

El Presente

Estudios sobre la cultura sefardí

La cultura Judeo-Española
del Norte de Marruecos

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Índice

Prólogo	1
<i>Historia:</i>	9
Yom Tov Assis	
The Jews of the Maghreb and Sepharad: A Case Study of Inter-Communal Cultural Relations through the Ages	11
María José Cano, Beatriz Molina y Elena Mironesko	
La visión de la alteridad entre judíos, cristianos y musulmanes en los libros de viajes y las crónicas: El caso de Marruecos según las Crónicas de Expulsión hispano-hebreas	31
Gérard Nahon	
Tetuán, Alcázar y Mequines frente al “Mesías” José ben Sur: la opción entre <i>Turkya</i> y <i>Frankya</i> (1675)	53
Pablo Martín Asuero	
El encuentro de los españoles con los sefardíes de Marruecos a la luz de Pedro de Alarcón	67
Aldina Quintana	
El <i>Mellah</i> de Tetuán (1860) en <i>Aita Tettauen</i> (1905) de Benito Pérez Galdós: Cambios de actitud frente a los estereotipos antisemitas en la España de la Restauración	81
Alisa Meyuhas Ginio	
El encuentro del senador español Dr. Ángel Pulido Fernández con los judíos del Norte de Marruecos	111
Rena Molho	
The Moral Values of the Alliance Israélite Universelle and their Impact on the Jewish School World of Salonika and Morocco	127
Gila Hadar	
Gender Representation on the Dark Side of <i>Qidushin</i> : Between North Morocco and the Balkans (Monastir)	139

<i>Lingüística:</i>	157
Yaakov Bentolila	
La lengua común (coiné) judeo-española entre el Este y el Oeste	159
David Bunis	
The Differential Impact of Arabic on <i>Ḥaketía</i> and Turkish on Judezmo	177
Cyril Aslanov	
La haquetía entre hispanidad y aloglotismo: divergencia y convergencia	209
Ora (Rodrigue) Schwarzwald	
Between East and West: Differences between Ottoman and North African Judeo-Spanish <i>Haggadot</i>	223
Isaac Benabu	
Jewish Languages and Life after Death: Traces of <i>Ḥaketía</i> among the Jews of Gibraltar	243
<i>Literatura, folclore y música:</i>	253
Paloma Díaz-Mas	
Las mujeres sefardíes del Norte de Marruecos en el ocaso de la tradición oral	255
Oro Anahory-Librowicz	
La imagen del musulmán y del cristiano a través de la narrativa popular sefardí de la zona norte de Marruecos	267
Nina Pinto-Abecasis	
El entramado de las relaciones entre las comunidades judías del Marruecos español en el espejo del chiste y el mote	283
Susana Weich-Shahak	
<i>Me vaya kapará</i> – La haketía en el repertorio musical sefardí	291
Lista de colaboradores	301

The Moral Values of the Alliance Israélite Universelle and their Impact on the Jewish School World of Salonika and Morocco

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My first encounter with Moroccan Jews came when the Jewish Agency assigned me to a kibbutz Ulpan on my arrival in Israel in 1964. Initially, I thought that, being from Salonika, I would associate with them easily because we shared a common language – French. I subsequently realised that we also shared a similar mindset. Today, I wonder whether this sense of familiarity was not the outcome of our parents’ common upbringing in the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* (AIU) schools. It is mainly parents, after all, who imbue their children with a value system and teach them communicative skills.

From its beginning the *Alliance*, founded in 1860, laid an emphasis on education rather than on instruction, with the overt aim of changing the mentality of Oriental and Balkan Jews. Its founders sought to create an educational system that would inculcate western values that the *Alliance* believed would lift the children who passed through their schools out of their perceived “backwardness” and enable them to become useful members of their community. Morocco and Salonika were among the first communities to be approached, due to their high percentage of poor and uneducated Jews.¹

1 André Chouraqui, *Les juifs d’Afrique du Nord*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 1952, pp. 193-208; idem, *L’Alliance Israélite Universelle et la renaissance juive contemporaine*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 1965, pp. 102, 109-121; idem, «Description de la ville de Salonique, par le père Jean-Baptiste Souciet, de la Compagnie de Jesus, missionnaire au Levant», *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses écrites des missions étrangères*, J.G.Merigot, Paris 1780, 2:320-361; Joseph Nehama, *Histoire des Israélites de*

Though many excellent studies have been written on the establishment and functioning of these secular schools,² none have explored in depth the way the change in mentality was effected. Our knowledge of the schools' curriculum, based on the *Alliance* circular letters of 1884 and 1904, does not compensate for the lack of immediate sources such as the AIU schoolbooks, lost in the vicissitudes of World War II. It is only through the study of these books and their content that one can really understand how the prejudices, superstitions, and other such ills thought to be common to Oriental and Balkan Jews were finally eradicated.

As might be expected, Jewish-religion courses in the *Alliance* elementary schools were usually taught in Hebrew and Judeo-Spanish where the latter was the local language. The teaching in these classes was entrusted to rabbis handpicked by the organisation or by pro-*Alliance* communal leaders. These same rabbis frequently also taught in the *talmudei torah*.³ In certain communities – such as Salonika, Edirne, and the coastal communities in Morocco⁴ – the *Alliance* exerted an influence on traditional education in the *talmudei torah*, as well as on private *hedarim*, *hevroth* and *ş lās*,⁵ whose principals were compelled to support the secular schools and frequently even to adopt their curriculum in order to enable their institutions to survive.⁶ Even where

Salonique, Communauté Israélite de Thessalonique, Thessalonica 1978, 6:382-383, 7:618-620; Rena Molho, *Salonika and Istanbul: Social, Political and Cultural Aspects of Jewish Life*, Isis Press, Istanbul 2005, pp. 85-97, 107-137; Aron Rodrigue, *Images of Sephardi and Eastern Jewries*, University of Washington Press, Seattle and London 1993, pp. 134-171.

- 2 Michael M. Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco, 1862-1962*, SUNY Press, Albany NY 1983; Simon Schwarzfuchs (ed.), *L'«Alliance» dans les communautés du bassin méditerranéen à la fin du 19ème siècle et son influence sociale et culturelle*, Misgav Yerushalayim, Jerusalem 1987; Aron Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews: The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Politics of Jewish Schooling in Turkey, 1869-1920*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1990; idem, *Images of Sephardi Eastern Jewish Communities in Transition: The Teachers of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, 1860-1939*, University of Washington Press, Seattle and London 1993; Rena Molho, *Salonika and Istanbul* (above note 1), 127-150. A more detailed bibliography for those interested may be found in these books or on the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*'s web site: <http://www.aiu.org>.
- 3 Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite* (above note 2), pp. 114, 350, 353.
- 4 Ibid, pp. 84-86.
- 5 Ibid, pp. 12, 113.
- 6 Molho, *Salonika and Istanbul* (above note 1), pp. 127-137; Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite* (above note 2), pp. 113-114.

this was not the case, such *melamdim* rabbis undoubtedly used schoolbooks with a similar content wherever they taught. When I decided to learn Rashi script, my friends Iakov Schiby and Christine Lochow-Drüke brought to my attention a sample of these books in Judeo-Spanish, now kept in the Ben Zvi Institute, Jerusalem.

It should be noted that the *Alliance* did not approve of the propagation of Jewish languages, be they Judeo-Spanish or Judeo-Arabic. For certain activities – such as the translations of plays and novels from the French, the publication of new books, newspapers, and courses⁷– however, *Alliance* alumni would deliberately employ these languages in order to enable their ideology to reach the lower social classes. Written for the same reason in Judeo-Spanish and directly related to the teaching of moral values, these schoolbooks reveal the way in which the regeneration of the traditional Jewish communities gradually took place.

Three of these handbooks were published in Salonika. They bear such titles as *Lecturas diversas recojidas*,⁸ *Nuevo Syllabario Espagnol: Metod pratica y moderna por el ensegnamento de la lingua judeo-espagnola*,⁹ and *Moral y Educacion Judia: Redigido espesialmente a la intansion de las escolas judias y de las famiya*.¹⁰ All of them are designed for children in primary schools. They are no longer than forty pages in length and contain between twenty and twenty-five brief chapters, each dealing with a different moral issue in the form of an exemplary story. Although the order of themes varies in each handbook, the similarity in their subject matter is reflected in their titles. For example, in *Moral y Educacion Judia* we find chapters entitled “EL LAVORO: Los Bienechos del Lavoro-Onor Al Lavoro”¹¹ and “EL HARAGANUD”, while the *Syllabario*¹² includes lessons on “El provecho del lavoro”, “Los que

7 Molho, *Salonika and Istanbul* (above note 1), pp. 263-281. In 1904/5, J. Nehama taught courses on commerce and accounting in the *Supérieure* section of the school for boys in Salonika, for which he compiled a two-volume handbook in Judeo-Spanish.

8 Yakov Eliaou haCohen, *Lecturas diversas*, ed. Ovadia Sh. Nar. Quarta edision enteramente reformada y revisionada Salonika [n.d.].

9 *El Nuevo Syllabario: Primas lecturas faciles*, Salonika, 1931.

10 Ben-Yaakov y Aharon Baruh, *Moral y Educacion Judia – Livro de lectura redijido espesialmente a la intension de las escolas djudias i de las familias*, Saloniko [n.d.]. The other two textbooks were published in Ismir in 1897 and 1911 under the respective titles *Livro de moral: Uzo de las escolas del oriente* and *Livro de instruction religiosa [traduisido y compuesto por las escolas judias]*.

11 Ben-Yaakov y Aharon Baruh, *Moral y educacion* (above note 10), pp. 12-14, 22-23.

12 *El Nuevo Syllabario* (above note 9), 31-32, 34, 25-26.

sembraron con lagrimas recojen con cantes”, and “El chico haragan, and the *Lecturas diversas*¹³ contains chapters named “El lavoro”, “La pelota y las furnigas”, and “El haraganud”.

A study of the contents of these textbooks reveals the *Alliance*'s systematic campaign to westernise the Jews of these “backward” communities, whose poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, and frail health had rendered them weak and powerless. In order to show the procedure followed in “indoctrinating” children of different age groups, I have chosen three examples that illustrate the way “work” is treated in each handbook.

El Lavoro: El ninio, la besba y el pasharo.¹⁴

El ninio:- Onde vas chika besba? Tu te deviertes as bolas en los campos sobre las flores.

La besba:- Yo non me devierto yo lavoro, yo cosgo la miel de las flores por tener mantinimiento para el invierno.

El ninio :- Onde vas tu chiko pasharo? Tu volas por todos los lugares en cantando y tu te deviertas, la vida para ti es un plazer.

El pasharo:- Yo no me divierto, yo lavoro, yo bushko yerbas, filos de lana por azer mi nido. Yo cojgo chikos guzanicos y granos de trigo para mantener pulikos.

Ijicos Moral: Todos lavoran. Cale el ombre lavora para fraguar su caza como el pasharo aze su nido, es menester que el ombre lazdre por mantenerse como la besba apareja su provision de miel. El que no quiere lavorar no debe comer.

El provecho del lavoro¹⁵

Un guertelano viendose en los ultimos dias de su vida yamo sus ijos serca de el y les disho:

Caros ijos mios, yo no tengo ninguna eredad a desharvos mas de la caza y la guerta que se topa alado. Solamente, en la guerta ay enterado un trezoro. Despues de mi muerte, cavacash bien toparash el trezoro cuadrado.

Despues dela muerte de sus padre los ijos se mitieron a cavacar la tiera con el mas grande cuidado. Ma eyos no toparon del todo el trezoro.

13 Yakov Eliaou haCohen, *Lecturas diversas* (above note 8), pp. 3, 19, 24.

14 Ibid, pp. 3, 19, 24.

15 *El Nuevo Syllabario* (above note 9), pp. 31-32, 34, 25-26.

El enverano, la guerta que en seguita alas bushquidas echas fue bien lavorada, quito frutos en grande cuantita donde la ganansia de aquel anyo fue dupia de los anyos pasados.

Estonses los ijos entindieron bien loque sus padre les quijo dizir en avlandoles del “trezoro”.

El Lavoro: Los Bienechos del Lavoro¹⁶

(...) No ay dudvo, que el lavoro del esprito y de la inteligensia ocupa un ranco alto en la vida sosiala. Ma el lavoro manual no es ni manco importante ni manco respectavle. Siendo son a las manos lavoraderas del lavorador que mosotros devemos el pan que mos mantiene, la casa que mos abriga y la vistimienta que mos cuvre (...).

(...) Los grandes savios del talmud onoravan talmente el lavoro manual que ellos tomavan sus por titulo. Ansi topamos rabi Yohanan el cunduriero, rabi Yosef el yapigi, rabi Itshak el ferrero, rabi Shimon el teshedor, Yohana e carbonero, y ansi muchos.

Mis ijos, amar el oficio, el mantiene con onor el que lo exersa, y le promermete de pasar una vida venturosa y indepediente.

It is interesting to see the diverse ways in which the moral obligation to work is treated in these textbooks, as well as the level of simplicity or sophistication adopted in correspondence with the children’s ages and to arouse their interest. These texts also reflect the consistency with which the *Alliance* educators attempted to change the mentality of the Jewish communities of Salonika, Morocco, and other places. To appease traditionalists, examples were taken from Jewish historical personages in an endeavour to legitimize western ideas and convert the children to ‘Educasion Judia’. They thus present manual work – which most Salonikan and Moroccan Jews considered lowly and treated with contempt¹⁷– as an honourable option for older students, especially those attending vocational schools. Examples drawn from the talmudists show that these Judeo-Spanish books were indeed used in traditional schools.

While we obviously cannot know whether precisely the same schoolbooks were used in Morocco as in Salonika, the fact that Judeo-Spanish was spoken and Spanish

16 Ben-Yaakov y Aharon Baruh, *Moral y Educasion Judia* (above note 10), pp. 12-14, 22-23.

17 Molho, *Salonika and Istanbul* (above note 1), p. 133; Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite* (above note 2), pp. 106, 126-128.

taught in some of Morocco's coastal Jewish communities – such as Larache, Tangier, Tetouan and Casablanca¹⁸ – suggests that schoolbooks such as those printed in Salonika could easily be used. Such a claim is especially plausible when it is acknowledged that the Judeo-Spanish employed is not “contaminated”, as S. Armistead would say, by Balkan loans. Since the Moroccan communities were a small minority in comparison to the Arabic-Jewish speaking ones, it is also therefore logical to conclude that the *Alliance* would not have produced textbooks specifically for the former. Among the teachers sent to Morocco, some were from Salonika and were familiar with these handbooks.¹⁹ In addition, the *Alliance* adopted a particular model, common to most communities, designed to inculcate specific values:²⁰

To the qualities we hope to develop in all our children – rectitude, love of truth and the common good, goodness, devotion to others – must be added in girls a few special qualities: gentleness, modesty, simplicity of dress, the wish to shine other than through a ridiculous display of jewels and petticoats, a sense of the equality between rich and poor ...

The same pattern was followed in the choice of teaching materials.²¹ In Salonika, the Alumni association's yearly bulletin contains detailed lists of the contents of courses taught in the last three years of high school (*Supérieure*). For the course of Moral Education taught in French, it lists the following:²²

- 18 Michael M. Laskier, “The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Social Conditions of the Jewish Communities in the Mediterranean Basin (1860-1914)”, Simon Schwarzfuchs (ed.), *L'Alliance dans les communautés du bassin méditerranéen à la fin du 19ème siècle et son influence sociale et culturelle*, Misgav Yerushalayim, Jerusalem 1987, pp. 71-88, 178.
- 19 Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite* (above note 2), pp. 131-132, refers to Joseph Matalon, who was the director of the Boys School in Tangier in 1883. Matalon was a Jewish teacher from Salonika; Elizabeth Antebi, *Les missionnaires juifs de la France, 1860-1939*, Calmann-Levy, Paris 1999, pp. 177-186; Aron Rodrigue, *Images of Sephardi and Eastern Jewries* (above note 1), pp. 47-51.
- 20 A.I.U., *Instructions générales pour les professeurs*, AIU, Paris 1903, p. 99.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 *Bulletin de l'Association des Anciens Élèves de 1909*, Salonika, 1909, pp. 1-11.

Moral Education or Ethics

First year

Solidarity. What we get from society. Repercussions of one's actions in the social milieu. Duties dictated by solidarity.

Obligations resulting from education received.

Social justice and fraternity.

The rights of the individual.

Tolerance.

Assistance.

The family, its social role.

Professions. The moral and social obligation of work. Professional virtues.

The spirit of initiative and cooperation.

Humanity. Relations between nations. International justice. Human civilisation.

Progress.

Second year

Revision of the first year course.

Objectives and character of Ethics.

Obligations and sanctions.

Motives of behaviour, pleasure, feeling, interest, reason.

Personal and general interest.

Duty and happiness.

Individual perfection.

The feeling of responsibility.

Justice and charity.

Cleanliness and work.

Freedom of thought.

Third year

The foundations of Ethics.

Study of the main philosophical systems. General review or Revision.

While this list is more complex than the contents of the three elementary schoolbooks, all the courses clearly adopt the same value system, rooted in the Enlightenment.

<i>Moral y Educacion Djudia</i>	<i>Nuevo Silabario Espanyol</i>	<i>Lecturas Diversas</i>
<p>Livro de Lectura redijido espesialmente a la intension de las escolas djudias y de las familyas por Ben-Yaacov I. Aharon Baruh, Salonico</p>	<p>Metod Practica y Moderna por el Ensenyamiento de la Lingua judeo-espanyola compozado sigun las nuevas metodes modernas de linguas estranyeras, Salonico 1931 editado por la libreria Ovadia Sh. T. Nar, Calye Ermu – Salonico</p>	<p>recojidas por Yaacov Eliau Acohen cuarta edision enteramente reformada y revizada Editor Ovadia Sh. T. Nar, Caye Menexe no. 11, sucursala en Campanyas alado del monumento del rey George, Salonico.</p>
<p>El Escop de la Moral En Familya Respetto de Padre Amor de Ermano En la Escola Doveres enverso el Maestro El Maestro de Escola Los verdaderos Guardianes Galeria de Ombres Ilustres Rabbi Shimon Ben-Yohai Rabbi Akiva Ben-Yosef El Lavoro Los Bienechos del Lavoro Onor al Lavoro La Instruccion entre los Djidios Rabbi Yohanan Ben-Zakai La Rapoza y los Pishcados El Estudio La Pasion por el Estudio Una Demanda de el Rey Sh'lomo Valor de la Sensia Una Mercansia que no se piedra nunca</p>	<p>Primas Lecturas Fachiles La Manyana Un buen Elevo intelijente Primo Dia de Escola El Chico haragan Un Elevo respectuozo El Ijico dezreglado Un Ijico reconosiente Un Elevo onesto Cale ayudar al Sufriente El Provecho del Lavoro Un Corason piadozo Cale ayudarnos unos con otros Los que asebran con Lagrimas recojen con Cantes El Mintirozo no es nunca cayado Muestras Fiestas El Repozo de Shabat La Fiesta de Rosh a-Shana Yom Kipur</p>	<p>La Escola El Lavoro La Tiera / La Mar La Union en la Familya Las Montanyas Respetto de Padre Las Rasas Amor de Padre Los Volcanes Antonio y su Padre El Vezuvio Limpieza es Riqueza [Hijien] Las Sharas El Djuzgo tsadik La Morada dela Familya El Plato del Nono Hijien Una buena Ija El Dezierto El Ijo repentido Moral djudia: Respetto de Padre y de Madre</p>

<i>Moral y Educacion Djudia</i> Livro de Lectura	<i>Nuevo Silabario Espanyol</i> Metod Practica y Moderna	<i>Lecturas Diversas</i>
La Inyoransa El Inyorante El Gayo y la Perla El Haraganud Los grandes Danyos del Haraganud Setensias del savio-Rey Sh'lomo sobre el Haraganud La Djidjigal y la Furmiga La Biblia El Livro-Luz Un Trezoro inapresiavle Galeria de Ombres Ilustres Rabbi Sh'muel a-Nagid	Hag a-Sukot Hanuka Purim Hag a-Pesah	Los dos Ermanos Un buen Ermano Devemos amar nuestros Maestros La Pelota y las Ormigas Utilidad de saver meldar Las dos Redomas Los dos Guerfanos El Presio de una Ora Detente leshos del Mal Amor de Estudio El Haraganud Las dos Liras Londra Una ermoza Acsion Consejos de Hijien Los Djaros rotos El onesto Ijo Los Mamiferos Fulyed de Vengansa Un buen Ijico ...

These values suggest that the individual develops within a social system defined by strict rules to which it is his duty to adapt. The “moralists” of the Enlightenment believed that the freedom or emancipation of the individual depended on his capacity to participate in those social institutions that defined his existence: the family, justice, society, profession, and country. Rather than focusing exclusively on his own personal objectives, man should define himself by aims common to all. In addition, in his private struggle against “human weaknesses” he should strive to become a man of culture whose knowledge would also be to his individual benefit. In general, the improvement of the human condition depends on education and the cultivation of altruistic and professional values by young people, together with the principle of the “natural rights of the human being” and his public usefulness.

By including such universal values as solidarity and charity – equally Christian as Jewish – in the schools’ programme, the *Alliance* also endeavoured to facilitate the adoption of new socio-political ideas stemming from the Enlightenment. In this way the Jews could retain their own traditions, since their – revised – moral values were

thereby incorporated into the civil and moral code of western civilisation. As a result, the principles of the “moral and social obligation to work and of professional virtues” conveyed by European literature were adopted by Oriental and Balkan Jews.

To what extent did secular moral education help them become citizens conscious of their social duties and rights, especially after 1912, when the establishment of the French Protectorate in Morocco and Salonika’s annexation by Greece drastically altered their respective worlds?²³ In what ways did the young people of Salonika and Morocco take an active part in their own history and contribute to the regeneration of their developing societies?

Regarding the question of solidarity among Jews, both Moroccan and Salonikan Jews responded positively to appeals for help by their less fortunate Russian co-religionists by collecting funds or giving them shelter after the pogroms of 1880 and 1905. From 1893 onwards, *Alliance* alumni associations began to flourish in both Tangiers and Salonika, subsidised in part by the *Alliance*, whose goal was to supplement the activities of the schools. It achieved this aim by establishing libraries, adult courses, vocational schools, apprenticeship training programmes, and night school courses such as those created in 1904 in Marrakesh and Salonika and later in Casablanca.²⁴ By 1912, in Salonika as well as Tangiers, Fez, and Casablanca, these associations contained hundreds of active members who paid membership fees and raised money by conducting conferences and excursions.²⁵ Utilising these funds, alumni also engaged in a wide range of philanthropic activities, such as financing food and clothing programmes for their needy classmates and the communities’ poor children. Thus, for example, the Tetuán and Salonika alumni played a major role in modernising the old religious practice of *malbish arumim* between 1885 and 1903.²⁶

The greatest social impact achieved by this enlightened elite was in revolutionising the schooling of women. By 1912, six vocational girls’ schools containing 1,927 students existed in Salonika, and twelve schools with 1,822 students in Morocco.²⁷

23 André Chouraqui, *Les juifs d’Afrique du Nord* (above note 1), pp. 123-129; Molho, *Salonika and Istanbul* (above note 1), pp. 187-228.

24 Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite* (above note 2), p. 130; Molho, *Salonika and Istanbul* (above note 1), p. 133.

25 Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite* (above note 2), p. 130.

26 Ibid, pp. 106, 115, 118, 129.

27 Molho, *Salonika and Istanbul* (above note 1), pp. 143-144.

These young women were now able to work and be independent – and on becoming mothers would educate their children according to *Alliance* principles. In Morocco, where the attendance of poor girls was more regular than that of their wealthier counterparts, this formed the only way to combat child marriages.²⁸

The promotion of tolerance towards non-Jews, on the other hand, was not an entirely successful enterprise. In coastal towns such as Tangiers and Salonika, some Christians and Muslims frequented the *Alliance* schools and remained friendly with their former classmates as alumni. In other coastal communities, such as Tetuán, however, children in the *Alliance* school in 1896 believed that Jews were the chosen people of God and that the Messiah would redeem them solely, to the exclusion of all others.²⁹

As the Judeo-Spanish schoolbooks indicate, although religious schooling was indeed greatly influenced by *Alliance* principles, the latter were not able to entirely erase all beliefs emanating from traditional mores. Ultimately, the impact of the moral teachings inculcated by the *Alliance* varied from one community to another, depending on how long the school had existed in a given place and the challenges young people faced once Europeans established themselves – as, for example, in 1912 in Fez.³⁰ Between 1880 and 1910, Salonika's communal leaders embarked on the reorganisation of the *talmudei Torah* and their curriculum, put into effect by the capable and enlightened rabbis M. Ottolonghi and I. Epstein. By 1912, all religious institutions had followed suit through their fusion into one new educational establishment under the auspices of the *Alliance*. Nevertheless, as in Morocco, even among the “enlightened” members of my parents' generation, old practices such as slaughtering a rooster on the foundations of a new house – a ceremony known as '*kapara*' – still persisted in Salonika while I was growing up in the 1950's.

28 Laskier, *The Alliance Israélite* (above note 2), p. 119.

29 Ibid, p. 115.

30 Ibid, p. 13.



תיבה, טיטואן 1923 – צילום שלום צבר
Tebá, Tetuán 1923 – fotografía: Shalom Sabar