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## Some Problems of Ladino/Judezmo Romanization

Zachary M. Baker

*Stanford University*, [zbaker@stanford.edu](mailto:zbaker@stanford.edu)

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# CATALOG DEPARTMENT

## Some Problems of Ladino/Judezmo Romanization\*

Zachary M. Baker

YIVO Institute for Jewish Research  
New York, NY

**Abstract:** While ALA/LC standards have been developed for the Romanization of Hebrew and Yiddish for bibliographic purposes, the lack of such a standard for the Romanization of Ladino/Judezmo impedes access to materials in that language. The distinctiveness of Ladino/Judezmo argues that it be treated on its own terms, and not as merely derivative of its principal components, Spanish and Hebrew. This article establishes the rationale for an ALA/LC standard for the Romanization of Ladino/Judezmo and suggests sources that could serve as its basis.

"There is no separate romanization table for Ladino; instead, the Hebrew table is used for consonants and Spanish usage for the vowels" (*Cataloging Service*, no. 53, Summer 1991, p. 46).

### Introduction

The languages spoken by Jews since the Babylonian Exile reflect the interaction of Jews with their surrounding societies, as well as the religious and cultural specificity of the scattered Jewish communities. Indeed, throughout the Diaspora distinctive Jewish languages have arisen during the past two millennia: Jewish Aramaic, Judeo-Arabic, Judeo-Persian, Judeo-Greek, Judeo-Italian, Yiddish (a Germanic language), and Judeo-Spanish—also referred to as Ladino or Judezmo. All of these languages have had rich oral traditions; some have also left extensive literary legacies.

\*Based on a presentation at the 29th annual convention of the Association of Jewish Libraries, held in Atlanta, June 1994.

With the rise of the nation-state, and under the impact of the industrial revolution, Jews tended to adopt the official languages of the countries in which they lived. This trend was most pronounced in Western Europe and the Americas, beginning in the early 19th century, although by the eve of World War II it was also noticeable in Eastern Europe, then the world's principal reservoir of Jewish population. The revival of spoken Hebrew in the wake of the Haskalah is another example of the response of Jews to the forces of modernity.

In some regions, though, Jewish vernaculars were more or less able to hold their own. This was particularly the case among Ashkenazic Jews in Eastern Europe (and among the first generation of Jewish emigrants from Eastern Europe), with a widely developed literature, press, educational network, and theater testifying to the vitality of Yiddish. On a smaller scale, the same could be said of the vernacular of the descendants of Sephardic Jews expelled from the Iberian peninsula, especially among Sephardim residing in the Balkan peninsula, most of which was under the rule of the Ottoman Turkish empire until the early 20th century. That vernacular is most commonly called Ladino, although the terms Judezmo and Judeo-Spanish are also used.

### Objectives of This Paper

As the quotation at the head of this article indicates, no serious guidance for the Romanization of Ladino/Judezmo has been supplied by our national library agency, the Library of Congress. A problem has been identified by LC, but a satisfactory solution to it has not been proposed. It is my intention, therefore, to:

- (a) demonstrate that Ladino/Judezmo is distinctive enough to warrant an approach to Romanization that respects it as such;
- (b) highlight some problem areas in the Romanization of Ladino/Judezmo; and
- (c) suggest some possible avenues toward the resolution of this problem.

What this article will not do, however, is actually propose a standard for the Romanization of Ladino/Judezmo. Development of that standard must enlist the expertise of qualified academic specialists, together with librarians who are familiar with the principles of ALA/LC Romanization of Hebrew and Yiddish, as documented by Maher (1987).

Why should the Romanization of Ladino/Judezmo matter to Hebraica librarians? Practically speaking, few librarians ever need to catalog books in that language, because its bibliographical universe is so limited and existing collections are relatively small, with their holdings already recorded in local card files, published checklists, and bibliographical databases (where, however, they are not particularly well represented). In a May 5, 1995, posting to RLG's *JAMES* (Jewish and Middle Eastern Studies) listserv, John Eilts reported that as of March 22, 1995, cataloging for 820 book titles and 23 serial titles in Ladino/Judezmo—less than half of that language's "bibliographical universe"—was found in the RLIN database.

Current North American cataloging policies dictate that records contributed to the bibliographical utilities include Romanized information, even where (as in the case of the Research Libraries Information Network, or RLIN) the capability of providing vernacular-alphabet access also exists. If coverage of Ladino/Judezmo in these databases is ever to become comprehensive, then the

holdings of *all* major collections will eventually need to be added to them. Therefore, the lack of an acceptable and consistent standard for the Romanization of Ladino/Judezmo impedes scholarly access to works in that language, all the more so in this Internet era, now that library catalogs are accessible from remote locations. Moreover, without a clearly formulated Romanization scheme for Ladino/Judezmo, catalogers may opt not to catalog their libraries' materials in that language.

One of the underlying goals of all descriptive cataloging is the faithful representation of written or printed information contained in the work at hand. "In Romanization, as found in American and British catalogues, the aim is to represent a foreign alphabet in the Roman one, giving the letters the spoken values of the English language," writes Bella Hass Weinberg. "Though we are dealing with *graphic* information, we have been striving for *phonetic* representation" (Weinberg, 1974, p. 20; author's emphasis). To a considerable degree, though, Romanization systems used in libraries also aspire to *reversibility*, i.e., a reader with knowledge of the original script and language should be able to convert the Roman characters in a catalog record back into the original. But, as Weinberg says,

reversibility is a feature of exact transliteration only, because each letter of the foreign alphabet is assigned a distinct corresponding symbol in the Roman alphabet, and conversion in either direction is a simple matter of table look-up. Pronounceability is often lost at the expense of reversibility. It is for this reason that so many different transliteration and transcription schemes exist. Some compilers of schemes want to give an idea of how a language is spoken, while others want to represent its orthography. Still others compromise somewhere in the middle (usually libraries). In an ideal world, transliteration and transcription would be the same and completely reversible. But all natural languages are open-ended, unstable systems. (Weinberg, 1974, pp. 18–19)

Library Romanization systems are thus imperfect by their very nature. This is certainly true for Hebrew, with its variant orthographies (*ketiv haser* and *ketiv male*) not being readily reflected in ALA/LC Romanization. It is true even for Russian,

since the *tvėrdyi znak* ("soft sign" [ʼb]), when it appears at the end of a word (as was frequently the case before the new orthography was adopted in 1918), is disregarded in Romanization. For a detailed analysis of problems engendered by the Romanization of Cyrillic-alphabet bibliographic records, see Aissing (1995).

The imperfections of ALA/LC Romanization are all the more glaring when applied to Jewish languages that combine vocalized (vernacular) with unvocalized (Hebrew/Aramaic) orthographic conventions. The ALA/LC Romanization of Yiddish, for example, is a hybrid, transliteration/transcription system—one that unavoidably, perhaps, but confusingly falls between two stools. The same situation would inevitably result were an ALA/LC Romanization table designed for Ladino/Judezmo, given the dual orthographies that it employs and given the ambiguities of its vocalization (which are described below). David Bunis, in a private communication (May 16, 1995), comments, "Librarians seem to be interested in compromising between pure transliteration and transcription—something to be avoided, in my opinion. I would suggest that they use either the one or the other, or, as I attempted to do in my dictionary [Bunis, 1993], that they use both, but separately."

The impetus for this article was the cataloging in 1992 of a collection of approximately 200 book titles in Ladino/Judezmo, held by the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. Cataloging was carried out by then-Head Cataloger Beth Feinberg, under my supervision, as part of a combined cataloging/microfilming project, with funds provided by the Lucius N. Littauer Foundation. In the absence of a Romanization standard for Ladino/Judezmo, an *ad hoc*—and not altogether satisfactory—approach was adopted by project staff. As suggested by the *Cataloging Service Bulletin*, the ALA/LC Romanization table was used for consonants; in contrast to LC practice, however, vocalizations did not always reflect Spanish pronunciations. One surmises that librarians elsewhere are similarly dissatisfied with the results of their own attempts to Romanize bibliographical elements in Ladino/Judezmo, even when they scrupulously follow the advice to use "the Hebrew table . . . for consonants and [follow] Spanish usage for the vowels" (*Cataloging Service Bulletin*, Summer 1991, p. 46).

## The Distinctiveness of Judezmo

The Hispanic component of Judezmo has much in common with 15th-century Castilian, and like other Jewish languages Judezmo possesses a considerable Hebrew/Aramaic component (Weinreich, 1973; 1980). Both in terms of phonology and lexicon, Judezmo also displays the influence of Turkish, Italian, and French—even Yiddish. (Two examples of Yiddish loan words in modern Judezmo are *yarséat* [Yiddish *yortsayt*], defined by Nehama [1977, p. 599] as the "anniversary day of a death . . ."; and *balabustro* [Yiddish *baleboste*], defined by Nehama [1977, p. 78] as the "not very strict father or mother of a family that neglects all of its duties." Yiddish *balebos* is defined by Uriel Weinreich (1968) as "proprietor, owner; host; boss, master; landlord," and the feminine *baleboste* as "proprietor, owner, mistress; hostess; housekeeper, housewife; landlady." Thus, in Judezmo *balabustro* has acquired nuances that *balebos(te)* does not possess in Yiddish. Judezmo has a rich oral literature—ballads, popular songs, proverbs—and a variegated written literature.

The description of Ladino/Judezmo that follows is based upon a lecture, "Introduction to the History of the Judezmo Language," presented by David Bunis (April 27, 1994), at New York University, under the sponsorship of the Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies and the Department of Spanish and Portuguese. Prof. Bunis, who received his doctorate in linguistics from Columbia University, is affiliated with the Romance Studies and Hebrew departments at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. The author of the recently published *Lexicon of the Hebrew and Aramaic Elements in Modern Judezmo* (Bunis, 1993), he is the leading contemporary academic authority on the history and structure of Ladino/Judezmo.

### (1) The Name of the Language

As with other Jewish languages, more than one name has been applied to the traditional language spoken by the descendants of Spanish and Portuguese Jewry. The most frequently encountered name, Ladino, is now used by scholars to denote the archaizing language used to translate sacred texts (e.g., Bible and prayer-book translations). Among scholars at least, Ladino does not refer to the general spoken language; it is, rather, a specific variety of the language used for translation (a calque variety, to use the label applied to it

by Haim Vidal Sephiha [1979]), whose purpose is to provide access to Hebrew and Aramaic texts, preserving their word order. Jewish-language specialists prefer to use the name Judezmo generically, as a broad cover term for all varieties of the spoken and written language; Hispanists tend to use the term Judeo-Spanish. The term Ladino/Judezmo is generally used here, since Romanization issues affect texts written in both the traditional translation language and in other varieties. Both in terms of descriptive cataloging (via MARC language tagging) and subject cataloging (in the *Library of Congress Subject Headings*), normative library practice is to equate Ladino with Judezmo, with texts in all forms of the language designated as Ladino. [It is not an accident that the MARC language descriptor and the LC subject heading for Ladino are the same. The American National Standard for Information Sciences—Codes for the Representation of Languages for Information Interchange states: "Each language code is accompanied by a descriptor . . . based on the form of language name found in Library of Congress Subject Headings" (ANSI Z39.53-1987, p. 7, section 3.1).

Brad Sabin Hill, *AJL's Voting Representative to the American National Standards Institute, Committee Z39 at the time this standard was drafted, attempted to get a code added for Judezmo, as distinct from Ladino. After extensive correspondence with the standards committee, he granted that most catalogers would not be able to distinguish the two language varieties, and that most people call the language Ladino—Ed.]*

## (2) Regional Variants

Judezmo had two main dialect regions: the Ottoman Empire and North Africa. The principal Ottoman Empire centers were located in the Balkan peninsula and western Anatolia, while the North African center was in Morocco. (The Sephardim who migrated to northern Europe in the 17th century—many of them the descendants of *conversos* [Jewish converts to Christianity]—tended to speak Castilian or Portuguese, rather than Judezmo.) Most written and published material in Judezmo has been produced by Ottoman Jews, and the focus of this article is Judezmo as spoken and written by Balkan-peninsula Sephardim.

The North African Jewish printed literary legacy is almost exclusively in Hebrew. Judezmo spoken in North Africa is com-

monly referred to as *Haketía*, a term of uncertain derivation (Díaz-Mas, 1992). An extensive linguistic treatment of *Haketía* is contained in the introduction to Alegría Bendayán de Bendelac's *Diccionario del Judeoespañol de los Sefardíes del Norte de Marruecos* (1995, pp. [xxxiii]–lvi). The recently published *Yaḥasrá: Escenas haquetiescas* (Lévy, 1992) is one of a small number of literary texts in *Haketía*. *Yaḥasrá* is printed in a form of Romanization that relies on present-day Spanish orthographic conventions.

Unlike the Ashkenazic Jews of Eastern Europe, Balkan Sephardim tended to settle exclusively in a relatively small number of urban centers, including Constantinople, Izmir, Adrianople (Edirne), Saloniki, Sofia, Belgrade, and Bucharest. In the 19th and 20th centuries, these cities were all centers of Ladino/Judezmo printing, as were Jerusalem and Vienna. (The very first printing press in the Ottoman Empire, in Constantinople, was set up by Sephardim shortly after the expulsion from Spain, and was used to print Hebrew books.)

## (3) Periodization

Prof. Bunis divides the development of the Judezmo vernacular into three stages:

(a) **Old Judezmo**, spoken on the Iberian peninsula until 1492. Old Judezmo bore a close phonological resemblance to the Castilian of that era, but Hebraisms were used to express many Jewish religious concepts. The word *Dyo* (or *Diyo*) was used by Jews for "God," instead of standard Castilian *Dios* (deriving from Latin *Deus*)—apparently reflecting the desire of Sephardim to avoid what they interpreted as a plural form. Similarly, the neutral, Arabic *Alḥad* ("the first [day]"), rather than the Christian-origin, Castilian *Domingo*, was used for "Sunday."

(b) **Middle Judezmo** (1493–ca. 1810). The centuries following the expulsion from the Iberian peninsula witnessed the survival of older forms and their subsequent evolution in isolation from Castilian. One example is the evolution of the preterite (past tense) form *demandemos* ("we asked"; modern Castilian *demandamos*) to *demandimos*. The phenomenon of metathesis (transposition of syllables) also became noticeable: The Castilian *general* evolved into *gerenal*, and *tarde* ("late") into *tadre*. Turkish influences also became apparent during this period.

(c) **Modern Judezmo** (ca. 1811–present). During the most recent period, Judezmo

came into contact with French and Italian, which became prestige languages for Balkan Sephardim. This was especially true for French, which was the language of instruction in schools sponsored by the Alliance Israélite Universelle. One example of Italian influence on Judezmo is the replacement of Castilian-origin *komunidad* and Hebrew-origin *kolel* ("community") with the Italian *komunitá* (*comunità*). A secular Judezmo literature developed alongside traditional religious writings. Later, with the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, there was increased pressure on Jews to adopt the national languages of the successor states (e.g., Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, Turkey). In modern Turkey, written Judezmo has become Latinized, paralleling Kemal Atatürk's decision to adopt the Latin alphabet for Turkish, which previously employed Arabic characters. (Turkish spelling practices serve as the basis for this version of Romanized Judezmo.) Finally, during World War II, Nazi genocide eradicated most centers of Judezmo-speaking Sephardim outside of Turkey, including above all the great cultural capital of the Sephardic world, Saloniki.

## (4) Orthography and Phonology

"Unlike Yiddish," writes Bella Weinberg, Ladino/Judezmo "never had a standardizing agency, but surprisingly, a rather standard orthography developed by itself" (1980, p. 330; see also Bunis, 1974). Words deriving from Hebrew or Aramaic follow spelling conventions applying to those languages, while different spelling practices are used for words of other origins. Even so, while certain orthographic conventions for the non-Hebrew/Aramaic component of Ladino/Judezmo do prevail, no standard orthography for the language as a whole has ever been formally adopted. Ladino/Judezmo printing normally employs the cursive "Rashi" typeface (so called because of its use in printed versions of that medieval rabbi's famous Bible commentary). Modern Judezmo retains a number of consonants that are either no longer found in Castilian or whose distributions are not identical with modern Castilian patterns (see Table 1). Examples include:

- "v" (*vet* + rafé or apostrophe) vs. "b" (*bet*, *livro* ["book"; Castilian *libro*] vs. *bweno* ["good"; Castilian *bueno*).
- "dzh" or "ğ" (*gimel* + haček, rafé, or apostrophe), as in *dzhente* ("people"; Castilian *gente*, with "g" pronounced like Hebrew *khaf*). This letter (with the diacritic) does not always represent the

sound "dzh"; in some cases it should be transcribed "č" or "tsh."

—"d" (*dalet*) vs. "đ" (*dalet* + rafé or apostrophe, pronounced like English "th" in "this"; *fundadah* ["founded"; Castilian *fundada*]; *delah sosyedad* ["of the society"; Castilian *de la sociedad*]).

—"zh" or "ž" (*zayin* + haček, rafé, or apostrophe), as in *muzher* ("woman"; Castilian *mujer*, with "j" pronounced like Hebrew *khaf*).

—"sh" or "š" (older Castilian "x"; represented by the Hebrew letter *shin*), as in *seš* ("six").

—In printed texts, the place name Saloniki is often spelled with the letter *sin* (rather than *samekh*) and should be Romanized as such (*Saloniki*), rather than as if spelled with a *shin* (*Shaloniki*).

The diacritics used in Judezmo consonants relate to pronunciation, and their role should be reflected in Romanization. (Indeed, recent LC practice does recognize the function of Judezmo diacritics, as the example of a title cataloged in 1987 indicates: *Nu'ev'o g'iko diksiyonariyo*; see Figure 1).

The Romanization of Ladino/Judezmo vowels is particularly problematic, since the same letter or combination of letters can be used to represent different sounds (see Table 2). Examples include:

—*he* (at end of word) = ah. *He* is also used to represent a consonant in words of Hebrew derivation, but as in Castilian is not pronounced, e.g., *aynará*, Hebrew *'ayin ha-ra'* (Bunis, 1993, p. 363, where the primary transcription given is *aynaráx* [with "x" representing the slightly guttural "h" sound]; Nehama, 1977, p. 73).

—*vav* = o, u (also = v, in words of Hebrew/Aramaic derivation).

—*yod* = e, i, y (as consonant).

—double *yod* = ie (or ye), ii (or yi, iy), ey. (Joan C. Biella, of the Library of Congress, Descriptive Cataloging Section, in a private communication [late 1993 or early 1994] with Caroline Holt [University of California, Los Angeles], wrote, "We romanize 'Dios' [sic] as 'Diyos' [sic] because the Hebrew script can't accommodate two contiguous vowels without expressing a consonant between them. We try to apply similar philosophies in romanizing Yiddish and Syriac." *Diyo* ["God"] is spelled *dalet-yod-yod-vav* in Ladino/Judezmo. In a private communication with the author, however [May 26, 1995], David Bunis comments that this word should be Romanized "as *dyo*, never as *diyo* . . . the latter [form is]

Table 1			
JUDEZMO AND CASTILIAN CONSONANTS			
Letter	Romanization	Example (Judezmo)	Example (Castilian)
בּ, בֿ, ב	v vs. b	livro vs. bweno	(libro, bueno)
גּ, גֿ, ג	ğ, dzh; č, ch, tsh	ğente; čiko	(gente; chico)
דּ, דֿ, ד	đ vs. d	fundadah	(fundada)
זּ, זֿ, ז	ž, zh	mužer	(mujer)
שּׁ	š, sh	seš	(seis)

Table 2		
JUDEZMO VOWELS AND THEIR ROMANIZATION		
Letter(s)	Romanization	Example(s)
הּ (at end of word)	h	delah
וּ	o, u, v (in words of Hebrew/Aramaic derivation)	estatutqs
יּ	e, i, y (as consonant)	livro de
יִי	ie (ye), ii (yi, iy), ei (ey)	diksiyonariyo, lei, sosiedad

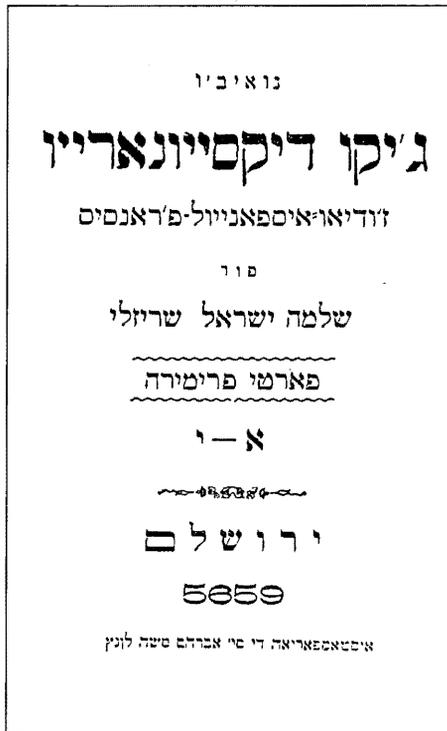
extremely misleading and should be rejected."

**Why is There No ALA/LC Romanization Table for Ladino?**

The recommendation that the ALA/LC Hebrew Romanization table be used for Ladino/Judezmo consonants and Spanish usage for vowels marks a conceptual step backward, as far as Library of Congress practices are concerned. Henry V. Besso's published catalog of Ladino materials at LC contains a usable, if somewhat dated, Romanization table for Ladino (Library of Congress, 1963, pp. 42-44). (For example, Besso uses "tz" for *tsade*, rather than "ts.") The introduction to the recently published catalog of Ladino/Judezmo publications in the Harvard College Library (1992)

states that its Romanizations are based on the Besso table, although it should be pointed out that in cases of clear conflict between the two, ALA/LC Romanization conventions for consonants apparently overrode those of Besso.

One possible explanation for the lack of an ALA/LC Romanization table for Ladino/Judezmo: in view of the inconsistencies between the Besso table and the elaborate rules codified in Maher's *Hebraica Cataloging* manual (1987), LC chose to "shelve" the Besso table and refrain from devising a new one until such time as it needs to catalog a substantial corpus of Ladino/Judezmo titles. Meanwhile, recataloging of the 500-plus titles represented in the Besso catalog simply may not be a high priority at LC.



**Cherezli, Salomon Israel.**

(Nu'ev'o g'iko diksiyonariyo)

נואיב'ו ג'יקו דיקסיונארייו: ז'ודיאואיספאנייול-פראנסים /  
פור שלמה ישראל שרזלי. — ירושלים : א.מ. לונץ,  
.1898-1899

viii, 232 p. ; 18 cm.

Ladino and French.

Title on added t.p.: Nouveau petit dictionnaire.

Photocopy. [Washington : Library of Congress, 1982?] viii, 232  
columns [i.e. 125 leaves] 19 x 25 cm.

(Continued on next card)

87-156749

MARC

AACR 2

HE

94

**Cherezli, Salomon Israel.**

(Nu'ev'o g'iko diksiyonariyo)

(Card 2) ... נואיב'ו ג'יקו דיקסיונארייו

1. Ladino language—Dictionaries—French. I. Title. II. Title:  
Nouveau petit dictionnaire.

PC4813.4.C44 1898

87-156749

MARC

AACR 2

HE

94

Library of Congress

Figure 1. Left: Title page of *Nu'ev'o g'iko diksiyonariyo z'udeo-espaniyol-franses . . . parte primerah*, por Shelomoh Yi'srael Sherezli. Yerushalem: Ešampariah de Se' Avraham Mosheh Lunts, 5659 [1898 or 1899].

Right: LC Card No. 87-156749. *Nu'ev'o g'iko diksiyonariyo*, by Salomon Israel Cherezli. (The word Romanized here as *g'iko*, observes David Bunis [private communication with the author, May 16, 1995], is actually pronounced *čiko* or *čiku*. Bunis transcribes this title as follows: *Nwevo čiko diksyonaryo*.)

**On the Cover:**

Montage of Ladino books from  
the collection of YIVO Institute for  
Jewish Research.

Photo credit: Kryisia Fisher.

The most extensive bibliography of Ladino publications (Yaari, 1934) lists fewer than 900 titles. On the basis of subsequent bibliographies, published catalogs, and checklists (Library of Congress, 1963; Harvard, 1992; Yeshiva University, 1982, 1992), the bibliographical universe for Ladino/Judezmo may be estimated at upwards of 2,000 book and periodical titles.

Imagine the uproar, had LC issued the following statement: "There is no separate romanization table for Yiddish; instead, the Hebrew table is used for consonants and German usage for the vowels." Yiddish has a bibliographical universe of 50,000 titles (YIVO, 1990, vol. 1, p. xxii), however, and even now a modest number of new works continues to appear in that language. To label Yiddish as "German in Hebrew characters" would be patently ludicrous and untenable; stipulating the analogue, Ladino/Judezmo as "Spanish in Hebrew characters," is apparently less controversial, even though it rests on at least two false assumptions:

(1) Ladino/Judezmo consists solely of elements deriving from Hebrew and Spanish:

(2) Those elements that do derive from Hebrew and Spanish are pronounced as if they were modern (Israeli) Hebrew and Castilian. Dictionaries demonstrate that there is a divergence between the so-called Sephardic pronunciation of Hebrew and actual usage among Sephardim. Also, many Judezmo words of Castilian origin diverge from modern Castilian pronunciations, even as their vocalization remains ambiguous, because they are spelled with letters that represent more than one sound (e.g., *demandimos* ["we asked"; older Castilian *demandamos/-emos*, modern Castilian *demandamos*] and *linguah* ["language"; Castilian *lengua*]).

#### Reference Sources and Romanization

As the last example indicates, LC's brief statement on the Romanization of Ladino would have *linguah* Romanized as *lenguah*, to reflect Castilian usage. Moreover, LC's statement does nothing to address the question of Romanization of the many non-Hebrew and non-Spanish elements in Judezmo. Unfortunately, there is no single standard Judezmo dictionary that can serve as an authority in this regard—unlike Even-Shoshan [1969–1970] for the vocalization of Hebrew, or Weinreich [1968] for the standard orthogra-

phy of Yiddish, both of which are essential reference tools for the Hebraica cataloger.

The two principal dictionaries that should be used as points of departure are *Dictionnaire du Judéo-Espagnol*, by Joseph Nehama (1977), and *A Lexicon of the Hebrew and Aramaic Elements in Modern Judezmo*, by David Bunis (1993). A brief table of "Phonetic Symbols and Spelling" appears in the recent book, *Death of a Language: The History of Judeo-Spanish*, by Tracy K. Harris (1994, pp. 279–280). An article by David L. Gold (1985), offering two transliteration schemes for Judezmo

(one based on the American National Standards Institute's "Narrow Transliteration" for Hebrew [1975, pp. 10, 12–13], the other, without fancy diacritics, using symbols available on normal English keyboards), may be consulted as well.

The Nehama dictionary represents a single dialect of Judezmo, that of Saloniki, and thus should not be regarded as a comprehensive or standard Judezmo dictionary. Lexical items are listed alphabetically in Romanization, with proposed etymologies and examples of usage; definitions are given in French. The Nehama dictionary

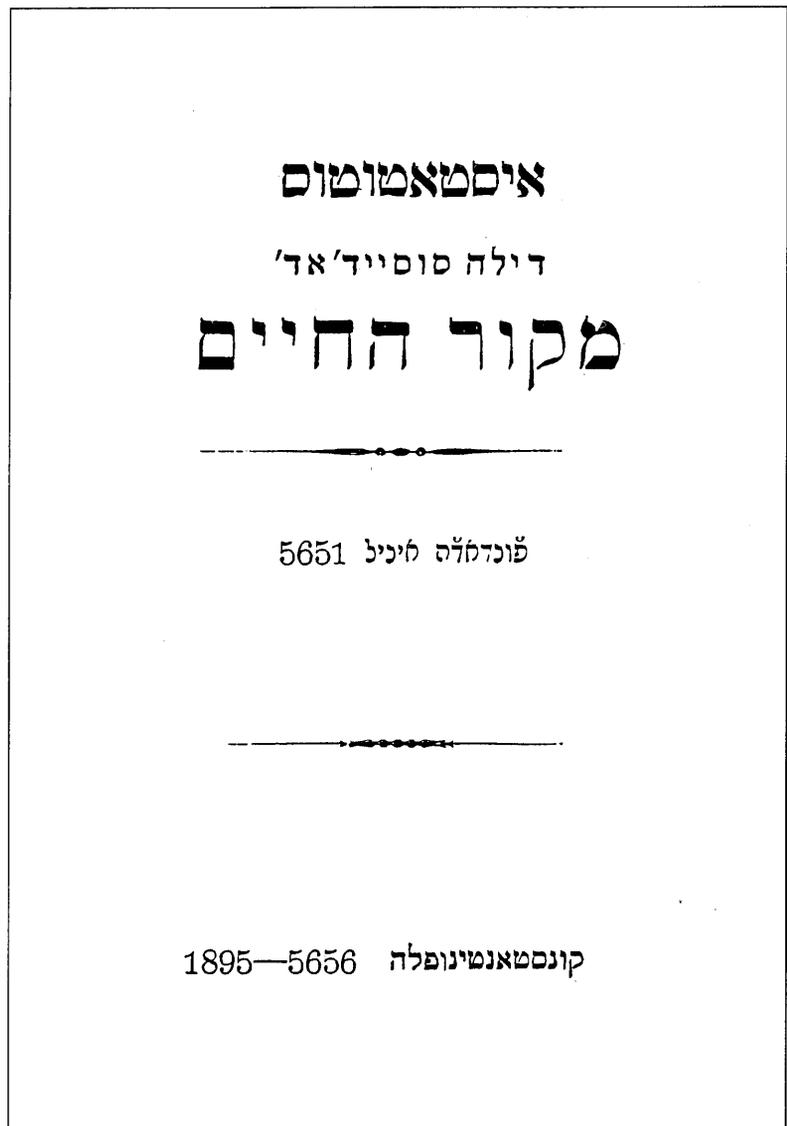


Figure 2. *Eṣtaṭuṭos delah sosyeḏaḏ Meḳor ha-ḥayim, fundadaḥ enel 5651. Konstantinoplakh: 1895–5656.* Through diacritics, the title-page shows a clear distinction between the two "d" sounds in Judezmo.

was published posthumously (with editorial emendations) and is regrettably flawed by numerous typographical errors and questionable etymologies. Still, it remains the best extant source for the phonetic transcription of Judezmo. Its Romanization table (pp. [xiii—xv]) is based in part on modern Spanish (e.g., “j” is employed as in Spanish), although diacritics conforming to Judezmo pronunciation are also employed. Words of Hebrew and Turkish derivation are identified, and their pronunciations are given. Unfortunately, the Nehama dictionary is out of print, though it is held by many major research libraries.

The Bunis lexicon represents the Hebrew/Aramaic elements of Judezmo, and for this component should be viewed as authoritative. It also includes examples of the usage of Hebrew/Aramaic-origin lexical items within Judezmo phrases and proverbs, thus shedding a glance at the transcription of other elements of Judezmo. Like Nehama, Bunis is concerned primarily with the *phonemic transcription* of Judezmo, although his lexicon does contain separate Romanization tables for both systematic transliteration and transcription. Its principal limitation, for the purpose of developing an ALA/LC standard for the Romanization of Ladino/Judezmo, is that because of its focus on Judezmo dialectology, variant Romanizations of individual words are often given, rather than a single suggested standard. (In a private communication, dated May 16, 1995, Prof. Bunis writes, “Unlike Yiddish, no Standard Judezmo phonology, acceptable to all speakers, has evolved. Thus, when I romanize written texts [as in my dictionary], the romanization attempts to reflect the dialect of the text’s author. However, since the great majority of Ottoman Judezmo speakers lived in Saloniki, Istanbul, and Izmir, and since their phonologies share many similar features, perhaps they [that is, Southeastern Ottoman Judezmo] could serve as the basis for romanization, rather than Spanish, which is obviously unsuitable.”)

This is not intended as a criticism, merely as an observation that a uniform approach to the Romanization of Ladino/Judezmo—paralleling the ALA/LC Romanization table for Yiddish—has yet to be devised. An ALA/LC Romanization table for Ladino/Judezmo would not be superfluous; as has been suggested (both here and previously [Adler, 1988–1989, p. 150]), it would greatly facilitate the cataloging of works in that language and bibliographical access to them in North American databases.

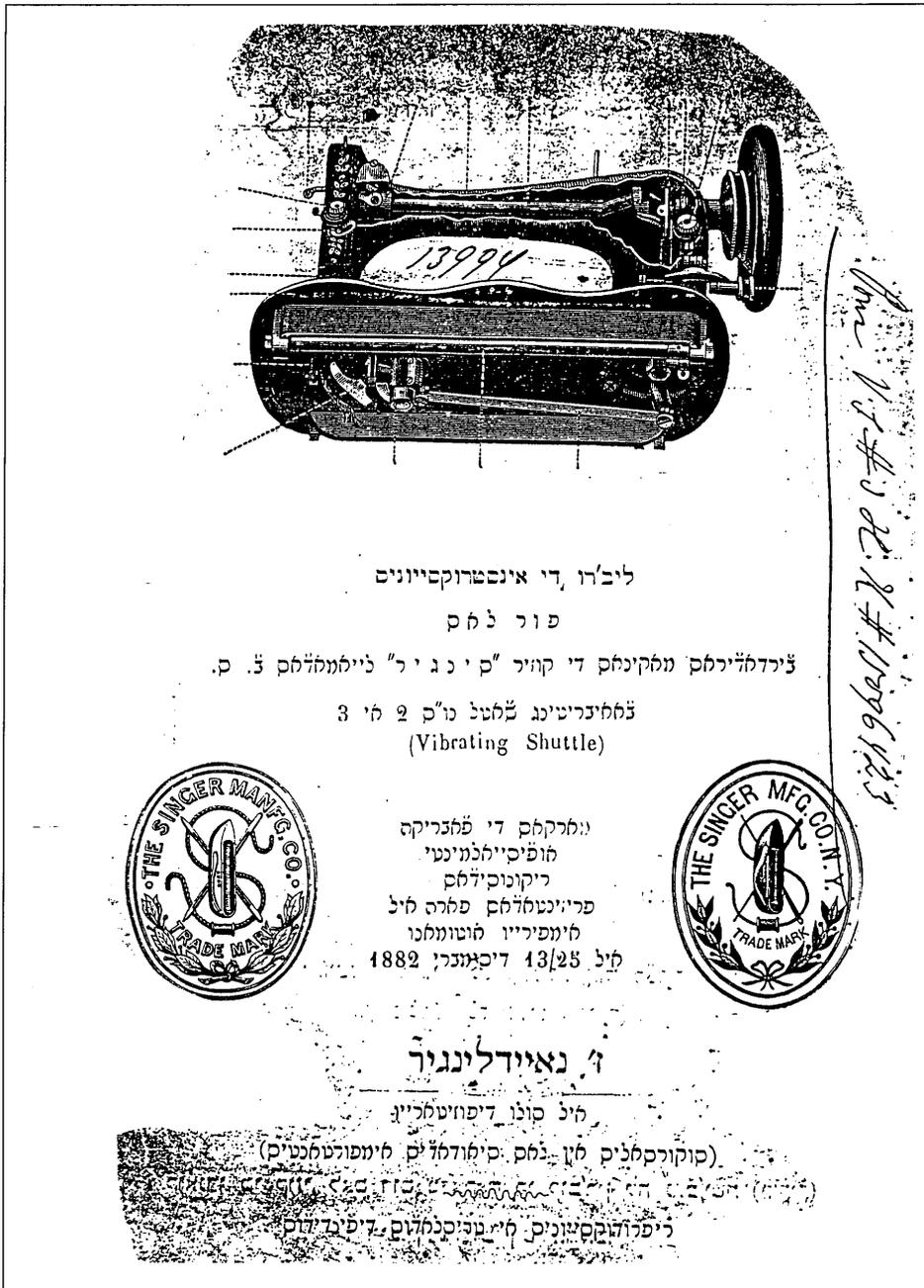


Figure 3. *Livro de instruksiyones por las verdaderas maquinas de çozer “Singer” iyamaças V. S.: Vaibreting shotl nu”m 2 i 3 (Vibrating shuttle).* Not all words on a Ladino/Judezmo title-page derive from Spanish or Hebrew.

Such a table should be devised jointly by experienced academic specialists and librarians familiar with the ALA/LC Romanization of Hebrew and Yiddish, relying upon the tables that have already been devised as its points of departure (see Appendix A), and upon the Nehama and Bunis dictionaries for guidance in the phonological subtleties of Ladino/Judezmo.

### Acknowledgments

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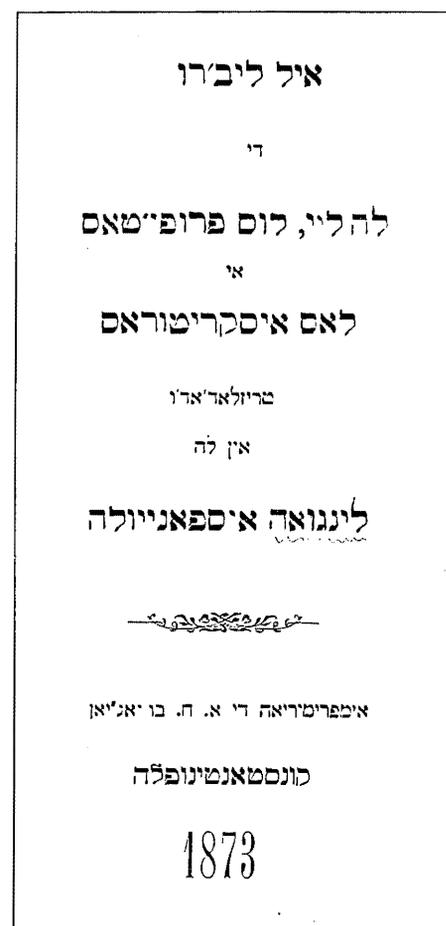


Figure 4. *El libro de la lei, los profetas i las eskrifturas, tzezlado en lah linguah espanyola. Konstantinoplach: Imprimeriah de A. H. Boyag'yan, 1873.* Even Ladino/Judezmo words of Spanish origin should not invariably be Romanized according to present-day Spanish usage (e.g., *linguah* vs. *lenguah*).

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### Appendix A

#### Selected List of Ladino/Judezmo Romanization Tables

- Bunis, David M. *A Lexicon of the Hebrew and Aramaic Elements in Modern Judezmo*. Preface by Shelomo Morag. Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University; Misgav Yerushalayim, Institute for Research on the Sephardi and Oriental Jewish Heritage, 1993. "Transliteration": pp. 57-58; "Transcription system": pp. 59-62.
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*Zachary M. Baker is Head Librarian of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research and President of the Association of Jewish Libraries (1994-1996). In 1992 and 1993, he supervised the cataloging and micro-filming of that library's 200 books in Ladino/Judezmo, as part of a project that was supported by the Lucius N. Littauer Foundation.*



## About those walking sticks...

On the left walking stick leans the Nobel laureate in literature, Isaac Bashevis Singer, the great Yiddish writer for the Jewish Forward. On the right one leans Seth Lipsky, who was then a member of the editorial board of the Wall Street Journal and who aspired to bring out the Forward in English. The date was August 1984. The editor had travelled to Mr. Singer's vacation spot at the Swiss Alpine village of Wengen to seek Mr. Singer's wisdom and support. They decided to take a walk. Mr. Lipsky suspected it might be the most important walk he ever took. So he slipped an instant camera into his pocket. Then they picked up those walking sticks from a barrel in the hotel lobby and set out.

The walk lasted hours. Mr. Singer talked of the Talmud and Mark Twain and of his love of the Yiddish language. They shared their appreciation of humor and

irony. They talked of the crisis in Jewish continuity. Finally Mr. Lipsky poured out his hopes for bringing the Forward out in English for a new generation of American Jews. As they were headed down the mountain, Mr. Lipsky reached into his pocket, retrieved the camera and passed it to a tourist strolling in the other direction. Mr. Lipsky took Mr. Singer by the arm and said, "Mr. Singer, please turn around." The great writer turned and looked back toward the mountains. Click. The shutter sealed the moment. Then Mr. Singer leaned over to his young visitor and told him that if he was going to become editor of the Forward he would have to remember, when he was getting his picture taken, to remove his sun glasses.

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