HAKITIA: A JEWISH LANGUAGE

HAKITIA: UMA LÍNGUA JUDAICA

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Abstract
The Hakitia language is the language of Amazonian Jews. They were expelled from Spain in 1492. Because they moved to Morocco, their variant of Ladino contains Moroccan Arabic, in addition to 15th century Castilian Spanish and Biblical Hebrew influences. In prior centuries, these Jews fled the famines in Morocco, and settled in the rainforest of Brazil. They now primarily live in the rainforest of the Brazilian Amazon.

Keywords: Hakitia; Jewish language; Linguistics.

1. INTRODUCTION
For the Sephardi’s\(^1\) offspring, March 31, 1492\(^2\) is considered an unlucky year in which personae non gratae\(^3\) and events\(^4\) distressed the Israeli community from the Iberian Peninsula.

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\(^1\) A Jew of Spanish or Portuguese descent. They retain their own distinctive dialects of Spanish (Ladino and Hakitia), customs, and rituals, preserving Babylonian Jewish traditions.
\(^2\) Adar II 23, 5252 in accordance with the Jewish calendar.
\(^3\) The joint Catholic Monarchs of Spain (Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon), and Tomás de Torquemada a Castilian Dominican friar and first Grand Inquisitor in Spain’s movement to homogenize religious practices with those of the Catholic Church in the late 15th century.
\(^4\) The Inquisition and the expulsion of the Jews from Spain.
Many Jews—even being Spanish citizens—were murdered and they had their properties invaded, their belongings stolen both by the Catholic Church and by the Spanish government. At the time, many other Iberian Jews fled around the world to save their lives from the bloodbath that happened in Spain.

The Inquisition\(^5\) also known as the Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office\(^6\) became notorious for bloodletting, public execution, and practice of torture performed in many other places in Europe against Jews, Muslims, and non-believers. The Inquisition—with the support of Fourth Lateran Council\(^7\)—was in full operation until the first half of the 19\(^{th}\) century, being much more inflexible in Portugal and Spain.

Figura 1

![Map showing migratory paths from the Iberian Peninsula to various regions of the world](image)

**Figura 1**


2. WHAT LANGUAGE IS THIS?

The language used by the Sephardi Jewish community who emigrated from the Iberian Peninsula to Turkey, France, Italy, Serbia, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Israel, and the surrounding regions was Ladino. On the other hand, the language used by the Sephardi Jewish community who emigrated from the Iberian Peninsula to North Africa (posteriorly to Brazil,

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\(^5\) A group of institutions within the government system of the Catholic Church whose aim was to combat heresy.

\(^6\) Currently known as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

\(^7\) The Fourth Lateran Council, the 12\(^{th}\) ecumenical council (1215), generally considered the greatest council before Trent, was years in preparation. The purpose of the council was twofold: reform of the church and the recovery of the Holy Land. The council ruled on such vexing problems as the use of church property, tithes, judicial procedures, and patriarchal precedence. It ordered Jews and Saracens to wear distinctive dress and obliged Catholics to make a yearly confession and to receive Communion during the Easter season.
Canada, and Venezuela) was Hakitia; a language little known both by researches (linguists who document, describe, and analyze endangered languages) and even by many Jews.

Although both have the same origin—the Castilian—, Ladino is the language of Castile in the 15th century merged with many other languages, but with almost the same phonetic-phonological and morphosyntactic Iberian idiosyncrasies.

In contrast, Hakitia is a mix of three other languages—42% of Castilian of 15th century, plus 38% of Arabic, plus 20% of liturgical Hebrew—that is equal to Moroccan-Jewish language 8.

Hakitic speakers understand what Ladino speakers say, but the opposite is not true. Hakitia is more a spoken than a written language. There is little information written in it, however the quantity of family letters is relatively significant. There is no written alphabet in Hakitia 9, that is, some Hakitic speakers write using a Latin alphabet, and others write utilizing the Hebrew alphabet. They have not yet had the concern to construct an alphabet for this language.

The Sephardi Jews, centuries ago, lived a situation of absolute isolation—social, cultural, and linguistic—compared to their brothers and sisters of other regions. Thus, they created a special way to speak to communicate amongst themselves without concern of being recognized by non-Jews either by particularities or for self-protection. Those so called Jewish languages arose for at least three reasons, namely, 1. Segregation: The Jews did not acquire the norm of non-Jewish territorial dialects because of the limited exposition to non-Jewish society; but because of persecution, the Jews progressively disconnected themselves in order to protect themselves against new attacks from non-Jews, and the Castilian—before the language they used to speak—became increasingly distant to the linguistic reality of the Sephardic Jews. 2. Separatism: Judaism has encouraged using Hebrew to the detriment of other languages. In addition, it always showed itself against other languages that could denote non-Judaic liturgical and religious concepts. 3. Migration: with the expulsion, there was an increase in the probability of Jews who became more exposed to heterogeneous dialects and to foreign languages than the relatively settled non-Jewish population.

Religious Sephardic people translated hundreds of pages to Ladino that included prayers and Jewish written texts 10. The first printed document in Ladino surfaced in Constantinople, in

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10 Me'am Lo’ez was initiated by Rabbi Yaakov Culi in 1730, is a widely studied commentary on the Tanakh written in Ladino. It is perhaps the best-known publication in that language.
the year 1510. For documents written in Hakitia it is not probable to have a date and a place so precise, for this linguistic variant Jewish-Romance was considered a speech of strictly oral communication and popular, without any religious purposes.

In the ending to the Middle Ages (1453), in an environment permeated by intolerant ideology, and for political-economic tenebrous interests, thousands of Jews were expelled from Spain leaving them orphaned from the fatherland where they had grown, helped to build and to develop the county.

Figura: 2

A SHORT STORY IN HAKITIA:

1. Venido bueno i venido klaro!
2. In Ierusalaim, viviam dos jaim. Uno deles era un felah i el otro hareor. Viviam jahade, hata ke un dia hubo pelea gadol entre ejos.
3. El hareor haldreo ke sesiñaria suio jai kando le halase.
4. Ejilearamse i kuriose el zimam.
5. En akel entonses de la esnea lo falah obro buena koseja. El jai del felah, se apliko de pie al hiade del adama ke habia, viendo las orejas de mahiz gadol i haldreo:
6. — Komo muestro El Dio es bueno...
7. — Porke berakome mas ke mio jaito?
8. — Soi esposado, tengo famia i mia koseja fera buena.
9. — Entonses tengoi ke tener la salam kon el; ansina, hoi krusare el arojo i salire a suio enlakia. Tomare mis desiplos i le remitire alhadrado a ke me gustaso i me indulte.
10. El jai del felah le haldreo suios desiplos la rixom ventaja de la koseja ke tenia el hareor, i haldreo a suios desiplos:
11. — Kando mi jai los topar i peskudar donde salieron i adole se van, besreen ser mios desiplos i kadeen haja ke remitoi ehdeo hata el.
12. — Arespondan ke salire al kamiño suio baruje-hamasil ensegida de vos.
14. Kando el hareor regreso, hubo una dahxa i el felah enkurvose i poso suia hala en arde, señalando emuna suio jai.
15. Ansi el hareor dio un abraso en el felah i se ajoraranse jahade.


TRANSLATION:

1. Welcome!
2. In Jerusalem lived two brothers. One was a farmer and the other one was a shepherd. They lived together; so, one day there was an argument between them and they bickered.
3. The farmer told his brother that he would kill him if he saw him again.
4. They separated, and the time just went by.
5. At harvest time, the farmer had an excellent harvest. He stood beside his lands; looking at the corn plantation, he said:
6. — How good God is...
7. — Why did God bless me more than my brother?
8. — I am married, I have kids, and I have had an abundant harvest.
9. — I need to make peace with him, to do so, today I will cross the brook and I will go up to him. I will take my servants and gifts with me in order that he will be pleased and forgive me.
10. The farmer brother sent his servants first and gave part of the harvest as a gift to the Shepherd. He said to his servants:
11. — When my brother meets you and asks you to whom do you belong, and to where are you going, you will tell him you are my servants, and you have gifts which I am sending to him.
12. — Say to him that I am going to meet him after you.
13. Hours later, the farmer saw that the Shepherd was drawing near with some armed men. Thus, there was a great tension and dread because it could mean certain death.
14. When the Shepherd got there, there was total silence. The farmer laid his face on the ground as a sign of respect and humility to his brother.
15. So, the Shepherd gave a tight hug to the farmer, and both kissed each other crying together.

3. CONCLUSION

After the fall of the Granada’s Kingdom, the Christian kings put an end to any form of Jewish worship in the Iberian Peninsula. In this context, a significant percentage of Jews left Portugal and Spain to live in North Africa. They were welcomed to the Ottoman Empire by the Banu abd al-Haqq dynasty; this kingdom was sympathetic to Jews giving them protection; in return, they had to pay taxes. Another curiosity was that Jews did not serve in the army. They enjoyed intellectual, judicial, and religious freedom in Morocco. Most of the reports and documents at the time show that in Morocco the Israelites had relative autonomy. In addition, the Jews established in an independent manner their own councils and their own civil laws. The cases of criminal offenses were judged by Muslim legislation. Out of it, the Jewish people had both time and voice in the entire Moroccan region.
Lastly, the Hakitia became itself a linguistic vehicle common to the population of Jews coming from Spain and Portugal who were victims to the first Jewish holocaust.

REFERENCES


Autores

Alvaro Fernando Rodrigues-da-Cunha is a linguist who works with documentation and description of endangered languages. He received both his Master’s and Ph.D. from the University of Sao Paulo, Brazil. He has developed and published his own theory on the intersection of narratives. Dr. Rodrigues-da-Cunha also lived among some indigenous groups as well as the Moroccan-Jewish people from the Amazon rainforest. He has publications focusing on the study of linguistics. Currently, he serves as a professor at Western Connecticut State University, USA.