
Rafael Arnold. *Spracharkaden. Die Sprache der sephardischen Juden in Italien im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert.* Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2006. 388 S. (Schriften der Hochschule für jüdische Studien Heidelberg. Bd. 7)

At the foundation of the monograph of Rafael Arnold from Institut für Romanistik of the University of Paderborn is a doctoral thesis which he defended in 2002 in the University of Heidelberg. The author does not specify whether the thesis text was altered in the process of readying the book for publication.

In his preface, where the author defines tasks, sources of his research work and also level of exploration degree of the problem he is interested in, he fairly notes that in spite of growing interest in Sephardim — including those in Spain — their activity on the territory of the Ottoman Empire is much more known than on the Italian soil.

The book is divided into two parts: “Cultural Historical Background” and “Researched Language Patterns”.

In the first chapter of the first part of the book, “Historical Background”, the author writes about etymology of the word “Sepharad”; about “golden age” of the Jews in Spain (10—12th centuries); about the language of Sephardim in Spain before the exile (Latin before the conquest, and later Arabic-Romanic bilingualism, even though there are no remaining texts in these languages); about the terms “Maranos”; about presumable number of exiles from the Iberian Peninsula (their exact number is unknown, and the hypotheses cited differ extremely; the number of those who fled to Italy is fixed at 15,000); their settling in various cities are also discussed; and so is the meaning of the word “ghetto”. The issue of what the Jewish community in Italy looked like before Sephardim does not qualify for the author's sphere of interest and is touched only in passing.

The next chapter speaks of the Jewish multilingualism and the testimonies of those languages, which were used by Sephardim, and later on it raises the issue of transferring other languages by means of Hebrew script. With no excuse R. Arnold uses the term *aljamiado* although at first this word would describe Spanish texts

written with Arabic graphics, and later — in a much wider sense — arabographic texts in Bosnian and Albanian languages. Is it legitimate to use this term that has specific Muslim connotations for Jewish literature? Answering the age-old question — “Why did Sephardim use Hebrew script to record Spanish texts?” (which has already been answered succinctly and irrefragably: “Because they were Jews”) — the author highlights the Sephardim's dislike for Latin script as the Christian one, and Christians, requiting like for like, were distrustful for Hebrew letters, fearing their magical powers. The fact that Sephardim turned to Latin in the 20th century is not explained with internal reasons, but with the fact that Latin was the only “legal” script in the Republican Turkey. Further, the author speaks of book-printing in Italy in Hebrew (including Christian publications), of publishing activities of the Jews (including publications in Latin script), of special role that Sephardim played, of the towns where printing offices were located (and what kind those offices were), of book trade and smuggling (since not only reader's demands of local communities were complied with but also those of the whole Sephardic world). There are also testimonies of personal book collections. The testimonies are few, and mainly they are the inquisition protocols; and sometimes — owners' wills. And the books in one's personal library could be in Hebrew, in other Judean languages or they may not belong to a Judean family at all. And finally he speaks of translations and methods of translation, including a “word-for-word” translation, using the author's terminology, although the term “calk” is more accurate and common. Interestingly, R. Arnold himself uses this term in the second part of the book. And as the author fairly notes this is not a proper Sephardic or Jewish phenomenon.

The second part of the book begins with the problem of transliteration. R. Arnold rightly observes that no common rules have been developed. What the author uses for the system in his book is also uncertain; for instance, the form b^{-v} is given for “ב”, but for **transliteration** purposes b is perfectly enough. And in regards to “ר”, he writes that they are very rarely used to communicate half consonants. As it becomes clear from the texts cited subsequently, such usage is not so rare after all.