_mario_e.htm.
- Díaz-Mas, Paloma. *Sephardim, the Jews from Spain*. Edited and translated by George K. Zucker. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992.

- Laredo, Abraham. *Los orígenes de los judíos de Marruecos*. Madrid: Hebraica Ediciones, 2007.
- Larrea Palacín, Arcadio de. *Romances de Tetuán*. Recogidos y transcritos. Vol. I. Madrid: I.D.E.A. 1952.
- Levy, Solly. *El libro de Selomó*. Madrid: Hebraica Ediciones, 2008.
- Ortega, Manuel L. *Los hebreos en Marruecos*. Madrid: Editorial hispano africana. 1919.
- Pimienta, Gladys and Sidney Pimienta. *1860-1883 Libro de actas de la junta selecta de la comunidad hebrea de Tánger*. Paris-Jerusalem: Jem Y Erez, 2010.
- Pinto-Abecasis, Nina. *השווא, המגוהן וחצי האיש: כינויים, הומור ופולקלור בשיח היום של יהודי טיטואן ודוברי החכתייה*. Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi institute, 2014.
- Séphiha, Haïm Vidal. "Judeo-Spanish, Birth, Death and Re-birth." In *Yiddish and Judeo-Spanish, a European Heritage*, ed. Nathan Weinstock, Haïm Vidal Séphiha and Anita Barrera – Schoonheere, 23-41. Brussels: European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages, 1997.
- . "Hablas ibéricas de los sefardíes tras de la expulsión (1942) (hispanohablantes, judeo-españolohablantes y lusohablantes)." In *Los sefardíes de ayer y de hoy*. Edited by Richard Ayoun and Haïm Vidal Séphiha. Translated by Tomás Onaindía, 328-338. Edaf : Madrid, 2002.
- Vilar, Juan BTA. *Tetuan En el resurgimiento judío contemporáneo (1850-1870)*. Caracas: Biblioteca Popular Sefardi, 1985.
- Weich-Shahak, Susana. *Moroccan Sephardic Romancero: Anthology of an Oral Tradition*. Translated by Vanessa Paloma Elbaz. Santa Fe: Gaon Books, 2013.
- Zafrani, Haim. *Two Thousand Years of Jewish Life in Morocco*. Jersey City: KTAV Publishing House, 2005.