

**TIJU JUSU AND OTHER SEPHARDIC CHARACTERS –
AN IMAGE OF GENERATIONS
AND THEIR LANGUAGE IN THE PROSE OF MOAFI**

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Socio-historical and literary notes

According to the research of Muhamed Nezirović (1992: 608), the author using the nickname Moafi was Moise Finci, son of Avram, born in Sarajevo in 1903. His family probably had its roots in Šibenik (present-day Croatia). He studied architecture in Rome and Milano, he also lived in Split for some time. It is possible that in 1941 he lived in Sarajevo again, from where he was taken to a concentration camp in the same year.

Nowadays rare traces of Moafi lead only to his prose samples. The collection of his texts can be found in two Jewish weeklies published in Sarajevo before 1941, among many other samples of literature of local Jewish authors from Bosnia. Moafi published seven texts in *Jevrejski život* (Jewish Life) in 1927 and two in *Jevrejski glas* (Jewish Voice) in 1933.¹ After that he trailed off as an author.

Before I briefly present some of the aspects of Moafi's writing, it is worth mentioning a few facts about the sources of the texts. *Jevrejski život* was a bilingual periodical of the Sephardi Movement in Bosnia. According to the ideology of the movement the aim was to preserve Sephardic culture and foster the Judeo-Spanish language. For this reason, during the first year the editors of the weekly decided to publish it in Judeo-Spanish. Furthermore, as the editors wrote, there were not so many Sephardim in Sarajevo who spoke Serbo-Croatian at that time, so Judeo-Spanish columns benefited the many readers whose primary language was Judeo-Spanish. This policy of the magazine was stated in the essay "Muestras publikasjones en espanjol":

¹ Moafi's published stories: "Micva" [Mitzva] (JŽ 137), "Oh-oh-oh, el pastel" [Oh-oh-oh pastry] (JŽ 151), "Un enkontro" [A Meeting] (JŽ 151), "Dolores" [Suffering] (JŽ 156), "Atras tiempos" [Past Times] (JŽ 158), "Bavažadas" [Stupidities] (JŽ 163), "Una letra no akavada" [An Unfinished Letter] (JŽ 176), "Mal de mučos" [Misery of Many] (JŽ 178), "Konosimjentos" [Acquaintances] (JG 14-15), "Ton-film" [Sound Film] (JG 18).

La Redaksjon del “Jevrejski život” tomo una mueva dečizjon. Una novita, kual a en la sivdat de Sarajevo komo i en la Provinsja i espesjalmente de la Serbia del Sud mas ke seguro se va resivir kon la simpatia de parte de los meldadores del nuestro organo: muestras publikasjones en espanjol, ke es trezladados i lavoros originales. [...] Los originales de espanjol kualos seguro kon tiempo van apareser i van estar bien meldados, la Redaksjon los va mas ke todo presiar i protežar.² (Muestras publikasjones en espanjol, 1924: 2)

In line with the guidelines of the policy of the weekly, many Judeo-Spanish texts were published: journalistic writings, essays, samples of Judeo-Spanish folklore, translations from many languages and, of course, examples of the new original Sephardic literature in Bosnia, as Krinka Vidaković-Petrov (1986: 93) calls it. This literature included Moafi’s prose, as well as pieces by Laura Papo Bohoreta, Avram Romano Buki, Benjamin Pinto and many others. As Nezirović (1992: 566) wrote, the cooperation of the magazine with the local authors was a huge success – they were indeed widely read. *Jevrejski život* was thus like other, older Jewish magazines in the former Ottoman Empire (such as *El Tiempo* of Constantinople and the Bosnian *La Alvorada* published in Sarajevo at the beginning of the twentieth century). To paraphrase Sarah Abrevaya Stein (2004: 61), who wrote about *El Tiempo* but could also be writing about *Jevrejski život*, it

[...] not only created new genres of texts, but also envisioned new kinds of Ladino readers. [...] [It] was designed to reach all readers of Ladino, regardless of age, gender, religious status, educational background, class or professional standing.

The publication of the first issue of *Jevrejski glas* in 1928 symbolically put an end to a so-called Sarajevo conflict, the collision of interests of two local Jewish fractions: the followers of Zionism and the followers of the Sephardi Movement or the local Sephardi Circle.³ In spite of being a journalistic organ of the united Sephardi-Ashkenazi local Jewish community,

² “The editorial board of *Jevrejski život* made a new decision. It is a novelty which in the city of Sarajevo, as well as in the province and especially in South Serbia will surely be well received by the readers of our magazine: our publications in Spanish, which are translated texts, as well as original ones. [...] The original Spanish texts which will surely appear with time and which are going to be widely read, will be especially cherished and promoted by the editors in the first place.” All Judeo-Spanish quotes are translated into English by the author of the present paper.

³ More information about the Sarajevo conflict and its ideological and organizational issues is included in Loker (1997).

Jevrejski glas did not neglect efforts to foster specifically Sephardi tradition and the Judeo-Spanish language during the period of an inevitable language shift among the Sephardi citizens of Bosnia.

In 1931, the editors of the weekly (printed mostly in Serbo-Croatian) started the column “Para noče de šabat” and encouraged the readers to create its content:

De oj adelantre, en kada numero de nuestra gazeta vamos trajar akontesimientos, anekdotas, dialogos, proverbios etc. de nuestra vida. Kon esto no keremos azer solo pasatiempo a nuestros lektores i daldes okazion para reir, sino konservar en eskrita el esperitu de muestras maales, muestra lingua, nuestras ekspresiones i modo de pensar, en kurto dičo nuestro folklor. En esteso tiempo jamamos a todos nuestros lektores de ajudarnos en este ečo.⁴ (Para noče de šabat, 1931: 7)

It seems that the significant goal of publishing Judeo-Spanish texts in *Jevrejski glas* (unlike in the case of *Jevrejski život*) was a kind of a local strategy for preserving the Judeo-Spanish tradition.

The years between World War I and 1941 were a period of the assimilation of most Bosnian Sephardic Jews, their participation in public life and, in linguistic terms, of bilingualism when the Serbo-Croatian language was acquired. At that time in the social life of the Bosnian Sephardim we can see the impact of several oppositions: older, traditional generations vs. the younger generation with a new, acculturated way of life; the shock of facing the social and cultural changes vs. an easy and natural adaptation to the new conditions. These oppositions are illustrated in almost every prose sample published in *Jevrejski život* and *Jevrejski glas*, including Moafi’s texts. Nezirović (1992: 612) distinguishes Moafi’s writing from the rest because it



⁴ “Starting from today, we will present the events, anecdotes, dialogs, proverbs, etc., from our life in every issue of our weekly. In this way we want to bring not only entertainment for our readers and make them laugh, but also to preserve in writing the spirit of our *maales* (neighbourhoods), our language, our expressions and way of thinking – in short, our folklore. At the same time, we encourage our readers to support us in achieving this goal.”

presents those issues without analysing them, but rather using a large dose of humour. I agree that there are many examples of comic qualities in Moafi's short stories and sketches of everyday Bosnian Sephardic life. Some of them, however, show concern and deeper reflections as well.

Moafi created short stories and sketches with a limited number of characters, mostly two or three, but they are expressive and they have their own particular attitudes. Based on Moafi's characters the stories can be divided into three groups. There are stories that present:

- 1) **only older generations living a traditional life within the confines of the *mahale*:** "Oh-oh-oh, el pastel" (*tija* Bunora,⁵ *tija* Rifka), "Atras tiempos" (Mošu di *tija* Flor and *tija* Simhuleta), "Mal de mučos" (*tiju* Judači and Hanuča la Hadujana);
- 2) **only younger generations:** "Konosimjentos" (two nameless male characters), "Bavažadas" (Blankor and her husband Jaku);
- 3) **the clash of the older generation and the younger generation and their attitudes:** "Un enkontro" (*tiju* Jusu and a young man), "Dolores" (Ham Josef and his son Bohor), "Una letra no akavada" (*tija* Klaruča and a boy), "Micva" (*tiju* Jusu, *tija* Renuča and a young man), "Tonfilm" (*tiju* Jaku and his daughters).

The paper mostly elaborates on the image of the older generations and their coexistence with younger ones. All of the characters in the first group are indeed presented with a dose of humour, but also with care and sentiment. They all lead a simple family life, limited by a small community of *mahale* residents and the rules of social and religious life are very important to them. The opinions of neighbours and the rabbis are crucial, as we can read:

No es este ečo para un Ďidjo [...] nos kastigan los sielos [...] no se komo los hahamim no le dišeron ainda nada i a la fina kale pensar lavoro no deša la santa lej nuestra a un Ďidjo.⁶ (Moafi, 1927h: 3)

What this small community's way of life shows is that every person plays his or her particular role or has a particular place or function (e.g., reads newspapers to others, writes letters, brings news on a regular basis or is

⁵ The spelling of the characters' names is in accordance with the original texts.

⁶ "This is not an occupation for a Jew [...] Heaven will punish us [...] I do not know how it is possible that the hahamim have not said anything so far, one has to have in mind that this job is not allowed by our sacred law."

simply a wife/husband of a particular person, well-known in the community).⁷ This is also reflected in the nicknames given by the neighbours:

[...] *tiju* Shakučo venija siempre kon notisias nuevas i por esto lo jamavan “el telefono.” Dami muštuluk! Ja gritava alimpiandose las eskapras antes de entrar en kaza.⁸ (Moafi, 1927b: 1)

Not all the nicknames given to the characters in the stories were accepted by them:

Tiju Judači tiene una mužer i a esta mužer [...] le dieron dulce nombre Hanuča [...] sino kale siempre ke digas Hanuča la Hadujana. Guaj si eja ti sjente!⁹ (Moafi, 1927h: 3)

The members of the community are in close relations and live in frames of repetitive rituals which set the rhythm of days, weeks and years:

Todos asperavan kon grande dispasensja ke venga Purim para sentir la megila por boka de Mošu [...] Noče de alhat abašava onde Mošu de tja Flor todo el vezinado porke les melde la gazeta [...] Entera semana despues se azijan komentarios a la lektura de noče de alhat.¹⁰ (Moafi, 1927e: 3)

In his texts Moafi tends to underline that various aspects of the past (such as social life, respect for tradition, knowledge and various skills) have more value than the present ones and often present times do not compare to the past:

⁷ Similar dialogues in Judeo-Spanish depicting the clash between the sexes, members of the older and younger generations, and a nostalgia for the traditional Sephardic lifestyle appeared in the series entitled “*Tío Ezrá i su mujer Benuta*” and “*Tío Bohor i su mujer Djamila*,” published in several Judeo-Spanish periodicals in inter-war Salonika (Bunis, 1999). Perhaps the Judeo-Spanish dialogues published in the Jewish press of Sarajevo served as a model for them.

⁸ “[...] *Tiju* Shakučo always came with some news and this is why he was called ‘El Telefono.’ Give me a tip for good news! He shouted cleaning his shoes before he entered a house.”

⁹ “*Tiju* Judači has a wife and she was given a sweet name Hanuča [...] but you always have to call her Hanuča la Hadujana (wife of the icon seller). Woe betide anyone she hears! [call her that].”

¹⁰ “Everybody could not wait for Purim to hear megila from Mošu’s lips [...] On a Sunday night all the neighbours came to Mošu de *tija* Flor, because he read newspapers for them [...] They commented on the reading of the Sunday night all the following week.”

Mošu de tija Flor era grande meldador. Aj vježos ke ajinda lo rikordan i dizen ke pokos eran los ke podijan ajinda en akel tiempo metersi a – para kun el. Por oj no premi ni avlar.¹¹ (Moafi, 1927e: 3)

The image of older married couples and Sephardi women draw our attention as well: women are very emotional, much more than their men, and of course their goal is to care for the family. Their conversations deal with everyday life, cooking, and the domestic scene. Women experience both positive and negative events very intensely. For example, Bunača who burnt her pastry thought that she did not perform satisfactorily as a wife:

[...] i kon boz de joro enpeso komo era su uzo: Ah pikadora mi alma! Ja se kimu [el pastel]. Viras la ravja del miju! Estu li es la muerti čika [...].¹² (Moafi, 1927b: 1)

But still, it was a greater failure when her husband could not see her success as a hostess when she finally baked a decent pastry:

A Bunača ja le kajo el sielo en la kavesa de sentir ke el marido no viene, despues de tanta pena i tanto lavoro, đusto oj kuando el mazal le ayudo [...] y tapandose la kara kon las manos kajo en el minder i se matjo a jorar de alma i de korason.¹³ (Moafi, 1927b: 2)

Two stories (“Konosimjentos” and “Bavažadadas”) that present the everyday life of the younger generation are images full of situation and language humour. One of the stories tells about a coincidental meeting of two men and the other depicts a serious conflict of a married couple caused by the husband’s preference for a long moustache, regardless of his wife’s opinion.

The third type of story in which the older generation and the younger generation meet is the most interesting aspect of Moafi’s prose. And again – some of the images and confrontations are of a comic character, but there are also texts with deep, serious reflections. A meeting of two

¹¹ “Mošu de tija Flor was a great reader. There are old people who still remember and say that even in past times only a few could compare to him. Not to mention nowadays.”

¹² “[...] and she started crying as she used to: Oh, my sinful soul! The pastry has burnt! I am going to see the fury of my husband! It is like a small death for me [...].”

¹³ “The heavens fell down on Bunača’s head when she heard that her husband would not come, after all these efforts and work, just today when fortune helped her [...] She covered her face with her hands, lay down on a *minder* [cushion] and started to cry with all her heart and soul.”

different worlds is presented in the humouristic story “Una letra no akavada”: this meeting is not only intergenerational (a little boy and a woman) but also cross-gender. The boy has his particular role in the community, because as one of the few capable of reading and writing, he writes dictated letters for all older members of the neighbourhood (“Jo era el eskrivano de la mahale entera” – as he says). At the same time, he does not fully understand the rules and customs of the adults’ world, but he is faced with them every day as he writes letters (in the story these are archetypal, e.g., the unfriendly relations between a mother and a daughter-in-law). This leads to funny situations, but also hurts the boy’s pride. For example, when *tija* Klaruča dictates a letter:

Ansina mi fižu. Di li en esta prima di todo komo jo esto buena, sana, i ke no pensi eja – aja ke ja mi va meter en la tieria kon sus intrigas. Mi Rafu, fižiko de mi madre [...] i eja la malmazala lo va jevando komo se jeva un pero por la kadena. Dili en kurto ke ja savemos todo [...]. I esto es la noera – muerta no mi la viera...

Jo ainda estava sudando para arisentar la primera fraza i eja mi ia kuriendo de palavras ma jo no entendia nada.¹⁴ (Moafi, 1927g: 3)

The story “Tonfilm” is also comic in character. It is about a member of the older generation, a patriarchal, traditional model of life (*a la vieža*) who comes across some aspects of progress and a new way of social and cultural life in Sarajevo. It is symbolised by his first visit to the cinema where he goes encouraged by his daughters. The symbols of traditional life that do not fit into modern society are: his *fes* (a traditional hat), which blocks other people’s view of the screen (the father refuses to take it off, he never does so in public places), his tobacco, which is also unwelcome at the cinema, and his loudly greeting friends seen from a distance.

New rules are received by *tiju* Jaku as an unpleasant surprise, e.g., a rule of sitting quietly among strangers (“They put me in a chair, there were people on the right and on the left that I have never seen and known in my life”), shocking scenes of kissing on the screen, and also, an obligation which is very rare in the trade – payment in advance for a ticket

¹⁴ “So, my boy. First, tell her that I am all right and healthy, and that I do not want her to think that her intrigues will be the death of me. My Rafu, the apple of his mother’s eye [...] cursed she, she leads him like a dog on a chain. Tell her in short that we already know about everything [...]. Some daughter-in-law she is. May I not see her dead...

I was sweating already when I heard the first sentence and her words came out in a rush, but I did not understand a thing.”

(“I cannot believe it! You do not know what you are buying”). For the older generation progress is definitely *sin hen i grasja* (“without charm”).

Two stories, “Un enkontro” and “Dolores,” are very much alike: they are full of fairly sad reflections on changes happening in a small Jewish community. Their main motif is a growing distance between Jewish young people and the old model of life, with its adherence to Jewish religious law and traditions. The stories show a clash of the old rules and the new, secular way of life of the youth. In “Enkontro” a young man who returns at dawn from an evening party in town meets an old Jew, *tiju* Jusu, who is going to the synagogue. In “Dolores” a son named Bohor, an educated physician visiting his old father, lights a cigarette during Shabbat. Older Jews do not observe such behaviour with anger, but with great sadness and disappointment. Even as the young feel ashamed, the disappointment of the elderly makes mutual understanding impossible, as a young man confesses when he is caught at dawn in the street during a Hanukkah holiday:

Tiju Jusu me mezurava de pies asta la kavesa kon sus ožos grandes i jo sentija todo el pezu di su mirada [...] Sufria jo por mi mintira, sufria el por mi verdad.¹⁵ (Moafi, 1927c: 4)

“Perdoni senjor padre, me olvidi [...]”¹⁶ – uttered a son when he understood that he had hurt his father’s feelings by showing disrespect for Shabbat. “Ah ja vejo ke te olvidates... de todo... i su boz temblava en joro.”¹⁷ Ham Josef’s bitter feelings are too deep to make the reunion possible.

The first published sketch of Moafi, “Micva,” does not show a visible clash of generations, but it is a story in which an old Jew makes a younger one aware of injustice in a synagogue that affects the old and poor Sephardim. They cannot read sacred texts or prayers (like the *af-tara* in the story) during the prayer service because they cannot afford to take part in the public auction of the *micvot* (honors) and pay for them, which makes them suffer and feel humiliated. In the story the older Jews believe that this youth can change the existing custom in the community.

¹⁵ “*Tiju* Jusu looked me up and down with his big, surprised eyes and I felt all the heaviness of his gaze [...] I was suffering because of my lie, and he was suffering because of my truth.”

¹⁶ “Forgive me, father, I forgot [...]”

¹⁷ “Oh, I can see that you have forgotten everything... everything... and his voice was trembling as he was weeping.”

The seniors do not have enough authority and bravery to fight with discriminatory tradition:

La provaja, dezija tiju Jusu, avre los ožos del ombre. Jo finke hue riko no senti i no entendija estos dolores [...] Somos siegos, ižo mijo [...] Tu sos la mansavez. Arikože tu fuersa por kombatir estos uzos negros en nuestro santo Kal [...].¹⁸ (Moafi, 1927a: 2)

Linguistic observations

Moafi's prose has many features characteristic of Judeo-Spanish of the Western Balkans. The lexis of the texts contains Judeo-Spanish vocabulary that does not exist in the contemporary Castilian standard and include forms and meanings which are distinct from Spanish, e.g.: *skapar*: Cast. *terminar* – 'to finish', *agora*: Cast. *ahora* – 'now', *topar*: Cast. *encontrar* – 'to find', *onde*: Cast. *donde* – 'where', *burako*: Cast. *agujero* – 'hole', *mansevez*: Cast. *juventud* – 'youth', *negru* – 'bad': Cast. *negro* – 'black.'

There are also lexical borrowings of diverse origins:

- Arabic – *hazinura* 'sickness' < *hazino* 'sick' < *ḥazīn* 'sad' (already incorporated before the expulsion);
- Turkish (often through local Slavic) – *čarsi* < *çarşi* – 'thank God', *muštuluk* < *muştuluk* – 'tip for good news', *mahalemaale* < *mahalle* – 'neighbourhood', *telal* < *tellal* – 'herald', *suluk* < *soluk* – 'air, breath';
- Hebrew – *muet* < *moed* – 'holiday', *kal* < *kahal* – 'synagogue', *beraha* < *berakha* – 'blessing'; *mazal* – 'fortune; happiness';
- Italian – *gazeta* < *gazetta* – 'newspaper', *malatja* < *malattia* – 'illness', *ma* – 'but';
- Slavic – onomatopoeic *kuc-kuc* (?) – 'knock-knock.'

The following phonological and phonetic features of the language in the texts are worth noting:

- the distinction between /b/ and bilabial /β/ or labiodental /v/; *palavra*: Cast. *palabra* – 'word', *gritava*: Cast. *gritaba* – 'screamed';

¹⁸ "Poverty, said *tiju* Jusu, opens people's eyes. I neither felt nor understood this pain when I was rich [...] We are blind, my son [...] You are young. Gather your strength to fight these bad habits in our holy synagogue [...]."

- the preservation of the archaic consonant /v/ in the position before the consonant /d/: *sivdad*: Cast. *ciudad* – ‘city’, *devda*: Cast. *deuda* – ‘debt’;
- a so-called *seseo* with the distinction of the sonority feature /s/: /z/: *korason*: Cast. *corazón* – ‘heart’, *sena*: Cast. *cena* – ‘dinner’, *vezindado*: Cast. *vecindario* – ‘neighborhood’;
- the sonority of intervocalic /s/: *kaza*: Cast. *casa* – ‘home’, *koza*: Cast. *cosa* – ‘thing’;
- the preservation of the archaic consonant /š/: *akeša*: Cast. *queja* – ‘complains’, *deši*: Cast. *dejé* – ‘I left’;
- the preservation of the archaic consonant /ž/: *ažena*: Cast. *ajena* – ‘distant’, *ožo*: Cast. *ojo* – ‘eye’;
- the preservation of initial /f/: *fižo*: Cast. *hijo* (Old Cast. *fijo*) – ‘son’;
- the preservation of the voiced prepalatal affricate /dʒ/: *đenti*: Cast. *gente* – ‘people’, *đidjo*: Cast. *judío* – ‘Jew’;
- the preservation of the voiced dental affricate /dz/: *katordzi*: Cast. *catorce* – ‘fourteen’;
- the labialization of initial /n/ before /ue/: *muevu*: Cast. *nuevo* – ‘new’;
- the loss of the multiple vibrant /r/, and thus a lack of distinction between the simple and multiple /r/: *peru*: Cast. *perro* – ‘dog’;
- epenthesis of the consonant /r/: *delantre*: Cast. *delante* – ‘in front of’;
- metathesis or transposition of the consonant /r/: *provi*: Cast. *pobre* – ‘poor’;
- preservation of the archaic initial cluster s+C: *stas*: Cast. *estás* – ‘you are’, *stima*: Cast. *estima* – ‘esteem’;
- pronunciation of atonic /o/ as [u]: *mumento*: Cast. *momento*, *fižu*: Cast. *hijo* – ‘son’;
- pronunciation of atonic /e/ as [i]: *ripuesta*: Cast. *respuesta* – ‘answer’, *kimadu*: Cast. *quemado* – ‘burnt’;
- the monophthongs /e/ and /o/ instead of the diphthongs /ie/ and /ue/: *keru*: Cast. *quiero* – ‘I want, I love’, *kontan*: Cast. *cuentan* – ‘they say.’

There are also interesting features in morphology:

- the regular ending -š for the 2nd person plural: *akordaš*: Cast. *Recordáis* – ‘you remember’;
- the archaic form of the 1st person singular in the present tense: *vo*: Cast. *voy* – ‘I go/I intend to’, *so*: Cast. *soy* – ‘I am’;

- the Judeo-Spanish default diminutive endings *-ikul-ika*: *manjanika* – ‘early morning’, *tardiziku* – ‘later’; *palavrika* – ‘a little word’, *Rahelika* < *Rahel*;
- the use of endings of Romance origin with bases of non-Romance origin: *hazinura* – ‘sickness’ < *hazino* ‘sick’ < Arab. *ḥazīn* (‘sad’) – ‘sick’;
- the use of non-Romance (esp. Turkish) endings with Romance-origin bases: *deskaralikes* – ‘impudences’;
- the change of grammatical gender: *la sigara*: Cast. *cigarro* (cf. also Turkish *sigara*) – cigarette, *kopiko*: Cast. *copita* – ‘a little drink.’

Some syntactic characteristics include:

- the personal and impersonal obligational construction with *kale*: *kale dezir* – ‘one must say’, *kale ke sepa* – ‘he must know’;
- the use of the subjunctive: *ki no lu asperis* – ‘don’t wait for him’, *ke no se apezgin* – ‘so they don’t get heavy.’

It seems that on the narrative level Moafi’s language is quite neutral (e.g., in comparison with other texts from the column “Para noče de šabat”) and seems to be the idiom of an educated person. There are not many influences of Serbo-Croatian, unlike in the case of the prose of other Jewish authors from Bosnia publishing in local Jewish magazines such as Avram Romano Buki or Laura Papo Bohoreta, whose language is described by Eliezer Papo (2007).

More dialectal features and examples of linguistic interference can be observed at the dialogue level, especially in dialogues of older Jews and women, which suggests that Moafi made an effort to stylize the language of his characters, as, for example, in this fragment from a dialogue between two elderly Sephardi women about cooking:

E, mi tija Rifka, pare todū si kerī mazal [...] no mi rikordu de aver kitadu dil fornu un pastiliku komu es regla di đenti. O si kori o se kema, o si toma di kulor, [...], i pur no mintir hue l’otru Purim ki fizi pastilikus afružaldadus i mi rikordo komu si huera oj ki mi kidarun haninus. Estu hue una vez de toda mi vida i el bendiču mi lu perdoni fin oj ja maldiši kinjentas vezis akeja persona ki invento il pastel.¹⁹ (Moafi, 1927b: 1)

¹⁹ “My *tija* Rifka, for everything you need luck [...] I don’t remember ever taking out a fine *pastel* [meat pie] from the oven. It’s either slack-baked or burnt, or it’s dark, [...], and I’m not lying: during one Purim, when I made holiday cakes and I recall it as if it happened yesterday, they really came out nice. That was only

The same group of elderly characters uses more Sephardi proverbs and sayings than younger characters, e.g.: “Dali a entender ke el kantariko va-va ala huenta finke no se arompe,” “Kavejos longos, sehel kurto,” “Pur kapara d’avunot.”²⁰

Last but not least, a few words about Moafi’s style and level of writing. Considering he was an amateur, his writing was surprisingly rich. Moafi was quite adept at describing his characters and elaborating their stories in a humorous way. His narratives are full of such juicy phrases as:

[...] dezija vezina ke estava en tanto, mirando el pastel kemadu komo el buen mediko kuando mira el malato antes de konstatar la muerte.²¹ (Moafi, 1927b: 1)

The author also gives much attention to the emotional states of his characters. He describes them in detail giving very expressive and meaningful presentations, it does not matter whether he is presenting a humoristic sketch or a serious reflection:

Akeja mirada de Blankor dominava todo el orgujo de Salamo ke se sentija kulpavle de todo. Estava dispuesto para demandar pardon i para perdonar. Ma komo se aze? Pensava, pensava, mirava su Blankor, akompanjava su mas čiko movimjento [...] I kon ultimo rajo de luz tardera ke kajia sovre la kara de su Blankor, esparzija se un splendor manjifiko kristalino relumbrava en mil kolores komo brazas – eran lagrimas de ožos de su Blankor.²² (Moafi, 1927f: 3)

Moafi’s prose, in spite of the fact that it is less known than the writing of Laura Papo or Avram Romano, fits itself very well into the trend of the new Judeo-Spanish Sephardi literature in Bosnia in the first half of the twentieth century. The prose also served two main purposes: it was

once in my whole lifetime and, God forgive me, until today I have cursed five hundred times the person who invented the *pastel*.”

²⁰ “The pitcher goes to the well so often that it finally breaks,” “Long hair, short intellect” [of women], “May the misfortune that has just happened be an expiation for our sins.”

²¹ “[...] said her neighbour, looking at the pastry like a good doctor at his patient before declaring his death.”

²² “That kind of gaze of Blankor overpowered all of Salamo’s pride and he felt guilty for everything. He was ready to ask for forgiveness and to apologise. But how to do it? He was thinking and thinking, looking at his Blankor, observing her smallest movement [...] And with the last ray of afternoon sunlight that fell on his Blankor’s face, a magnificent, clear glitter was shining, sparkling with thousands of colours like hot cinders – they were his Blankor’s tears.”

to make reading appealing to the Judeo-Spanish speakers, and later on it formed a part of a local strategy for the preservation of Judeo-Spanish culture. At the same time, Moafi illustrated, in a comic or thoughtful way, the main aspects of change that the small Sephardi community was going through, and which were seen differently by the older generation and the younger generation. Moafi, using symbols and archetypal motifs comprehensible within the community, presented those changes very clearly and in an appealing form. Nowadays the texts also present valuable samples of the language of the Bosnian Sephardic community between the world wars.

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