

THE BEARER OF A FAMILY NAME IS NOT NECESSARILY
AN AUTHORITY ON ITS ORIGIN, MEANING, ETIOLOGY,
OR HISTORY (ON THE SEFARDIC FAMILY NAME *ADATO*
~ *ADATTO*)

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THE JEWISH FAMILY NAME FILE

Resumen. Trabajo que estudia con propiedad el origen, significado, etiología e historia del apellido *Adato* o *Adatto*.

Resumo. Traballo no que se analizan as orixes, o significado, a etiloxía e a historia do apelido *Adato* ou *Adatto*.

Abstract. This article studies the origin, meaning, etiology and history of the sefardic family name *Adato* or *Adatto*.

1. INTRODUCTION

For several years, I had correspondence with Albert Adatto, who was born in Istanbul, Turkey, and recently died in Seattle, Washington. Shortly before his death, he wrote me:

Some spell our family name with one *t* and others with two. The enclosed photocopy from page 284 of Moïse Franco's *Histoire des Israélites de l'Empire Ottoman* (Paris, 1897) is the basic source. My discipline is history and I discount anything unless I am satisfied with the quality of my source material.

Here is our family tradition regarding our name. Please note that I cannot footnote anything. When our family left Spain in 1492, they went to Turkey by way of Italy, where they took on the Italian name of *Adatto* with two *ts*. We became Italian by name because it was safe and it was a highly desirable Italian name.

In Italian, the word *adatto* means 'suitable, adequate'. By tradition we are an adaptable Sefaradi family that made the transition from Spain to Turkey via Italy with the greatest of ease in Italian style.

Years ago our family belonged to the Italian synagogue in Istanbul.

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Mr. Adatto did not live to see my reaction, which follows.

2. HISTORICALLY SEFARDIC LINES VERSUS SEFARDICIZED LINES

The fact that one is Sefardic, that one is a native Judezmo-speaker, or even that one is, as Mr. Adatto was, both does not necessarily mean that all one's lines or even any of them goes back to Sefarad 1 (= the Jewish designation for the Iberian Peninsula before the expulsions of the Jews in the 1490s). Indeed, it is theoretically possible (though statistically unlikely) for a person to be both Sefardic and a native Judezmo-speaker yet descend from lines not one of which goes back to the Iberian Peninsula. That is, any number of Sefardic lines can be of non-Sefardic origin and any number of non-Sefardic lines can become sefardicized, so that any number of Sefardic Jews could descend in any or all of their lines from non-Sefardic Jews. To take a hypothetical example, say that a non-Sefardic Jewish family from Rumania not of Sefardic origin and a non-Sefardic Jewish family from Italy not of Sefardic origin settle in Istanbul, eventually become completely Sefardicized, and a child of one marries a child of the other; their descendents are Sefardic Jews of wholly non-Sefardic origin. Which is to say that we must distinguish between *historically Sefardic lines* (lines that go back to Sefarad 1) and *Sefardicized lines* (lines of non-Sefardic origin that have become Sefardicized outside Sefarad 1).¹

Because Mr. Adatto did not distinguish between historically Sefardic lines and Sefardicized ones, he mistakenly believed that his Adatto line went back to the Iberian Peninsula (and perhaps he believed that all his lines did). However, as we will see presently, not only does no evidence available to us support that belief but the evidence which we do have tells us that the Adatto lines are Sefardicized lines, not historically Sefardic ones, and that those lines go back to one or more places where Italian was spoken (presumably, but not necessarily, Italy).

¹ Also, historically Sefardic lines and Sefardicized lines can become de-Sefardicized. For example, many currently non-Sefardic lines are formerly Sefardic or Sefardicized ones.

3. OVEREMPHASIS OF THE YEAR 1492

Because 1492 was a watershed year in the history of Sefardic Jewry (in that year, when the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon were united to form Spain, Jews there were required either to convert to Roman Catholicism if they wanted to stay or to leave if they wanted to remain Jews), many people in our time are under the misconception that all Jews choosing not to convert left the Iberian Peninsula in that year and only in that year. Yet many in fact had left before 1492 and others, becoming outwardly Catholic but inwardly remaining Jews (= crypto-Jews) left later.² Thus, Mr. Adatto's assumption that his Adatto line left the Iberian Peninsula in that year (when Spain had just come into being) is doubly wrong.

4. THE ORIGIN OF THIS FAMILY NAME

The available data allow us to say only that the Jewish family name *Adato* ~ *Adatto*, which has been borne at least by Sefardic Jews in the Ottoman Empire, seems to be derived from the Italian adjective *adatto* '1. fit, suited; proper, right. 2. qualified, suitable'. We say "seems" because appearances may be deceiving: the fact that the variant of the family name with two *ts* is identical in spelling to that Italian adjective does not necessarily mean that the former is derived from the latter. On the other hand, since no other reasonable etymology for the name comes to mind, that explanation is likely to be right. If so, we would then ask which of the meanings of the Italian word is or are relevant to the family name – a question probably unanswerable at this late date.

² That misconception rests in part on another one, namely that before 1492 everything was fine and dandy for Jews on the Iberian Peninsula (during the so-called "Golden Age of Sefardic Jewry", which to a large extent is a myth concocted by certain Ashkenazic historians in the nineteenth century) and only in 1492 did everything suddenly turn sour.

5. THE PRONUNCIATION OF THE FAMILY NAME IN LATTER-DAY JUDEZMO

The pronunciation of this family name in latter-day varieties of Judezmo having the allophone [ð], like Istanbul and Salonika Judezmo, is additional proof that it was never used on the Iberian Peninsula. The following remarks refer only to those varieties.

In Judezmo words of non-Hebrew-Aramaic origin (including Judezmo-speakers' family names of non-Hebrew-Aramaic origin), intervocalic /d/ is phonetically [ð] if the words (including the names) go back to Old Judezmo (= the Judezmo of Sefarad 1) and phonetically [d] if they do not. For example, *dedo* 'finger', *kada* 'each, every', *krudo* 'raw', and *seda* 'silk' (all of which go back to Old Judezmo and thence to Old Spanish) have [ð] whereas *bilidjé* 'city hall, town hall' (from Turkish), *_adir* 'umbrella' (from Turkish), *idea* 'idea' (from Italian and possibly French too), and *udá* 'room' (from Turkish) have [d].³ Which is to say that the Judezmo rule, of Old Spanish origin, according to which intervocalic /d/ is realized as [ð] does not apply to words which arose in New Judezmo (= the Judezmo of Sefarad 2, that is, the communities founded by Jews from Sefarad 1) or, as noted in footnote 3, to certain Hebrew-Aramaic-origin words which presumably go back to Old Judezmo.

In Istanbul Judezmo, *Adato* ~ *Adatto* is pronounced with [d], not [ð].⁴

³ In Hebrew-Aramaic-origin Salonika Judezmo words presumably going back to Old Judezmo, intervocalic /d/ is realized in some as [ð] (for example in *ganeden* 'heaven, paradise') and in some as [d] (for instance in the third word of *anijo de kidu_im* 'wedding ring'). Why [d]?

⁴ We may add in passing that the latter-day Judezmo pronunciation of *Adato* ~ *Adatto* is with a single [t] (compare Italian *adatto*, whose second consonant is a geminate [tt]). That is not surprising because Italian [tt] always becomes [t] in Judezmo. Similarly, Italian [nn] (geminate /n/) becomes [n] in Judezmo (see *kanella* below). However, at least in Salonika Judezmo, Italian [ll] (geminate /l/) remains [ll]. Thus, Salonika Judezmo has, for instance, *fanella* '[sleeved] men's undershirt [of at least cotton or wool, for use in colder weather]' (< Italian *flanella* 'flannel'), *kanella* 'cinnamon (< Italian *cannella* 'idem'), and *tabella* '[any

Consequently, this name was not brought to Istanbul from the Iberian Peninsula, whether directly or indirectly. Which is to say that the name could not have reached Istanbul by any of these routes:

1. Iberian Peninsula --> Istanbul.
2. Italy --> Iberian Peninsula --> Istanbul.
3. Iberian Peninsula --> Italy --> Istanbul.

6. THE MEANING AND ETIOLOGY OF THE NAME

The Italian adjective *adatto* has four forms: masculine singular *adatto*, feminine singular *adatta*, masculine or unmarked plural *adatti* (referring to two or more people at least one of whom is male or to two or more people whose gender is not known), and feminine plural *adatte*. Thus, if Mr. Adatto was right that the family name *Adatto* comes from that Italian adjective, the only logical conclusion to draw would be that the name was acquired by ONE MALE, who either saw himself as adaptable (if he chose the family name himself) or was seen by someone else as adaptable (if someone else bestowed the name on him). Yet Mr. Adatto believed that “by tradition we are an adaptable Sefaradi family.” That is, overlooking the fact that the presumed etymon of the name is masculine singular, he wrongly inferred that it referred to an entire family.

In most cases, a family name tells us something only about the first person in a family to bear it, not necessarily about any relatives. For example, if one of your family names is *Carpenter*, the first in your family to bear it was a carpenter and the name does not necessarily mean that anyone else in your family was, is, or will be a carpenter. If you bear the Ashkenazic family name *Blinder*, you descend either from a blind male or from a sighted person who on

public, including commercial] sign' (< Italian *tabella* 'list; board'). Given the etymology of *fanella*, it was presumably once made (and may still be) of flannel. At least before /i/, [ɪ] is, to my ear, slightly long in Salonika Judezmo, for example in the diminutive *fanellika* '[short-sleeved] undershirt [of cotton, for use in warmer weather]'

I thank Nissim Alhades for supplying the Salonika Judezmo words mentioned in this article.

one or more occasions was so unaware of the obvious that he was nicknamed (Yiddish) *blinder* 'blind one' or (German) *Blinder* 'idem' and that nickname eventually became his family name, but that does not mean that anyone else in your family was, is, or will be blind or unaware of the obvious.

The inadvisability of trying to read too much into family names becomes glaringly clear if we consider, as we must, ALL those which a person has inherited (say one of your lines is named *Carpenter* and another *Blinder*, are you necessarily a blind carpenter?) or when we consider contradictory ones (if one of your lines is named *Langsam*, which comes from German *langsam* 'slow', and another *Geshvind*, which comes from German *geschwind* or Yiddish *geshvind*, both meaning 'swift', does that mean you are slow some days and swift other days or that you're consistently neither terribly slow nor terribly swift?). The only omen names are those indicating something automatically inherited, like the Jewish family names *Kohen* and *Levi*, which indicate that their male bearers belong respectively to the Priestly Caste and the Levitical Caste, which is inherited in the male line.

It is good to know all our family names (quick! what's your mother's mother's mother's mother's family name?) and know the origin and meaning of each one, but let us not go overboard by putting any interpretation on a name that it will not bear. Once a family name is inherited (that is, once it is borne by someone other than the first person in a family to bear it), it becomes a mere identification tag, as arbitrary as a number (except if it is an omen name like *Kohen* or *Levi*). *Adatto* therefore tells us something only about the FIRST MALE in Mr. Adatto's Adatto line to bear it.⁵

⁵ It remains to be seen where the name *Adato* ~ *Adatto* falls along the monogenetic-polygenetic continuum. Do all who bear it descend from one person who was the first to bear it (in which case it would be monogenetic)? Or, do they descend from a few unrelated people who were the first to bear it in their families (in which case it would be paucogenetic)? Or, do they descend from many unrelated people who were the first to bear it in their families (in which case it would be polygenetic)? Often, the laity is unaware of that continuum, thinking instead that all who bear a certain family name are related to one another, that is, as if each family name were monogenetic.

Only a few family names are derived from plural nouns or adjectives referring to two or more people. Naturally, they apply to at least two of those who first acquired it (but possibly not to all) and it remains to be seen whether they apply to any descendents of the first bearers.

As for “adaptability,” we may wonder how it is measured. Is it passed on by nature, nurture, or both? If by nature, is it genetically inheritable? If by nurture, the family has presumably held the name in such awe that generation after generation parents have taught their children to be “adaptable.” Have parents done so? Is “adaptability” a teachable characteristic, whether wholly or in part? Have parents in Mr. Adatto's Adatto line succeeded in passing down “adaptability” generation after generation? Have members of the family chosen only spouses who are highly “adaptable” in order to make sure they are fully able to participate in the family's effort to pass on “adaptability”? What happens when a woman bearing the name marries and thus, by convention, “loses” that name and takes her husband's? Must she, can she, or does she still want to teach her descendents to be “adaptable”?

Furthermore, who precisely constitute “the Adatto family”? Only men (who do not “lose” the name on marrying) or women too (who do “lose” it)? And what about male descendents of women?

Also, if the family, however defined, is “adaptable,” why did certain of its members (supposedly) leave the Iberian Peninsula? Or Italy? Or Turkey? Could they not “adapt” to the country they were living in?

A moment's attention to those (rhetorical) questions tells us that Mr. Adatto read into the name far more than careful research allows. Believing in the ancient myth that *nomen est omen* ‘a name is an omen’, he spun baseless theories about a family who supposedly by “tradition” was supposedly “adaptable” and supposedly made “the transition from Spain to Turkey via Italy with the greatest of ease in Italian style” – when in fact he had no evidence that his Adatto line had ever lived on the Iberian Peninsula, the pronunciation of the name in latter-day varieties of Judezmo having [δ] tells us that it does not go back to the Iberian

Peninsula, and the fact that it seems to come from a masculine singular adjective reveals something only about one male (if indeed its etymon is Italian *adatto*).

For the life of me, I can not make heads or tails of “Italian style” or fathom why it would have been “safe” to have an Italian name or why “[*Adatto*] was a highly desirable Italian name.”

Lamentable too is the fact that Mr. Adatto focused on only one of his family names. Whether legal, social, or personal convention dictates that we “inherit” only the name of our male line or that females “lose” that name when they marry, the truth is that we inherit ALL our family names. Thus, your mother's mother's mother's family name, for example, is no less yours than your father's father's father's father's name.⁶

Even supposing for argument's sake that Mr. Adatto's Adatto line once lived on the Iberian Peninsula and left in 1492 for the Ottoman Empire, it would probably never have stopped in Italy.

When Sultan Bajazet II heard that Ferdinand and Isabella had decided to expel the Jews from Aragon and Castile, he sent

⁶ That bias in favor of the name inherited in the male line and consequent neglect of all one's other names are seen continually in queries sent to The Jewish Family Name File. To take some made-up examples: “What is the origin of the name *Finkl?*” (signed, Khayim Finkl); “What is the origin of the name *Zilbershteyn?*” (signed, Brokhe Zilbershteyn); “What is the origin of the name *Kashales?*” (signed, Aron Kashales). “Where does the name *Moskona* come from?” (signed, Luna Moskona). All too rarely does one see letters like this: “I descend from people named *Finkl, Zilbershteyn, Kashales, Moskona, ...*, and... What's the origin of each of them?” (signed, Khayim Finkl).

The bias is not so great among speakers of the non-Jewish Hispanic languages because they inherit both their father's family name and their mother's (cf., e.g., Spanish *apellido paterno* 'father's family name' and *apellido materno* 'mother's family name') and a woman, on marrying, does not “lose” her family name (for example, if Josefa Pérez Fernández marries Juan García Blanco, she becomes Josefa Pérez Fernández de García Blanco or Josefa Pérez de García). Spanish-language blanks to be filled out almost always ask for *apellidos* 'family names', by which is meant the father's family name and the mother's. (In Spanish and Catalan, the order is father's family name + mother's family name; in Portuguese, mother's family name + father's family name.)

ships to take any Jews who wanted to settle in his country.⁷ If the ships heading back to the Ottoman Empire had to stop en route for repairs, supplies, or any other reason, they were unlikely, because of strained relations between Christians and Muslims, to do so in Italy, which was then in Christian hands. Rather, they would have headed for North Africa, which at the time was divided into several states all under Muslim control and thus friendly to the Ottoman Turks, who had long been Muslim.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Mr. Adatto asked fewer questions about the name *Adatto* and “answered” more than he should have. Careful examination of what he believed about the name shows that most of it was wrong. He had no evidence even that his Adatto line had ever lived on the Iberian Peninsula and the evidence we do have tells us that a male member of this line acquired the name someplace where Italian was spoken (we presume Italy but cannot be sure) and that it does not go back to the Iberian Peninsula or prove that any of its bearers hailed from there.

⁷ An unconfirmed tradition has it that on hearing that the Jews were about to be expelled, the Sultan exclaimed something like 'King Ferdinand says he is an intelligent monarch, but in fact he is impoverishing his kingdom and enriching mine'. The exclamation is often presented as fact, though I know of no evidence that the sultan ever uttered it.

In a television program about Jewish fasts shown in New York City in September 1994, Jay H. Rosenbaum, the rabbi of Congregation Habonim (in Manhattan), said that when the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492 “they left for ports unknown.” That is hard to believe. For one thing, the Sultan sent ships for those Jews willing to settle in his country. For another, Jews leaving the Iberian Peninsula, whether or not their destination was the Ottoman Empire, presumably knew the ports of call of the ships they embarked on (people just do not get on a ship without asking). If, however, I am wrong and the Jews indeed “left for ports unknown,” let us have the evidence.

The only entertainable datum to be retained from Mr. Adatto's letter is that *Adatto* is probably derived from Italian *adatto*.⁸ The only irrefutable datum in his remarks is that his male line belonged to the Italian Synagog in Istanbul (which is not surprising for a line bearing a name of Italian origin).⁹ The only reasonable inference to draw from those two pieces of information is that this line immigrated to the Ottoman Empire from some Italian-speaking area, presumably Italy.

Had the Adatto line gone back to the Iberian Peninsula, it would have belonged not to the Italian Synagog of Istanbul but to one of the synagoges in the city founded by Jews hailing from the Iberian Peninsula and it would presumably not have a name of Italian origin.

It would be nice to be able to tell everyone, "The information you've provided about your family names is complete and accurate; I couldn't have put it better" (Yiddish saying: *far "omeyn" kumt ka patsb nisht* 'you don't get slapped for saying "Amen"). Only once in a blue moon, however, does that happen. Mostly, people know nothing about their names or they are partly or wholly misinformed. Many times they protest, "Who are you to tell me what MY name means!?"

In sum, just as physicians and attorneys listen to what their patients and clients have to say, but then they form their own opinions, based on their training, their experience, their insight, and their examination of the situation (whether or not those opinions coincide with the patients' or clients'), so too do students of family names give their bearers a chance to say what they think,

⁸ *Adato* is a non-Italian respelling of the name. The Sefardic family name *Adatiko* may be a variant of *Adato* ~ *Adatto*. If so, it presumably contains the Judezmo masculine singular diminutive suffix *-iko*.

⁹ Cyrus Adler described the membership of that synagog somewhat inaccurately: "On the first Saturday in Turkey, I went to a synagogue in the section of the city called Galata, which was nearest to my hotel. This little building, which as I recall was the Synagogue of the Italian Sephardim long settled in Constantinople, had a floor consisting entirely of marble, as was also the Ark" (*I Have Considered the Days*, New York, The Burning Bush Press, 1941, p. 86). Instead of "the Synagogue of the Italian Sephardim long settled in Constantinople" read "the Synagogue founded by Jews from Italy."

but, like doctors and lawyers, we take nothing on faith. The fact that you are you does not necessarily mean that you know more about your medical condition than a doctor or more about your legal status than a lawyer. Likewise, bearing a certain name is no guarantee of possessing correct information about it.¹⁰

Although the laity can be dead right and the “experts” dead wrong, that is not the case here. As the Judezmo proverb puts it, *kada uno save su salmo, ma el xazqan save dos* 'everyone knows his psalm, but the cantor knows two'.

8. THE UNRELIABILITY OF MANY OF FRANCO'S EXPLANATIONS

Let us turn to Moïse Franco's *Histoire des Israélites de l'Empire ottoman*, which Mr. Adatto thought was “the basic source.” Franco said that *Adato* is one of the Sefardic family names that are “d'origine espagnole.” However, if the name is of Italian origin, as Mr. Adatto believed and as I suppose, it shows a connection with some Italian-speaking area, not the Iberian Peninsula. In that case, Franco mischaracterized it. If, however, he was right and the name is indeed of Spanish origin, from what word in Spanish or in any other language of the Iberian Peninsula does it come?

Since Franco was untrained in the study of Jewish family names (a discipline in its infancy anyway during his lifetime), nothing he said about the “origine des noms des Israélites de Turquie” (p. 284 ff.) – not just about *Adato* – should be taken on faith. Following are just a few examples, from pages 284 and 285, of his unreliable or unproven explanations.

Franco gave *Capouto*, *Cassouto*, and *Vitas* as being of “d'origine espagnole” (p. 284). If by “d'origine espagnole” is meant

¹⁰ Nor are relatives, even close ones, necessarily knowledgeable about personal names: Douglas Century writes in “My Brooklyn: Still a Contender on the Waterfront” (*The New York Times*, 12 March 1999, pp. E37 and E50) that one of his grandfathers was “born Velvel in what was then the Russian industrial city of Bialystok” (p. E37). Fact is, he was probably named *volf* or *z'ev-volf* at birth (both of which are Yiddish). *Velvl* (sic recte, not “Velvel”) is not a given name but a pet form of *volf* and *z'ev-volf*. Thus, the grandson knew his grandfather only by a pet form of his given name, he wrongly thought it was his given name, and he misromanized it.

'derived from Spanish', to what Spanish words do they go back? If by that phrase is meant 'going back to Spain', from what words in what language(s) of Spain do they come?

Franco listed *Roditi* under the names “d'origine italienne” (p. 285), yet it does not come from Italian and it does not indicate any connection with Italy or any other Italian-speaking area. Rather, this name comes from Greek *Rhoditis* 'native and/or resident of Rhodes' and is thus synonymous with the non-Jewish Greek family name *Rhoditis* (possibly respelled *Roditis* in Roman-letter languages), which likewise comes from that Greek word.¹¹

If that explanation of *Roditi* is wrong, to what Italian word does the name go back? Certainly not to *rodiese* and *rodiota* (the Italian for 'native and/or resident of Rhodes'), neither of which would have yielded that family name.

Another name which Franco listed as being of Italian origin is *Castro*. Rather, this name comes from Italian and/or one or more languages of the Iberian Peninsula. Each token of this highly polygenetic name has to be examined separately in order to determine its precise language of origin.

Salinas, according to Franco, is “d'origine française” and it refers to “Salins, département du Jura” (p. 285). Salins being a small town in eastern France with no Jewish history, it could not possibly be relevant to any Sefardic name or, for that matter, any Jewish family name at all. Franco merely applied the only “rule” of etymology which the laity possesses: “if *x* looks or sounds like *y*, *x* must be derived from *y*.” Thus, he found Salins on a map or in a

¹¹ Non-Jewish Greek family names may retain or lose their *-s* (as in *Mavrodiadis* ~ *Mavrodiadi* 'of the black one'). Jewish family names of Greek origin tend to lose it, as in *Rhoditi* and *Kalometi* (the latter name comes from Greek *kalometis* 'beautiful skill, wisdom'). Ladislav Zgusta has explained to me how *-s* can be lost: in Greek, family names can be derived from the genitive form of an *o*-stem. For example, the non-Jewish Greek family name *Papandreou* was originally the genitive form of *Papandreas* 'priest Andrew', as in the full personal name (given name + surname) *Ioannes Papandreou* 'John [son] of the priest Andrew'. In later Greek, the scheme “genitive equals nominative minus *-s*” spread far, especially in the vocalic declensions. Hence *Rhoditis* ~ *Rhoditi* (possibly respelled *Roditi* in Roman letters) and *Kalometis* ~ *Kalometi* (possibly respelled *Kalomiti* ~ *Kalomity* in Roman letters).

gazetteer and concluded, on the basis of the near identity in spelling between *Salins* and *Salinas*, that the latter comes from the former. Rank impression may be all we can indulge in as a first step, but, even if so, we must then go on to look at the name critically.

Fact is, *Salinas*, a family name borne by some Jews and many non-Jews on the Iberian Peninsula and their descendents elsewhere, comes from Portuguese *salinas* 'saltworks' and/or Spanish *salinas* 'idem'. It thus indicates a connection of some kind to saltworks in any of countless places on the Iberian Peninsula: the first to bear that name in a family lived near a saltworks, worked in one, owned one, and/or leased one.¹²

Under the names “d'origine française” (p. 285), Franco listed *Sarfati*, which he said comes from a Hebrew word meaning 'French'. Yes, in Franco's day, Hebrew *tsarefati* meant 'French', as it does today, but in earlier times the word had other meanings too: around the tenth century, it came to designate both France and the Iberian Peninsula; and around the fourteenth century, all of western Europe. Since this family name was acquired centuries ago (not in recent times, when Hebrew *tsarefati* has meant only 'French'), only one of the older meanings is relevant to each token of it. This name, therefore, *might* indicate a connection with France, but not necessarily.

Anyone who speaks of “corruption” in connection with names, as Franco frequently did (no fewer than seven times just on pages 284 and 285), is ignorant of even basic linguistics, no more to be trusted in matters of language than a would-be chemist who today spoke of phlogiston or a would-be doctor who practised bloodletting. Scientific students of language are objective and nonjudgmental: we speak of *change*, not “corruption.”

¹² As a Sefardic family name, *Salinas* was once frequent in the town known in Turkish as *Silivri* and in Judezmo as *silivría*. Joe Halio and the late Adolfo Arditti told me that around 1913 about three thousand Jews from this town, which is on the Sea of Marmara in European Turkey, emigrated during the course of approximately three months, most if not all of them settling in Cuba and Mexico.

The foregoing, mind you, refers to just a few of the names on a mere two pages of Franco's book. All his publications are valuable if used critically, dangerous if not. If no one today would be uncritical in using, say, a medical textbook published in 1897, the same is true of any other piece of research from that year. Unfortunately, even the best of work on Sefardic family names is only a little better than Franco's.

9. THE ITALIAN PRESENCE IN SOUTHEASTERN SEFARAD 2

The Italian presence, manifested in several ways, in Southeastern Sefarad 2 (= the Sefardic communities of the Ottoman Empire and its successor states) is often underestimated or ignored. Here are the highlights of that presence:

1. In general:

A. Until about 1840, Italian was the prestigious nonlocal non-Jewish language in the Ottoman Empire. After that time, French acquired that status, though Italian did continue to enjoy a certain measure of prestige.

B. Commercial relations with Italy, Salonika probably having the most intense.

C. The various Italian possessions, at various times, in the area. Which is to say that Italian was, at various distances, present locally too.

D. Some cities, like Salonika, had Italian-medium schools.

2. Specific to Jews:

A. Many Italian Jews settled in the Ottoman Empire. Hence the appreciable number of Southeastern Sefardic family names of Italian origin and the several Italian synagogues in the Ottoman Empire and successor states.

As an example of how easy it is to overlook the consequences of the Italian presence in the Ottoman Empire, we may take Southeastern Judezmo *pan d'espánja* 'spongecake' (literally 'Spanish bread'), which more than one person has misinterpreted as a sign that Sefardic Jews in the Ottoman Empire brought the

recipe for this cake with them from Spain, though it actually comes from Italian *pan di Spagna* ~ *pandispagna* 'idem'.¹³

Indeed, since most Jews who left the Iberian Peninsula for the Ottoman Empire did so at the time when the very concepts of 'Spain' and 'Spaniard' had just come into being (not surprizingly, the Judezmo name of the Spanish language is *kastiljano* ~ *kastiljanu*, literally 'Castilian'), Southeastern Judezmo *pan d'espánja* could not possibly go back to Old Judezmo or to Old Spanish.

10. SUMMARY

Mr. Adatto was right that we should use our sources carefully. As the Yiddish saying goes, *zog nit alts vos du veyst; gleyb nit alts vos du herst* 'don't say everything you know; don't believe everything you hear'.

¹³ At least in part, the French too learned to make spongecake from Italians, as we see from two of its French names, *biscuit de Savoie* and *gâteau de Savoie*.