

## From Messianic Apologetics to Missionary Counterattack in the Sabbatian Sacred *Romancero*

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### THE CORPUS AND ITS AUTHORSHIP

DUE TO THE EXTREME SECRECY of the Sabbatians who followed their messiah into apostasy, only five manuscripts containing their sacred poetry are available to scholars today.<sup>1</sup> The corpus of songs contained therein amounts to well over a thousand unique titles, and among them are found five poems of a particular type: romances. Four of them are traditional Judeo-Spanish romances that were sanctified by the Sabbatians: “Meliselda,” “Delgadina,” “Tarquin and Lucretia,” and “Armavan gera los Moros.” One single romance, “Ḥakhamim van ayrando,” was created by the Sabbatians themselves.<sup>2</sup> This essay explores the Sabbatian

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1. Four of them were acquired by the late president of Israel, Izhak Ben-Zvi, and are presently kept in Jerusalem in the institute that bears his name (BZ 2270, BZ 2271, BZ 2272, BZ 2273). The fifth is at Harvard University (Harvard 80).

2. In BZ 2272, these are songs 107, 152, 158, 151, and 116, respectively. Throughout this essay, Judeo-Spanish words appearing in my analysis or in my own transliterations of Judeo-Spanish texts (which were originally written in Hebrew script) are written semi-phonetically, following the norm accepted by the Israeli National Authority for Ladino and its Culture, the overwhelming majority of Sephardic institutions and individuals, and the majority of the research community. At the same time, when quoting Judeo-Spanish texts transliterated into Latin script by other authors, I adhere to the orthography proposed by the quoted authors. This produces inconsistency, especially in the spelling of the names of the historical and pseudohistorical personalities such as Meliselda, Tarquin, and Lucretia. To avoid confusion, I follow a simple rule for names: in my own text, I use the accepted English names above. In Ladino texts transcribed by me, I follow the present-day Ladino norm (i.e., Melizelda, Tarkino, Lukresia), while in texts transcribed by Attias and other researchers of Sephardic romancero the names are cited according to the preferred Spanish norm (i.e., Meliselda, Tarquino, Lucrecia).

sacred *romancero* as a whole, examining the use and impact of the genre, locating the songs and their hidden meanings in particular contexts of early Sabbatianism.

“Meliselda” reflects Shabbetai Tsevi’s own tendency to use feminine characters, imagery, genre, and language to represent himself and his mystical and messianic role. At least two additional romances, “Delgadina” and “Tarquin and Lucretia,” represent the continuation of these notions among his followers. As a trained ḥakham (the traditional Sephardic term for rabbi), Shabbetai must have been fluent in all three languages of the traditional Ottoman Sephardic discourse: Aramaic (penetrable only by the educated, mostly rabbinic, elite), Hebrew (whose liturgical and biblical strata were accessible to the overwhelming majority of the male population, while its rabbinic stratum was reserved for more educated men), and Judeo-Spanish (the vernacular shared by the entire community, male and female, in oral form). Sephardic women, who were at the bottom of this linguistic scale, operated only in Judeo-Spanish. The educated rabbinic elite, in contrast, could use Aramaic to exclude the masses or Judeo-Spanish to include them, or maintain the use of Hebrew for the rabbinically educated male. Consequently, Shabbetai’s use of the vernacular in these songs appears to be a strategic decision. It undermined the elite and its culture—in accordance with his other acts during this period—while simultaneously reaching out to common people, including women. In fact, the Sabbatian movement was the first in Jewish history to promote an egalitarian agenda, on both the theoretical and the practical levels.<sup>3</sup>

The anti-establishment spirit of Shabbetai’s “strange act” of sacralizing romances is not limited to the fact of their being in the vernacular. Even more subversive is the use of the literary genre of the romance—one identified with women and illiterate men. Even though all members of the traditional Ottoman Sephardic community were exposed to Judeo-Spanish oral culture and its different genres, they were not identified with them to the same degree. In a society in which the overwhelming majority of women were illiterate, it is obvious why they depended on oral literary genres, transmitted in the vernacular. The rabbinic elite, on the other

3. Ada Rapoport-Albert, *Women and the Messianic Heresy of Sabbatai Zevi, 1666–1816* (Oxford, 2011); Rapoport-Albert, “On the Position of Women in Sabbatianism,” in *The Sabbatian Movement and Its Aftermath: Messianism, Sabbatianism, and Frankism*, ed. R. Elior (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 2001), 143–329; Morris M. Faierstein, “Women as Prophets and Visionaries in Medieval and Early Modern Judaism,” in *Women in Judaism*, ed. L. J. Greenspoon, R. A. Simkins, and J. A. Cahan (Omaha, Neb., 2003), 247–62.

hand, had an ambiguous stance toward Judeo-Spanish oral literature. Some of its genres, especially those that could be used to strengthen accepted social norms, such as folktales or proverbs, were readily used. Others, such as romances, were mostly criticized, primarily because of their frivolity. They were seen as promoting ideas and values foreign to rabbinic Judaism, and consequently Sephardic ethical literature does not lack examples of rabbinic criticism of the genre and its (mostly female) protagonists. As far as Sephardic laymen are concerned, the incipits of the Hebrew piyyutim which were sung after the famous romances are a potent witness to the extent of the familiarity that pious Sephardic laymen had with the traditional *romancero*.<sup>4</sup> Not only did the Sabbatian messiah give precedence to the vernacular language of the common folk over the sacred Hebrew of the elite (whose rule over the liturgy usually remained unchallenged) but he also consecrated the most profane of genres: the romance.

Although the Sabbatians might look like a homogeneous group to outsiders, they in fact split into three groups almost from the beginning of their detachment from traditional rabbinic Judaism.<sup>5</sup> Today the three go by a range of names, most commonly Yakubis, Karakaş, and Kapandjis, though each of them is known by other names, some of them internal (used by the Sabbatians themselves), and some external. (Of the latter, many are derogatory.<sup>6</sup>) Consequently, defining the manuscripts analyzed here simply as “Sabbatian” is imprecise. Further attention is required in order to ascertain from which Sabbatian subgroup they emerged.

All five known Sabbatian sacred romances have been published, but

4. See Edwin Seroussi and Rivka Havassy, *Incipitario sefardi: El cancionero judeoespanol en fuentes hebreas: Siglos XV-XIX* (Madrid, 2009), 43–49. As a matter of fact, this research shows that Sephardic common men were no less fluent in the Ottoman secular poetry. The majority of the Ottoman Sephardic religious poems of the time were written for the melodies of the already existent secular (often frivolous, and sometimes even scandalous) Judeo-Spanish, Turkish, Greek, or Arabic songs. Adding the incipit (the name or the initial line of the original song), told the singers to which melody the religious song should be sung. This shows that the writers of these piyyutim, as well as their singers, had a high level of proficiency in the secular repertory.

5. For more information on the background of the split and the modes of organization of each group, see Paul Benjamin, “And the Spirit of Sabbatai Zevi Moved upon the Waters: Modes of Authority and the Development of the Donme Sects” (B.A. thesis, Haverford College, 2012).

6. See Cengiz Sisman, “The History of Naming Ottoman/Turkish Sabbateans,” in *Studies on Istanbul and Beyond*, ed. R. G. Ousterhout (Philadelphia, 2007), 36–51.

generally in an eclectic and homogenizing manner, without attention to the peculiar Sabbatian misspellings that allow us to ascribe them to one group or another. They are distributed through three of the five known manuscripts of Sabbatian songs, with some appearing in more than one (as is the case with other genres of poetry within the broader Sabbatian corpus).<sup>7</sup> For obvious reasons, “Meliselda,” the song sanctified by Shabbetai himself, is most widespread, and it appears in three manuscripts (BZ 2271, BZ 2272, Harvard 80). “Armavan gera los Moros” occurs in two manuscripts (BZ 2272, Harvard 80) and the same is true of “Ḥakhamim van ayi irando/ayrando” (BZ 2271, BZ 2272). The only one that contains all five of these songs, manuscript BZ 2272, has not yet been published.<sup>8</sup> Each of the other two manuscripts contains two sacred romances: BZ 2271 has “Meliselda” (song 93) and “Ḥakhamim van ayi irando” (song 4), and Harvard 80 contains “Meliselda” (song 93) and “Armavan gera los Moros” (song 17).

Closer attention to the language and orthography of the manuscripts rules out the possibility that these manuscripts were produced by Kapandjis. As evidenced by a short prayer book that Gershom Scholem published in 1942,<sup>9</sup> Kapandji Hebrew was deeply influenced by Judeo-

7. Paul Fenton wrote a pioneering study of the Harvard manuscript, dating it to the 1750s. Paul B. Fenton, “A New Collection of Sabbatean Hymns” (Hebrew), in *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 16, *The Sabbatean Movement and Its Aftermath: Messianism, Sabbatianism and Frankism*, vol. 1, ed. R. Elior (Jerusalem, 2001), 329–51. In MS Harvard 80 Fenton identified at least 33 songs already known from BZ 2270 and 25 additional songs already known from BZ 2271.

8. BZ 2270 (239 songs) is the only manuscript that has yet been published in its entirety. Moshe Attias edited the manuscript itself, Izhak Ben-Zvi added an introduction, and Gershom Scholem added his own annotations to those of Ben-Zvi and Attias. Moshe Attias, *Shirot ve-tishbahot shel ha-shabeta'im*, ed. M. Attias (Tel Aviv, 1947). This manuscript, however, does not contain a single Judeo-Spanish romance, nor does BZ 2273. One additional manuscript, BZ 2271 (105 songs), was prepared for print by Attias but still awaits publication. It contains two Judeo-Spanish romances (see below). The remaining three manuscripts, BZ 2272 (161 songs), BZ 2273 (306 songs), and Harvard 80 (680 songs) are presently being prepared for print by Avner Perez.

9. Gershom Scholem, “Order of Prayers of the Dönneh in Izmir” (Hebrew), *Qiryat Sefer* 18 (1940/41): 298–312; 19 (1941/42), 58–64. Republished in Gershom Scholem, *Studies and Texts Concerning the History of Sabbatianism and Its Metamorphoses* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1982), 370–421. For a more harmonizing interpretation of the liturgical materials in this prayer book, see Michael D. Meyerson, “The Sabbatian Siddur: Liturgy of a Messianic Movement” (thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements for ordination, Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion, 1979).

Spanish. Though written in Hebrew script, it was semi-phonetic, with every single phoneme, including vowels, represented graphically, just as all of Sephardic Jewry used to write Judeo-Spanish until Westernizing tendencies led many to move to Latin script. Among the Kapandjis it was Hebrew, and not Judeo-Spanish, written this way, but in the manuscripts of poetry treated here, Judeo-Spanish is ascendant.

Not only language but also theological content reinforces that this material is not Kapandji—and in fact is probably Karakaş. Kapandjis did not believe in Shabbetai's divinity while the Karakaş did, and the songs of R. Yehuda Lewi "Tova,"<sup>10</sup> a famous Karakaş leader and reformer, are dispersed through all five manuscripts. As Avraham Elqayam's recent thorough examination of the corpus shows,<sup>11</sup> the theme of Shabbetai's divinity is central in many of Tova's songs. Moreover, MS Harvard 80 contains a poem (396) attributed (according to Fenton<sup>12</sup>) or dedicated (according to Elqayam<sup>13</sup>) to a certain Osman-Baba. Fenton suggests that this is Barukhya Ruso, the Karakaş reincarnation of Shabbetai Tsevi, whose Islamic name was Osman-Baba.<sup>14</sup> If this inference is right, the manuscripts were probably produced by the Karakaş group,<sup>15</sup> as no Kapandji or Yakubi source would quote this Osman-Baba. Kapandjis came into existence by splitting from the Karakaş over the issue of Osman-Baba being Shabbetai's reincarnation.<sup>16</sup> According to the spiritual expectations of the Kapandjis, the messiah's body should not decompose,

10. Ibid, 157. On Yehuda Tova, see Moshe Attias, "Piyyut and Prayer for Simḥat Tora by a Sabbatian Poet, R. Yehuda Lewi Tova" (Hebrew), *Sefunot* 1 (1956/57): 128–40; Yitzhak Molho and Rivka Shatz, "Commentary on 'Lekh lekha' by Yehuda Lewi Tova" (Hebrew), *Sefunot* 3&4 (1958/59–1959/60): 433–521.

11. Avraham Elqayam, "*Shirot ve-tisbbaḥot* of the Sabbatians: A Critical Study of Gershom Scholem's Handwritten Annotations" (Hebrew), *Kabbalah* 31 (2013): 119–68.

12. Fenton, "New Collection," 342.

13. Elqayam, "*Shirot ve-Tisbbaḥot*," 152.

14. For more information about Barukhya Ruso, see Gershom Scholem, "Barukhya, the Head of the Sabbateans in Salonica" (Hebrew), in Scholem, *Studies*, 321–91; Yitzhak Molho, "On the Figure and Identity of Barukhya Ruso, aka Osman-Baba" (Hebrew), *Mabberet* 2 (1952/53): 86, 97–99.

15. Elqayam, for his part, finds it hard to decide definitively whether the manuscripts were produced by the Karakaş or the Yakubi group—but is personally more inclined to ascribe them to the Yakubis. Elqayam, "*Shirot ve-Tisbbaḥot*," 158.

16. Cengiz Sisman, "A Jewish Messiah in the Ottoman Court: Sabbatai Sevi and the Establishment of a Judeo-Islamic Community (1666–1720)" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2004), 125.

so the natural state of Osman-Baba's corpse was proof for many that his claims were futile. The Kapandjis, as a new group that did not accept Osman-Baba's messiahship or divinity, would not include Osman-Baba's poem in their sacred poetry. At the same time, the manuscript containing Osman-Baba's poem cannot be Yakubi either. The Yakubis, the first subgroup to be created among the believers, were the followers of Shabbetai's brother-in-law, Yakub Çelebi (Ya'akov Kerido), who was believed to receive Shabbetai's soul after the latter's departure. With Yakub as a rival of Osman-Baba for this status, the Yakubis also cannot be expected to include this poem.

Fenton is careful not to be too resolute when discussing the identity of the Osman-Baba mentioned in the manuscript, or the manuscript's Karakaş provenance: "It is possible that it is Berakhya Ruso (died in 1720), whose Muslim name was Osman-Baba. He was a leader of the Karakaşlar group, which left the Izmirler group, and the author of our anthology might well belong to this course."<sup>17</sup> To my mind, however, Osman-Baba was too central a figure in Karakaş theology for his poem to be included in the sacred poetry of the other two groups. The name Osman-Baba was too emblematic, thus even the assumption that there could have existed an ordinary Kapandji or Yakubi who just happened to bear the same name, Osman, and the same honorific title, "baba" (father, spiritual leader), strikes me as improbable.<sup>18</sup> After all, Osman-Baba is the first person of the Karakaş trinity, the one that represents the masculine aspect of the divinity, while Shabbetai Tsevi himself is the second person of the trinity, the feminine aspect.<sup>19</sup> Osman-Baba was already an exclusively Karakaş identity marker.

17. Fenton, "New Collection," 342.

18. It should be noted that spiritual leaders of the Bektāşī Order, headquartered in Albania, use the honorific "baba" for all their spiritual leaders/teachers. For an extensive study on this order, see John K. Birge, *The Bektāşī Order of Dervishes* (London, 1937).

19. Interview with a Karakaş Jew from Istanbul, July 2014. This is reminiscent of those Shi'ite groups, like the Nuşayris, in whose theology 'Ali takes precedence over Muḥammad. 'Ali is believed by this group to be God in the flesh; it was he, 'Ali, who created Muḥammad from his spirit, while Muḥammad created Salman. These three, then, form a trinity in which 'Ali is described as the "ma'ani" (meaning), Muḥammad is the "ism" (name) and Salman is the "bab" (door). For more information about the group, see Meir M. Bar-Asher and Aryeh Kofsky, *The Nuşayrī-'Alawī Religion: An Enquiry into its Theology and Liturgy* (Leiden, 2002). The connection between the Sabbatians and the heterodox Ottoman *sufi* orders of known 'Alewite Shi'ite provenance, such as Bektāşīs, has long been acknowledged by researchers, but thorough monographic studies on the subject were never conducted. Fenton, "New Collection," 343, n. 43, points out that the

“MELISELDA,” THE FIRST SABBATIAN SACRED ROMANCE

The romance “Meliselda”<sup>20</sup> was sanctified by Shabbetai Tsevi himself. In his famous “Derush ha-taninim” (The homily on dragons), speaking of the succession of the *partoufim* (supernatural configurations) to the lower world, Nathan of Gaza, Shabbetai’s Elijah the Prophet or John the Baptist, says: “and concerning these and similar issues AMIRAH<sup>21</sup> used to sing a holy of holies song in the vernacular.”<sup>22</sup> Gershom Scholem assumes that Nathan is referring here to the famous Judeo-Spanish romance “Meliselda.”<sup>23</sup>

Nathan does not name the song but we may safely assume that he referred to Shabbetai’s favorite song, the Spanish erotic romance “Meliselda, the Emperor’s Daughter,” to which Sabbatai used to give all sorts of mystical interpretations. It consequently acquired a great sanctity in the eyes of the Sabbatian believers, who sang it at their meetings.<sup>24</sup>

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Bektaşis also believe in a trinity, which consists of Allah, Muḥammad, and ‘Ali. For a connection between Shabbetai Tsevi himself and a Ḥalweti order *sheikh*, see Paul B. Fenton, “Shabbetai Sebi and His Muslim Contemporary Muhammad An-Niyazi,” in *Approaches to Judaism in Medieval Times*, ed. D. R. Blumenthal (Atlanta, 1988), vol. 3, 81–88.

20. The heroine of the romance goes by different names in different traditions: in Spain she is known as Melinsenda; in France as Beliselda, Melisenda, or Bellisent; among Maghreb Jewry as Benisela, Belisera, or Felimina—and among Ottoman Jews as Meliselda. See Gad Nassi, “*Meliselda*—The Sabbatean Metamorphosis of a Medieval Romance,” *Los Muestrros* 48 (2002): 38–41. For the theme of Meliselda in literature and theater, see Samuel Verses, “Meliselda Coming up from the Bath (Hebrew),” *Pe’amim* (2000/2001): 75–97. Interestingly, Yehuda Liebes saw the allegory from *Igeret magen Avraham me-erets ha-ma’arav*, in which the king sends his servant to check on the welfare of his captured bride, as a Sabbatian parallel of R. Nahman’s famous “Ma’ase me’avedat bat ha-melekh,” possibly inspired by “Meliselda.” See Yehuda Liebes, *On Sabbateism and Its Kabbalah: Collected Essays* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1995), 448.

21. A Hebrew acronym for the phrase *Adonenu Malkenu Yarum Hodo* (Our lord and king, his majesty be exalted), one of the most common ways of referring to Shabbetai Tsevi among his believers.

22. Gershom Scholem, ed., *Be-‘ikvot mashiah* (Jerusalem, 1944), 15 (translation is mine).

23. On “Meliselda” in general, see Samuel G. Armistead, “Melisenda and the Chansons de Gestes,” *La Corónica* 27.1 (1998): 55–58. On Sabbatean oicotype of “Meliselda,” see Nassi, “*Meliselda*—The Sabbatean Metamorphosis.”

24. Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Ṣevi: The Mystical Messiah, 1626–1676* (Princeton, N.J., 1973), 313.

Scholem's assumption is based on Thomas Coenen's *Ydele verwachtinge der Joden getoont in den Pesoon van Sabethai Zevi, baren laesten vrmeynden Messias* (Vain expectations of the Jews, as manifested in the image of Shabbetai Tsevi, their last false messiah, 1669). Coenen was an evangelical preacher who served the Dutch merchant community in Amsterdam. He followed the new Jewish messiah and his movement closely, largely in order to belittle Jewish messianic expectations and to advance his own Protestant Christian agenda. He recounts Shabbetai's self-appointment as messiah:<sup>25</sup>

From here he went to the ark in which the scroll of the Torah is kept, he lifted it (the scroll) in his arms and sang a Spanish song, which I shall bring in continuation, to the extent I shall be able to capture its meaning and understand its words.

To the mountain ascending, to the river while descending,  
Over there Meliselda I met, the daughter of the Emperor.  
She was coming from the bath, where she purified herself,  
Her face shining like a sword, her brows like a steely arch,  
Her lips to corals were similar and her flesh to milk alike.

This Spanish song is none other than "Meliselda." The fact that Shabbetai singled out this romance to be performed during his dramatic self-appointment in Izmir's synagogue shows to what extent it was central to his theology and to his self-image.

Evidently Shabbetai himself was comfortable using a vernacular romance to convey his messianic message. However, at the beginning of the Sabbatian revolution, some of Shabbetai's early followers had reservations concerning the consecration of such base, even feminine, songs to transmit sublime theological messages. At least one of them felt an urge to devernacularize and defeminize the song so loved by his messiah; Avraham Yakhini wrote his famous song sung to the melody of "Meliselda" using the masculine-identified language and genre of Hebrew piyyut. This adaptation was preserved in a Salonican Sabbatian manuscript and was published by Abraham Amarillo under the heading "From the Book of Hymns of R. Avraham Yakhini, concerning AMIRAH, and AMIRAH was wont to sing it to the tune of Meliselda."<sup>26</sup> Not only was the "low" language of the original exchanged for Hebrew, and the adaptation writ-

25. Thomas Coenen, *Ydele verwachtinge der Joden getoont in den Pesoon van Sabethai Zevi, baren laesten vrmeynden Messias* (Amsterdam, 1669), 56 (translation is mine).

26. Abraham Amarillo, *Sefunoth* 5 (1961), 245. Cited by Scholem in *Sabbatai Sevi*, 401.



ten following the generic norms of learned men (such as frequent reference to biblical verses, motifs and images), but even the female main character of the original song is masculinized: in Yakhini's adaptation, Meliselda becomes Melits-El-Da (the advocate with God is this), that is, Shabbetai.<sup>27</sup>

But if Yakhini's reinterpretation stemmed from his discomfort, as a learned man, with the vernacular romance, that discomfort was apparently not shared by the shapers of the Karakaş liturgy who already used the vernacular as the primary language. Some followed in the footsteps of their messiah by using traditional feminine-identified romances to transmit delicate theological messages and even furthered the genre: while Shabbetai did not change the text of "Meliselda," only ascribing a deeper metaphysical meaning to it, the later Karakaş poets altered their hypotexts more freely to fit their theology and eschatology. In the framework of Karakaş liturgy, conducted mostly in Judeo-Spanish, there was no longer anything off-putting about conveying exalted theological concepts in the vernacular. Moreover, not only are the genre, text, and language of these Karakaş adaptations of traditional Sephardic romances all gendered feminine but even the persons who represent Shabbetai are female. Shabbetai used the female character of Meliselda to communicate his self-image to the world; his followers used two female characters, Delgadina and Lucretia, to represent him and ascribe higher metaphysical meaning to his apostasy. Shabbetai's followers imitated his iconoclasm in much more radical acts, even converting to Islam, and thus an old rabbinic prejudice toward women, the vernacular, and folk literature hardly left a mark.

Still, this process of normalization was gradual. At the beginning, the use of Judeo-Spanish was more strikingly subversive, undermining the Hebrew culture of the rabbinic elite. The inclusion of "Meliselda" in Shabbetai's messianic self-appointment in 1666 was a "strange act" for the majority in his audience. With the gradual but constant consecration of Judeo-Spanish among the Karakaş, the subversiveness was blunted for the later generations of believers. Far more scandalous acts of fathers of revolutions have become natural and neutral to those born after the revolution.

#### "DELGADINA" AND "TARQUIN AND LUCRETIA":

##### INCEST AND ADULTERY AS METAPHORS FOR CONVERSION

"Delgadina" is a very famous and widespread romance, as can be deduced from the fact that the Pan-Hispanic Ballad Project / International Online

27. For a thorough analysis of Yakhini's "adaptation," see Eliezer Papo, "'Meliselda' and Its Symbolism for Sabbatai Şevi, His Inner Circle and His Later

Archive of the Pan-Hispanic Ballad: A Database of Ancient and Modern Oral Versions of Ballads contains 350 different versions of the song. In the catalogue of the Sephardic romance, Samuel Armistead mentions thirty-seven Sephardic versions,<sup>28</sup> some of them Ottoman and some North African.<sup>29</sup> The Voice of Israel archive houses eight versions.<sup>30</sup> Compared with the abundance of versions of “Delgadina” among other Sephardic Jews, the Sabbatian tradition proves to be scarce. There is one single known Sabbatian version of “Delgadina,” and it is preserved in BZ 2270. It was published by Moshe Attias in his short article on the Karakaş version of “Tarquin and Lucretia.”<sup>31</sup> The text was later published by Perez,<sup>32</sup> who was also the first to comment on this incest-themed romance as a metaphor for Shabbetai’s apostasy. I would add that Sabbatian followers used it as an apology for their own apostasy as well.<sup>33</sup> Tamar Alexander wrote extensively about this romance and related stories in Sephardic rabbinic culture without reference to the interesting twist of the Sabbatian version.<sup>34</sup> To my mind, the case of the Karakaş variant of “Delgadina” is one of the most interesting instances of a Karakaş adaptation of a traditional Sephardic romance. There is something charming about their omission of the plot (found in all known Sephardic versions), getting straight to the metaphysical message: namely, that Shabbetai’s apostasy was not a voluntary act of a mortal and weak man but rather an inevitable and indisputable divine decree. I begin with the typical Sephardic version of the romance, as noted by Attias in his *Romancero*.<sup>35</sup>

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Followers,” *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts* 35 (2016): 113–32.

28. Samuel Armistead, *El romancero Judeo-Español en el Archivo Menéndez Pidal* (Madrid, 1979), vol. 2, 136–41.

29. <http://depts.washington.edu/hisprom/ballads/>.

30. As specified by Tamar Alexander, *The Heart Is a Mirror: The Sephardic Folktale* (Detroit, 2008), 353, and n. 49.

31. Moshe Attias, “The Romance *Tarquinos y Lucrecia* in a Sabbatean Manuscript” (Hebrew), *Shevet Va’am* 3 (1958/59): 97–101.

32. Avner Prerez, *Agua, fuego i amor: Gazeles i kantes mistikos de los sabetaistas* (Ma’ale Adumim, 2006), p. xiv in Latin script and p. 45 in Hebrew script (with Hebrew translation on the preceding page).

33. For Perez’s short elaboration on the significance of the romance in the Sabbatian context, see p. iv of the Judeo-Spanish introduction, or p. 14 of the Hebrew one.

34. Alexander, *Heart Is a Mirror*, 350–60.

35. Moshe Attias, *Romancero sefaradi* (Jerusalem, 1956), song 45, p. 138.

Delgadilla

Tres hijas tiene el buen rey,  
tres hijas como la plata,

la una se llama Fatme  
la otra Šerifé se llama,  
la más chiquitica d'ellas,  
Delgadina se llamaba.

Un día estando en la meśa,  
el su padre la miraba.  
—Qué me mira, señor padre,

Qué me mira, qué me ama?

—Yo te miro Delgadilla,  
que te quiero por namorada.  
—No lo quiere el Dio del Alto,

ni mi madre la honrada,  
ser combleza de mi madre,  
madrasta de mis hermanas!

—Moricos, los mis moricos,  
los que de mi pan comíais,  
hacedme una torre alta,  
por meter a Delgadilla,  
que le dieran a comere,  
carne cruda y mal salada,  
que le dieran a beberere,  
sumo de naranja amarga.

Delgadilla

Three daughters has the good  
king,  
Three daughters as dear as  
silver,  
one is called Fatme,  
the name of the other Sherife,  
and the youngest of them [all],  
she was called Delgadilla,

One day by the table,  
her father gazed upon her.  
—Why do you stare at me, my  
lord and father?

Why do you stare as if you  
love me?

—I stare at you, Delgadilla,  
since I want you for my lover.  
—God who is in the heavens  
wills not,  
nor my mother, the honored  
one,  
that I should be my mother's  
rival,  
and [prove] stepmother to my  
sisters.

—Moors, my very own Moors,  
who my bread have eaten,  
build for me a tower high,  
where Delgadilla shall be  
placed,  
may she be given to eat,  
only raw and salted meat,  
may she be given to drink,  
only juice of bitter orange.

The plot is simple: the king has three daughters, the youngest of whom is very delicate (as implied by her name Delgadilla/Delgadina). The king desires her as his mistress. She refuses, saying that neither God in heaven nor her mother would like her to become her mother's rival and step-

mother of her sisters. The “hurt” king then throws Delgadina into a specially built prison, with a harsh dietary regimen.

The Karakaş version of the poem joins the action in medias res and is made up of only two short stanzas, thesis and antithesis. The following is my transliteration and English translation of the only known Karakaş version of “Delgadina.”

No kual Dio del sielo kiera,	God in heaven would not will
	that,
ni tal kiera ni tal fara,	Would not will that, would not
	do that,
ser komplese de mi madre,	That I should be my mother’s
	rival,
madrasta de mis ermano[s]. <sup>36</sup>	And stepmother to my
	sibling[s].
Ansi Dio del sielo kijo,	So God in heaven willed,
Ansi kijo i ansi fizo,	So willed and so has done
ser komplese de <sup>37</sup> madre,	That I should be mother’s rival,
madrasta de mis ermano[s].	And stepmother to my
	sibling[s].

Never was the difference between traditional Sephardic Judaism and the new faith of the Islamized Sabbatians presented more effectively in fewer words. While the pan-Sephardic version that served as the basis for the Karakaş one sticks to a traditional interpretation of God’s will (that is, God does not will incest), the Karakaş one follows the eschatological

36. In the thesis, as well as in the antithesis, the *ermanas* (sisters) of the original hypotext becomes *ermano* (brother), in singular. Since the noun is preceded by the possessive pronoun *mi* (mine) in plural, I have added a morpheme “s” to the noun, to make it accordant to the pronoun, just as Perez did in his own edition of the song. This type of mistake clearly shows that at least some of the songs were added to the compendium near the end of nineteenth century, when the process of language switching among the Islamized Sabbatians was almost finished, with Turkish as their new vernacular and Judeo-Spanish as their mostly sacred tongue. An anonymous contributor to the *Jewish Daily* heard already in 1932, from Salonican Sabbatean *Hakhamim*, that they regarded Judeo-Spanish as sacred, because it was the language of Shabbetai Tsevi (quoted in Sisman, “History of Naming,” 76).

37. Perez introduces here the word *mi* (my), in square brackets, but nothing in the manuscript indicates that such an addition is justified. It seems that his intervention in the text is based on his broad knowledge of the parallel Sephardic versions of the song, and not on the text at hand.

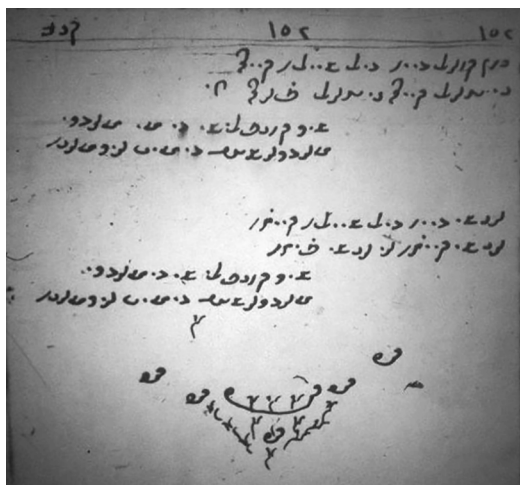


Figure 1. The only known Karakaş variant of “Delgadina,” MS BZ 2272 (song 152). Photograph courtesy of the Ben-Zvi Institute; reproduced with permission.

divine will for messianic times: *Bitulah shel Torah zehu kiyumah*, the abolishment of the Torah is its fulfillment. The king who demands Delgadina’s love cannot be the sultan, as that would be a mere rape and not incest, since the sultan is an outsider to the group. Rather, the king who demands the transgression is Israel’s (and, consequently, Shabbetai’s) heavenly father, who demands that Shabbetai, “his own flesh and blood,” fornicate with another god by apostatizing to another religion.

To represent a different kind of apostasy, the Sabbatians turned to a hypotext with a theme of another type of sexual transgression: rape rather than incest. When the king of Turkey, as opposed to God the heavenly king, demands Shabbetai’s apostasy, the story of Tarquin and Lucretia is used. Shabbetai is once again represented by a female character, this time as Lucretia.<sup>38</sup> In this ancient tale, as it was first told by the Roman historian Livy and the Greek historian Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Lucretia was raped by the son of the last Roman king, Lucius Tarquinius Superbus. The rape, and Lucretia’s consequent suicide, were the proximate cause of the revolution that overthrew the monarchy and estab-

38. The Karakaş version of this romance is preserved in one single manuscript, BZ 2272 (song 158). It was first published by Attias, who dedicated a short article to it (Attias, “The Romance *Tarquinos y Lucrecia*”), and was later republished by Perez. Perez, *Agua, fuego i amor*, xii–xiv in Latin script, and on 43 in Hebrew script (with Hebrew translation on the preceding page).

lished the Roman Republic. The scene has been a major theme in European art and literature, and it found its way to folk culture, where it is usually told in the form of romance or ballad with inevitable changes. For example, in the pan-Sephardic *romancero* Lucretia is not raped. Tarquin threatens that if she does not submit to his demand, not only will he kill her but he will also destroy her honor. He will kill a black slave after having killed her in order to claim that he caught the two *in flagranti* and that he punished both of them, acting as a protector of the honor of his vassal, Lucretia's husband. Lucretia, however, refuses the offer, saying that she prefers to die knowing that she is an honorable woman, instead of submitting to Tarquin and living in the shame of her infidelity.

I have shown elsewhere that this ancient theme was adapted by the Karakaş to convey their specific theological messages.<sup>39</sup> There is no doubt that the Karakaş version developed from the pan-Sephardic version, but it introduces a few very significant changes. Thus, for example, Lucretia's name is changed into Don Kre[e]nsia, meaning "Master of the Faith," which is one of the Sabbatian code names for their messiah. The other Karakaş change is fundamental to the plot. Unlike Lucretia in the pan-Sephardic romance, the Karakaş Don Kre[e]nsia *accedes* to the king's demand:

<p>"Si tu me los atorgarash, Serash reina enkoronada. I si no me los atorgarash, Kortare kon la mi espada. Kortare a ti Don Kre[e]nsia, I a un negro de tu kaza.</p> <p>Echara fama por Roma, Fuistes mujer desfamada."</p> <p>Don Kre[e]nsia deske lo sintiera, Luego se los atorgara.</p> <p>"Mas kiero bivir kon onra,</p>	<p>"If you will accept it, You shall be a crowned queen. But if you will not accept it, I shall cut you with my sword. I shall cut you, Don Kre[e]nsia, As well as a black [slave] from your house. [Then] I will spread a rumor in Rome, That you were a woman of ill repute."</p> <p>Don Kre[e]nsia, as she heard him, Immediately she accepted [his love].</p> <p>"I prefer to live with honor,</p>
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39. Eliezer Papo, "From Lucretia to Don Kr[e]nsia, or, Sorry, I Just Had to Convert: The Karakaş Sabbatian Oikotype of a Medieval Romance," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 24 (2016): 31 – 59.

I no morir desfamada.”	Than to die in ill repute.”
Echaronse en una kama,	They went to a single bed,
Dos puerpos i una alma.	Two bodies and one spirit.
Luego amanesio la alva,	Soon afterward the dawn rises,
Alva klara i espechada.	A clear and disgusting dawn.

Again, the Karakaş follow Shabbetai’s example, representing the messiah through a female figure (Lucretia) in order to convey one of the movement’s most important theological messages—all in a feminine genre and language. Since the gender of Tarquin the Roman king is not changed in the Karakaş version, their dalliance becomes a homosexual or queer encounter.<sup>40</sup> Lucretia’s honorable refusal (“I prefer to die with honor than to live in ill repute”) in the original pan-Sephardic romance becomes in the Karakaş version, “I prefer to live with honor than to die in ill repute,” where the honorable option, somewhat absurdly, is the messiah’s divinely decreed submission to Tarquin’s advances.

There are quite a few Sephardic romances about adulterous wives, any of which could have served the Karakaş in expressing this theological symbolism. Instead, they have converted a romance that praises a woman of valor, facilitating a rhetorical shift to praising, rather than condemning, adultery. To my mind, the reason for singling out this specific romance has to do with the names of its protagonists—specifically, with their adaptability to the world of Sabbatian symbolism. While the name of Lucretia was amended into Don Kre[e]nsia, the name of Tarkino, Rey de los Romanos, did not even need any change to fit perfectly as the description of Sultan Mehmed IV. Tarkino is easily related to Turkino (Judeo-Spanish for Turk) and the title Caesar of the Romans (or, in Ottoman Turkish: Kayser-i Rûm) was actually the highest title of the Ottoman sultans (after khalifa), ever since Mehmed’s conquest of Constantinople. The citizens of the Eastern Roman Empire called it Βασιλεία τῶν

40. For a discussion of Shabbetai as a transgender woman, see See Papo, “Meliselda.” On Shabbetai Tsevi’s sexuality in general, see Eli Shai, *Messiah of Incest: A New Uncensored History of the Sexual Element in Jewish Mystical Messianism* (Hebrew; Tel Aviv, 2002). On his homosexuality, see the unpublished paper of Daniel Yonas, “The Sexual Inclination of Shabbetai Tsevi” (Hebrew), available at [http://www.havana.org.il/academic\\_papers#c2012](http://www.havana.org.il/academic_papers#c2012). For the homosexual aspects of the thought of other Sabbatian leaders, see also Avraham Elqayam: “To Know Messiah: The Dialectics of Sexual Discourse in the Messianic Thought of Nathan of Gaza” (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 65 (1996): 637–70; and Bruce Rosenstock, “Messianism, Machismo, and ‘Marranism’: The Case of Abraham Miguel Cardoso,” in *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question*, ed. D. Boyarin, D. Itzkovitz, and A. Pellegrini (New York, 2004), 199–227.

Ῥωμαίων (Vasileiatōn Rhōmaiōn, Empire of the Romans), and as successor to its emperors, the Ottoman sultan was its new king—in Judeo-Spanish, rey de los Romanos. In the Sabbatian mind, Tarquin’s immoral demand of Lucretia to betray her husband became a powerful metaphor for the Turk’s immoral demand of Shabbetai to betray his god and his religion.

“ARMAVAN GERA LOS MOROS”: THE MISSIONARY  
COUNTEROFFENSIVE

The Karakaş romance “Armavan gera los Moros” further perpetuates the Sabbatian theology of apostasy. Preserved in only one variant,<sup>41</sup> it was published by Perez, who was also the first to identify it as an adaptation of a romance known in Iberian tradition as “La hermosa Jarifa y Abindarraez” or “Sanjuanada,” and among Hakitia speakers of Northern Morocco as “Fátima and Jarifa.”<sup>42</sup> If “Delgadina” presented Shabbetai’s apostasy as an act of divine will, and “Tarquin and Lucretia” presented it as an honorable act that introduced a new messianic dawn or era (*Luego amanecio la alva, alva klara i espechada*; Soon afterward the dawn rises, a clear and disgusting dawn), “Armavan gera los Moros” hints at what God or Shabbetai wanted to achieve with this apostasy.

The following is the transliteration of the Karakaş variant, with English translation.

Armavan gera los Moros  
alas sivdades de gear  
rebolviendo sus kavayos

salian djugar las lansas.

Hay Sherifa mi namorada!

Pendones yevan ergidos,  
lavradas<sup>43</sup> de sus amadas.

The Moors launched a war  
at the cities of dispute,  
brandishing [spears] on their  
horses,

they went out to play with their  
spears.

O, Sherifa, my beloved!

They wear upright banners  
Embroidered by their lovers.

41. It is preserved in one variant only: MS Harvard 80 (song 86). MS BZ 2272 (song 151) contains only the title, “Armavan gera los Moros,” without the actual song.

42. Perez, *Agua, fuego i amor*, xiii in Latin script, and on 41 in Hebrew script (with Hebrew translation on 40).

43. The masculine noun *pendones* (banners) is followed by two adjectives, one masculine (*ergidos*: risen) and another feminine (*lavradas*: embroidered). Perez corrects the manuscript here, without indicating that. Once again, one can see that at the time this song was added to the compendium, Judeo-Spanish already



Todo ke emuna tiene ya	Anyone who already has <i>emunab</i> [faith],
Sepasla bien agozarla	should know how to rejoice in it.
Hay [ . . . ]	O [ . . . ]
Todo ke emuna no tiene,	He who does not possess <i>emunab</i>
salga kanpo a ganarla	Should go out to the field to conquer it
Ke ayi avian dos ermanaske de amor están	Because there were two sisters there
tomada[s]. <sup>44</sup>	taken by love
Hay [ . . . ]	O [ . . . ]
La una s[']yama Fatme, la otra Sherife s[']yama.	One of them is called Fatima, the other, Sherifa is her name
Disho Fatma a Sherifa, komo kien la konsedjava.	Fatima said to Sherifa, As if giving her advice.
Hay [ . . . ]	O [ . . . ]
Ermana mia, Sherifa	My sister, Sherifa!
Ke estas de amor tomada	Who is deeply in love
Solias de tener kolores	You used to have rosy cheeks
yagora <sup>45</sup> estas demudada.	And now you look changed
Hay [ . . . ]	O [ . . . ]
Aparesvos, mi Sherifa,	Appear, my Sherifa

was not a spoken language among the Sabbatians. Consequently, the song could not have been written before the end of the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, Perez's edition of this romance contains some mistakes. Thus, for example, "todo ke emuna no tiene" (He who does not possess *emunab*) became in Perez's transliteration "[todo ke amor tenia]" (He who had a lover), in square brackets, as if it were his own addition to the text. Also, what seems to be "Todo ke emuna tiene ya / Sepasla bien agozarla" (Anyone who already has faith / should know how to rejoice in it) Perez renders as "Todo ke emuna tenia se pasa bien a gozarla" (whoever has had faith should have a good time enjoying it).

44. Perez corrects the texts here, without indicating it with square brackets, as he usually does. Grammatically, he is right, if the sentence speaks about two sisters they can only be "tomadas" (taken [by love]), plural, and not "tomada," singular.

45. Thus in the text, instead of "i agora" (and now). (Perez corrects the manuscript without indication.) The fact that Sabbatian copyist writes the syntagm the way it is pronounced, and not the way it is usually written, suggests that he does not differentiate between slang and the written language. This is an indication that Judeo-Spanish was not his native language.

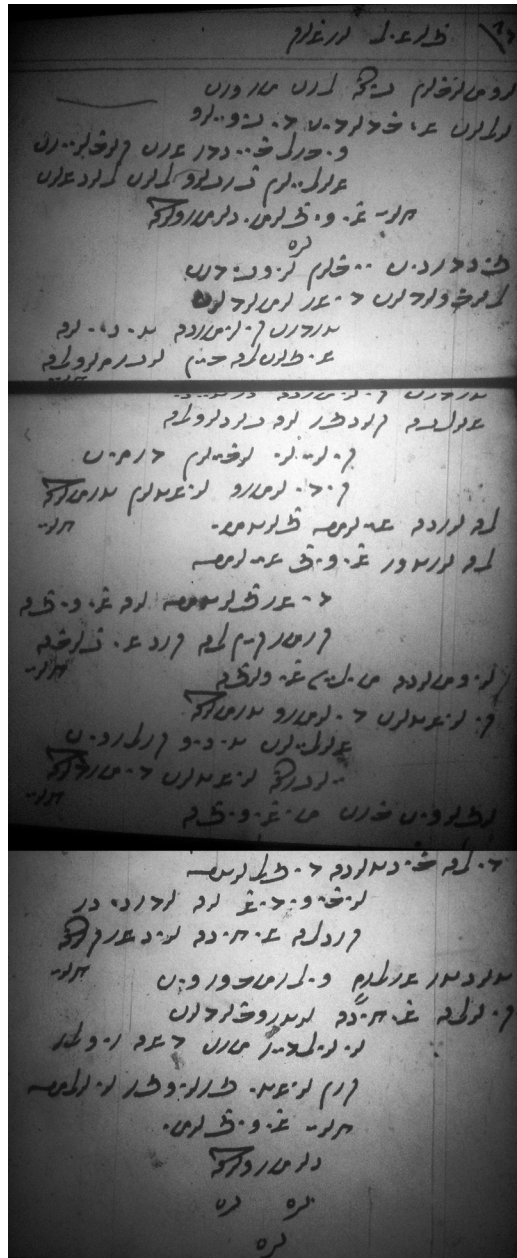


Figure 2. The only known Sabbatian variant of “Armavan gera los Moros,” MS Hebrew 80 (song 86), Houghton Library, Harvard University.

De la ventana de plata, I veredesh a Adonenu,	From the silvery window And you shall see Adonenu [our Master]
Konla Shehina ensu kara.	With the Shekhinah [Divine Presence] on his face.
Hay [ . . . ]	O [ . . . ]
Tanto suluz <sup>46</sup> relumbroses, ke a la Shehina atorva. <sup>47</sup>	His light shines so much that it dazzles the Shekhinah.
I el Dio mos desha <sup>48</sup> verlo Kon este puerpo i alma.	May God allow us to see him with this body and soul.
Hay Sherifa mi namorada!	O, my beloved Sherifa!

The plot may be summarized as follows: Moorish knights are having a tournament and two sisters, Fatima and Sherifa, are watching. Fatima invites Sherifa to appear at the golden window and see *Adonenu* (Hebrew for our master, i.e., Shabbetai Tsevi) with the Shekhinah on his face. It seems that both women, Fatima and Sherifa, are in love with the same man. In a huge jump, the two concluding verses of the song express the widespread Sabbatian belief in Shabbetai's "second coming." It is not clear whether these are the words of Fatima herself, or a prayer of the entire Karakaş community, or both—but it is clear that whoever is saying the prayer is eager to see the messiah in "this body and soul," in other words, before death and reincarnation.

Since there is no extant Ottoman Sephardic version of this romance, two other versions—one Christian and the other North African Sephardic—will give a sense of the hypotext for the Karakaş version. (See the appendix for the complete text of these two versions.) In the Iberian variant, which seems to be more complete, the Moors are having a tournament, a chivalrous competition, in which the knights are trying to impress their ladies. Among the ladies observing the men's display of virility are two former best friends, Sherifa and Fatima, who now barely speak to each other. Sherifa asks Fatima indiscreetly why she paled; to which Fatima responds that she is in love with Abindarraez, but her love is unrequited as Abindarraez has cast his eyes on Sherifa. Fatima also

46. Perez adds here the word "da"—gives—in square brackets, to make the text more logical.

47. Perez adds here suffix "va" for past continuous tense, without any apparent reason, neither in the manuscript nor in the grammatical congruency.

48. Typically for the period of gradual abandonment of the language, the subjunctive form "deshe" (may allow) is replaced by the more common indicative present tense form: "desha" (allows).

accuses Sherifa of being unfaithful to her as a friend, by answering Abindarraez's love. Sherifa then confides to her friend that her heart is already taken and that she is therefore no obstacle to her desire for Abindarraez. In the North African Judeo-Spanish development of the theme (as in the Karakaş version), Sherifa and Fatima are not friends but sisters. As in the Iberian variant, Sherifa asks Fatima why she has gone pale; Fatima tells her to open the window to see the Moorish knight Raguis, but a battle suddenly erupts and Sherifa is taken captive. Sherifa then writes a letter to the "king of the Christianities" (her supposed lover) and he promises a great reward to anyone who would bring Sherifa back.

While the Karakaş variant uses the same war terminology (Armavan gera los Moros... / The Moors launched a war . . . ) as the Moroccan Sephardic one (Armárase una grande guerra / A great war was launched), it is obvious that it speaks of a chivalry tournament (rebolviendo sus kavayos, salian djugar las lansas/brandishing [spears] on their horses, they went out to play with their spears) like the Iberian variant (Hazen gran fiesta los moros, por la vega de Granada, revolviendo sus cavallos, jugando van de las lanças / The Moors organize a great fair in the Vega de Granada, stirring their horses, brandishing their spears). Likewise, the Karakaş verses "Todo ke emuna tiene ya / Sepasla bien agozarla / Hay Sherifa mi namorada! / Todo ke emuna no tiene, / Salga kanpo a ganarla" (Anyone who already has *emunab* / Should know how to rejoice in it / He who does not possess *emunab* / Should go out to the field to conquer it" does not mention Moors, but they are thematically connected to them since they are evidently parallel to the following verses of the Iberian version: "El moro que amores tiene / alli bien se señalava / y el que amores no tenia / alli no escaramuçava" (The Moor who has a lover / there was seen in good light / and he who did not have one / would not cause a skirmish).

The Moors of the Karakaş version represent the Muslim Ottoman Turks, whom it depicts as waging war against some cities, but these wars and battles are their way of competing with each other and impressing their female lovers. Two ladies are mentioned by name: Fatima and Sherifa. Just as the romance "Tarquin and Lucretia" was chosen because of the manipulability of the names of its main characters, in this case too, the hypotext was picked due to the symbolic power and meaning of the names Fatima and Sherifa in Islamic culture. Fatima is the youngest daughter of the prophet of Islam, Muḥammad, and his wife Khadijah, and the only one who gave him descendants. She was the wife of 'Ali, Muḥammad's cousin and follower, and mother of Ḥasan and Ḥusain. She is the most important (in Sunni) or the only (in Shi'ite theology) female

member of Muhammad's household. Fatima is considered a role model for all Muslim women and is the object of great veneration, love, and respect throughout the Muslim world. As for Sherifa, it is the feminine variant of the Arabic traditional honorific *sharif*, meaning "noble" or "highborn." The masculine plural of the adjective, *ashraf*, denotes the direct bloodline descended from Muhammad by way of Fatima.<sup>49</sup>

In the Karakaş adaptation, both of these central Muslim female figures are in love with Shabbetai Tsevi. However, instead of confronting her rival, Fatima acts as a matchmaker. First, she asserts that Sherifa is in love ("ke estas de amor tomada"), and that her love is the reason for her paleness ("solias tener kolores i agora estas demudada"). Then Fatima makes Sherifa face her love ("aparesvos mi Sherifa, de la ventana de plata / i veredesh a Adonenu kon la Shehina en su kara"). Fatima does not refer to Shabbetai by his name, or by the title with which Jewish or Muslim nonbelievers referred to him. Interestingly, she instead uses the term "master," used by the believers only. Even more significantly, she uses the plural form *Adonenu*—"our master," thus indicating that they both believe in him. The choice of a romance that contains these names is anything but arbitrary. Even if it does not express any reality (for example, the sultan's mother or some other important female figures of the harem converting to Sabbatian faith), it certainly expresses the most ardent—and secret—Sabbatian hopes. These hopes gave meaning retroactively to the conversion, both Shabbetai's and their own. The apostasy was God's will, not out of some heavenly caprice, impenetrable and incomprehensible to mortals—but rather because of a logical eschatological plan. The Islamized Sabbatians were to bring about a change of heart in Islam, converting the Ottoman Muslim elite (*ashraf*) into the Sabbatian faith and rectifying *kelipat Yishma'el*—retrieving the divine sparks that are trapped in the earthly shells of Islam.<sup>50</sup> This way they would set the stage

49. For political reasons, during the Abbasid period the term was applied to all the Hashemites (members of Muhammad's clan within the Kuraysh tribe), whether they were Muhammad's direct descendants or descendants of Muhammad's uncles, such as Al-'Abbas ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib, whose descendants ruled the Abbasid caliphate. During the Fatimid Dynasty, the use of the term was restricted solely to the descendants of Fatima's sons, Hasan and Husain. This restriction remained in force even after Egypt became Sunni again under the Ayyubids. Sometimes, further distinctions are created in Sunni Islam, and the honorifics *sharif/sharifa/ashraf* are used to describe only the descendants of 'Ali's elder son, Hasan, while the descendants of 'Ali's younger son Husain are denoted by the honorific title *sayyid/sayyida/sadab*.

50. According to the teachings of the Zohar, the Shekhinah is separated from the sefirot because of man's sins. This causes "sparks of holiness" to be exiled in the *kelipot* (shells). Jewish observance, according to this understanding, is aimed

for Shabbetai's second coming, this time as the king of the converted Ottoman elite.

If the consecrated Sabbatian versions of "Delgadina" and "Tarquin and Lucretia" are Sabbatian apologetics, dedicated to the justification of Sabbatian apostasy, the consecrated Sabbatian version of "Armavan gera los Moros" is much more than that. Here the sacred Sabbatian *romancero* switches from defensive to offensive mode. Instead of explaining the messiah's conversion to Islam, it proclaims the Sabbatian faith in the imminent conversion of the Ottoman Islamic elite to Sabbatian messianism. This romance represents the peak of Sabbatian audacity, as this small group of followers of an unwilling Jewish convert to Islam proclaims the imminent counterattack of its messiah, who will convert the sultan and his court. Then, unlike Shabbetai's own unwilling, external, and instrumental conversion, the conversion of the Ottoman elite will be genuine, wholehearted, and definitive.

"ḤAKHAMIM VAN AYI IRANDO/AYRANDO":  
BETWEEN THE FIRST (MELANCHOLIC) AND THE SECOND  
(GLORIOUS) APPEARANCE OF THE MESSIAH

This belief in Shabbetai's successful second coming also affected the way the later Sabbatian sacred romances presented his first encounter with the sultan. Thus, the fifth and last Karakaş romance, "Ḥakhamim van ayi irando/ayrando" (Rabbis go there annoyed), depicts Shabbetai's meeting with Meḥmed V in an optimistic tone that is totally discordant with non-Sabbatian, nonsacred history. This is the only known Sabbatian sacred romance that was not based on a previously existent folk song but rather invented from scratch by Sabbatians. It has been published several times but not always recognized as a romance,<sup>51</sup> and it is preserved in two

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at elevating the sparks back to their divine source. When all the sparks are freed from the *kelipot*, depriving them of their vitality, the messianic era begins.

51. This romance was preserved in two manuscripts, BZ 2271 (song 17) and BZ 2272 (song 116). Attias was the first to recognize "Ḥakhamim van airando" as a romance and to publish the version from BZ 2271. Moshe Attias, "A Sabbatean Romansa" (Hebrew), *Heḏ ba-Mizrah* 2/9 (1953/54): 8. He also published it in his *Romancero*, 177–8 (song 76). In both places he omitted the refrain, repeated unequivocally after every verse in both manuscripts: "Sh[abetay] Ts[evi], mal-kenu, kela Shehina es el / I por bien es, por bien de nuestro rey [Ysrael in MS BZ 2272], i por bien" (Sh[abetay] Ts[evi], our King, who is the Shekhinah / It is for benefit, for benefit of our King [Israel in MS BZ 2272], for benefit). Perez republished Attias's version, without the refrain. Perez, *Agua, fuego i amor*, xiv in Latin script/45 in Hebrew script (with Hebrew translation on the preceding page). Elena Romero published the version that appears in BZ 2272. Elena Romero, *Entre dos (o más) fuegos: Fuentes poéticas para la historia de los sefardíes de los*

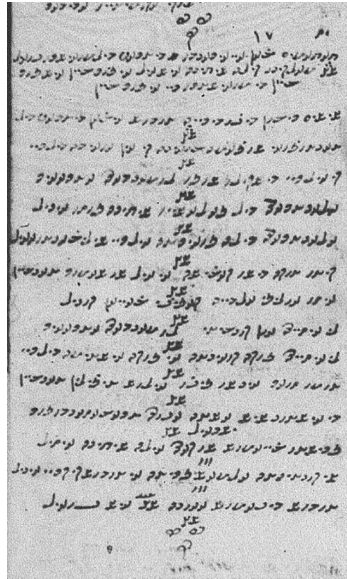


Figure 3 “Ḥahamim van ayi irando,” MS BZ 2271 (song 17). Photograph courtesy of the Ben-Zvi Institute; reproduced with permission.

manuscripts with slight differences in the opening line, hence “ayi irando” and “ayrando” as alternative names.<sup>52</sup>

The following is the transliteration of MS BZ 2271, with English translation. Since the differences between the two versions are very minor (the aforementioned variation in the opening line and the omission of a single verse), I reproduce only the more complete version here, noting differences in footnotes.

Ḥahamim van ayi irando	Rabbis go there, annoyed
Ḥahamim van ayi irando <sup>53</sup>	Rabbis go there, annoyed,
detras del	behind

*Balcanes* (Madrid, 2008). Fenton republished the same version as Attias, categorizing it as a “historical song” rather than a romance and restoring the refrain. Fenton, “New Collection,” 344.

52. The words *ayi* (there) and *irando* (annoyed) are combined into one single word, *ayrando*, in MS BZ 2272. Looking only at this manuscript, Romero proposed that the verb might be related to the Turkish noun *gayret* (endeavor), rather than the gerund of the verb *irar* (anger, irritate).

53. As noted above, BZ 2272 has *ayrando* in place of *ayi irando*.

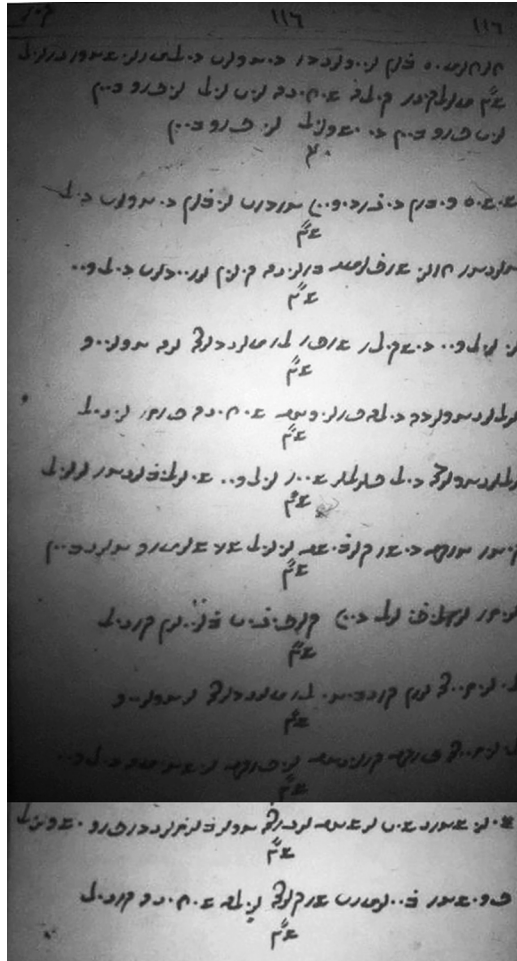


Figure 4. “Hahamim van ayrando,” MS BZ 2272 (song 116). Photographs courtesy of the Ben-Zvi Institute; reproduced with permission.

muestro Goel,	our Redeemer
Sh[abbetai] Ts[evi], malkenu,	Sh[abbetai] Ts[evi], our King,
kela Shehina	who is the
es el	Shekhinah
I por bien es, por bien de	It is for the good, for the good
muestro rey,	of our King,
I por bien.	and for the good.



Shishim ribon de Djuderiya, todos ivan detras de el, Sh[abbetai] . . .	Six hundred thousand Jews, they all go following him, Sh[abbetai] . . .
Tanto fue <sup>54</sup> su fama buena, que en oyida del rey, Sh[abbetai] . . . <sup>55</sup>	So great was his fame that it [came to the] ears of the king, Sh[abbetai] . . .
Ke <sup>56</sup> el rey de skelo supo, lo mandara a traer, Sh[abbetai] . . .	That the moment the king knew he sent for him, Sh[abbetai] . . .
Ala[']ntrada de la puerta Shehina pozo enel, Sh[abbetai] . . .	At the entrance of the gate, the Shekhinah rested on him, Sh[abbetai] . . .
Ala[']ntrada del palasyo, el rey se levanto ael,  Sh[abbetai] . . .	At the entrance to the palace, the king stood up in front of him,  Sh[abbetai] . . .
Kito toka de su kavesa, i el su samur tanbien,  Sh[abbetai] . . .	He took the turban of his [own] head and the coat of sable's fur as well,  Sh[abbetai] . . .
Izo ulife aldiya, kapidji[s] <sup>57</sup> vayan kon el,  Sh[abbetai] . . .	He gave him a daily wage, and the gate openers to go ahead of him,  Sh[abbetai] . . .
Le iziera un konvite, lo mandara a traer, Sh[abbetai] . . .	He made him a banquet and sent for him, Sh[abbetai] . . .
I le iziera poka kuenta, i poka estima del rey,	But he [Shabbetai] paid him little attention and had little respect for the king,

54. BZ 2272 has *hue* in place of *fue*.

55. BZ 2272 omits this refrain.

56. BZ 2272 has *I* in place of *Ke*.

57. Here BZ 2272 is grammatically more congruent. The noun *kapidji* (gate opener) needs to be plural in order to fit the plural form of the verb *ir* (to go), *vayan* (should go). As already stated, this sort of mistake is not typical for native speakers of any language, and its numerosity and recurrence in the same places, in the same songs, in different manuscripts only proves that some materials were added to these compendia at the end of the nineteenth century, when Judeo-

Sh[abbetai] . . .	Sh[abbetai] . . .
Tomo Zoar en su pecho, i los	He took Zohar onto his chest
tefilin tambien, <sup>58</sup>	and the phylacteries tas well,
Sh[abbetai] . . .	Sh[abbetai] . . .
De estonses asta agora	Ever since then and until now,
travajando por Yisrael,	[he is] working for Israel,
Sh[abbetai] . . .	Sh[abbetai] . . .
Presto veyamos su kara, i la	May we swiftly see his
Shehina esel,	countenance, he is the
	Shekkinah,
Sh[abbetai] . . .	Sh[abbetai] . . .
Si kontenta almas preta[s] <sup>59</sup> i	Yes, he consoles the blackened
todos ke	souls, and all those who
kreye[n] <sup>60</sup> enel,	believe in him,
Sh[abbetai] . . .	Sh[abbetai] . . .
Todos digamos auna: Sabet[ay]	Let's all say in one voice:
Şev[i] es goel,	Shabbetai Tsevi is the
	redeemer,
Sh[abbetai] . . .	Sh[abbetai] . . .

Unlike the Karakaş versions of “Delgadina” and “Tarquin and Lucretia,” which speak about Shabbetai’s apostasy indirectly but truthfully, stressing its violent and coercive side by representing it via powerful images of enforced incest and adultery under threat of death, this Karakaş romance speaks of the meeting between Mehmed IV and Shabbetai Tsevi directly but ignores the difficult aspects of the apostasy. In this version of events, the king never asked Shabbetai to convert to Islam, certainly not under threat of death. If he gave him a turban, it was as a token of the king’s great appreciation. That is why he also gave him his royal coat of sable fur. Unfortunately, this appreciation was not mutual. While the

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Spanish had already become the sacred language of the Karakaş community. See also notes 37, 47, and 48 above.

58. BZ 2272 omits this verse.

59. Again, BZ 2272 is more grammatically congruent. The adjective *preta* (black) needs to be in the plural in order to fit the plural noun *almas* (souls). See note 57 above.

60. Again, BZ 2272 brings here a grammatically more congruent version. The verb *kreyer* (to believe) needs to appear here in third-person plural (*kreyen*), and not in third-person singular (*kreye*), as the noun *todos* (all those) is in the plural. See note 57 above.

king was enchanted by Shabbetai's fame and personality, Shabbetai did not share the royal enthusiasm ("I le iziera poka kuenta, i poka estima del rey"/ But he [Shabbetai] paid him little attention and had little respect for the king). As if in one of his melancholic periods, Shabbetai acted disconnected, totally absorbed into mystical teachings ("tomo Zoar en su pecho"/he took Zohar onto his chest) and divine percepts ("i los tefilin tambien"/the phylacteries as well) of Judaism. This romance omits not only Shabbetai's conversion but also his death. The song leaves the listener with the impression that Shabbetai stayed at the sultan's court (or, maybe, was taken to heaven), and continued working for the good of Israel. Like Jesus, Shabbetai will console the blackened souls and all those who believe in him only when he appears for the second time—in heavenly glory as the long-awaited redeemer.

#### CONCLUSION

Shabbetai Tsevi himself used a female personality (Meliselda), a feminine literary genre (the romance), and a language associated with femininity (the vernacular, Judeo-Spanish) to disseminate his metaphysical self-conception as the Shekhinah,<sup>61</sup> the divine bride. At least one of his early followers, Avraham Yakhini, devernacularized and defeminized the song so loved by his messiah by offering a Hebrew substitute on same theme, sung with the same melody. However, later Sabbatians, at least those of the Karakaş group, no longer shared whatever concerns Yakhini had. They proceeded to adapt traditional vernacular Sephardic romances to Sabbatian theology, ascribing them a new symbolic meaning just as their messiah himself had.

On at least two occasions, female protagonists of traditional romances are used to stand for Shabbetai and represent him. In "Delgadina," the shortened Karakaş version does not actually mention her by name, but this very widespread popular treatment of the incest theme is used to depict Shabbetai's apostasy (and the subsequent apostasy of his faithful followers). Just as Delgadina's father asked her to break a taboo to sleep with him, Shabbetai's "heavenly groom," the "king of the universe," asks him to cross the borders of the acceptable and convert to another faith. In the case of "Tarquin and Lucretia," Lucretia's name is changed into a male one, Don Kre[e]nsia, but the character nevertheless continues to play a female role. Tarkino Rey de los Romanos, who represents the Turk, King of the (Eastern) Romans, asks Don Kre[e]nsia to betray his

61. See Papo, "Meliselda," 130.

spouse and sleep with him to avoid a shameful death, and he willingly does so—bringing a new (messianic) dawn.

In the Karakaş version of “La hermosa Jarifa y Abindarraez” / “Sanjuanada” / “Fátima and Jarifa,” the Sabbatian messiah is not represented by a female protagonist of the original romance—but it is reported that his light was so shining that it dazzled the Shekhinah. If in the Zohar and Lurianic Kabbalah the Shekhinah represents the female aspect of divinity, in Karakaş theology it represents Shabbetai, who is the female aspect of the divine. The last known Sabbatian romance, “Ḥakhamim van ayi irando/ayrando,” refers explicitly to “Shabbetai Tsevi, our king, who is the Shekhinah.” The same way Jesus’s followers transformed him from a “son of man” into a “son of God” over time,<sup>62</sup> Shabbetai was also seen as divine by his most ardent followers—yet, interestingly, he was not treated as the son of God or the embodiment of divinity’s masculine side. Rather, they saw him as the embodiment of the godhead’s feminine aspect. This is the role he wished for himself, and this is the role his Karakaş followers gladly gave him.

This essay has argued that with the sacred romance “Armavan gera los Moros,” the Sabbatian message enters an offensive mode, shifting from a defense of the apparently problematic apostasy to a vision of the widespread conversion of the Muslim Ottoman elite. In accordance with this polemical counterattack, “Ḥakhamim van ayi irando/ayrando” offers an even more optimistic depiction, in which Shabbetai’s conversion and death are not mentioned, and it is implied instead that the sultan’s esteem for the supposed messiah is ongoing, as Shabbetai continues to work for the good of Israel.

#### APPENDIX

Two additional versions of the romance that served as a hypotext for “Armavan gera los Moros”: the Christian Iberian “La hermosa Jarifa y Abindarraez”<sup>63</sup> and the North African Sephardic “Fátima and Jarifa.”<sup>64</sup>

La hermosa Jarifa y  
Abindarraez

Fátima and Jarifa

La mañana de Sant Juan

Estas las dos hermanas

62. As in the Catholic *Credo*, which calls him the “true God of true God, begotten, not made, of one essence with the Father; by Whom all things were made.”

63. Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, “Apéndices y suplemento a la Primavera y flor de romances de Wolf y Hoffmann,” *Antología de poetas líricos castellanos* (Santander, 1945), 285–86.

64. Armistead, *Romancero judeo-español*, 387, 393, 358.

al tiempo que alboreava  
hazen gran fiesta los moros  
por la vega de Granada;  
revolviendo sus caballos  
jugando van de las lanças,  
ricos pendones en ellas  
labrados por sus amadas,  
ricas aljubas vestidas  
de seda y oro labradas.  
El moro que amores tiene  
alli bien se señalava

y el que amores no tenia  
alli no escaramuçava.  
Miranlos las damas moras  
de las torres de Alhambra;  
entre las quales los miran  
dos de amor mas lastimadas:  
la una llaman Jarifa  
la otra Fatima se llama;  
la una tiene hermosura,  
la otra hermosura y gracia.  
Solian ser muy amigas  
aunque agora no se hablan.  
Jarifa como es discreta  
a Fatima preguntava:  
“Ay Fatima, hermana mia  
como estas de amor llagada,  
que agora color no tienes  
y otras vezes te sobrava?”  
Fatima no le responde,  
a dissimular provava,

pero en verse assi importuna  
respondió algo turbada:  
“Importuna eres Jarifa  
aunque discreta, —pesada,  
en querer saber de mi  
lo que a mi mesma negava;  
y pues que saber lo quieres  
assomate a essa ventana,

que se quieren y se aman  
como dos cuerpodh en un alma.  
La una se yama Fatima,  
la otra Sharifa se yama.  
Sharifa, como 's discreta,  
a su hermana preguntara:  
“¿Qué tienes tú, hermana mía?  
¿Qué tienes que no me hablas,  
Siendo que siempre ha sido  
dos cuerpodh en un alma?  
Parese que estás de amor  
tocada.”

—“Ahora que me preguntas,  
de ti no puedo guardar nada.  
Asómate a 'sa ventana,  
asómate a 'sa saliela.  
Verás morito Raguis,  
tocando la vigüela.”  
—Sharifa, como 's discreta,  
aomóse a la ventana.  
Vio morito y mora  
tocando la vigüela.  
Armárase una grande guerra,  
a Sharifa cautivaran.  
Se la meten en cárseles honda  
y de escuridades.  
Sharifa qu' así se vio:  
—“¿Si se aljadra aquí alguno,  
que de mí tenga manzzía,  
que yeven a esta carta  
al rey de la[s] cristiandades,  
que me encuentro en una cársel  
honda y de  
escuridades.”

—El rey, como lo supo,  
se sentara a yorares.  
—“¿Quién será y quién será  
Que me yevan estas carta[s]  
Sharifa la mi namorada.  
Si la cautivaron moros,  
la tomarán por esclava.