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Judeo-Spanish and the Living Museum Claim:
A Synchronic View of a Diachronic Dilemma

<u>Introduction</u>

That all languages must cope with external influences is a central tenet of linguistic, and particularly sociolinguistic, study. This is particularly so with Judeo-Spanish, the language of the exiled Spanish Jews, sometimes referred to as Sefardim, spoken until recently in the former states of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey, the Balkan states, and the Levant, as well as in Morocco, northern Europe, and, more recently, several Latin American states and the United States itself.[1] Throughout these myriad influences, JS has shown itself to be in some ways remarkably resistant to change, holding tight to both the Old Spanish from which it descends and the traditional Hebrew language and culture that are at the base of its identity; at the same time, the language has fully incorporated where necessary elements of the various external influences that have acted upon it to maximize linguistic survival–a survival that, alas, looks more and more unlikely with the passing decades.[2] Popular impressions of the language view it as in some sense a frozen relic, a "living museum" of 15th century Castilian (as if this were possible!), shielded from an ever-changing modern world and gazing forever into the past. However, synchronic comparison of modern JS with varieties of peninsular and Latin American Spanish, as well as non-Hispanic languages, show the error of this assumption.

<u>Notes on Dialectal Variation, Orthography, Nomenclature, and Historical Significance</u>

The two main varieties of Judeo-Spanish are Levantine JS, spoken in Turkey and the

Levant, and Haketía, spoken in Morocco. Significant JS-speaking populations have more recently

sprung up in the New World. However, for breadth of diversity and receptiveness to foreign

influences, Levantine JS is most remarkable and will thus provide the focus of my discussion.

However, it should be noted, that within the widespread Levant and Turkey, numerous dialects

exist. A certain amount of generalization for the sake of argument is required, although the perils

of over extrapolation are acknowledged.[3] The central point of these generalizations is not to

suggest that all dialects of JS follow a particular phonological trend but to point out that

developments thought characteristic of JS simultaneously occurred in other Spanish dialects, thus

casting suspicion on claims that JS is unusual or archaic in the particular sense under discussion.

The earliest records of written JS date from the 11th century. The so-called *aljamiado* script

(Díaz-Mas: 98) is essentially JS translated into Hebrew characters; the resulting calque language

has often been referred to as Ladino. JS was not written in the Roman alphabet until the 19th

century. Numerous divergences from Spanish orthography exist: the < c > in Sp < casa > is written

as a [k] in JS < kasa >; < ñ > as in *cañon* becomes < ny > in JS < kanyon >, and so forth. However,

JS orthographic divergences present no impediment to anyone familiar with Spanish orthography.

 As JS orthography is fairly phonetic (in some instances, more reliably phonetic than modern

Spanish), I will use that in my JS examples, unless I feel that the standard IPA will give a better

illustration. As standard Spanish is well-known, I will use the standard orthography in my

comparisons with JS variants unless the IPA gloss yields better understanding. English glosses

will also be provided.

The question of how to refer to the language has been something of an ongoing dilemma

and is itself indicative of the rootlessness and questionable political status of its people. Lacking

the status of an official language in virtually every locale in which it has found itself, speakers of Judeo-Spanish show much variation in describing their mother tongue. The language has been variously referred to as Sephardim, Spaniolit, Judezmo, Dzhudezmo, Ladino, Judeo-Spanish, Judeo-Fragnol, and even Cristiano, due to the religious orientation of the mother country. As mentioned before, Haketía is the name of the Moroccan version of JS. Some native speakers have referred to the language as Ladino, although this has historically referred to the Hebrew-calquing language and not the spoken variety. To make matters more confusing, Ladino is sometimes confused with Ladin, which is an entirely unrelated dialect of the Rhaeto-Romansch branch of Romance. 19th century contact with French led to the coinage, Judeo-Fragnol. The term Judeo-Spanish seems to have been used primarily by scholars who continue to refer to the language with this term, and, therefore, it is the term that I use. The other terms listed are variants employed by native speakers attempting to impose some regularity on what has apparently been a linguistic free-for-all.

The historical importance of the Sephardic language and culture is not to be dismissed either: renowned for their multilingual prowess in medieval Spain, they were pivotal in the reintroduction of the Greco-Roman classics of Aristotle, Plato, and others into the European vernacular languages–a Europe suffering through the Dark Ages. However, the Sephardic contributions to the School of Toledo, a literary community that translated Arab sources into Christian vernacular languages, went unheralded in the changing politics of the resolutely Christian Spain of the *Reconquísta,* leading to their banishment from their Spanish homeland. Other Sephardim have distinguished themselves in the realms of philosophy (Spinoza and Maimonides), politics and literature (Fernando de Rojas, Benjamin Disraeli), and religious mysticism and sainthood (Teresa of Ávila). It is for this historical importance to the Western

tradition that the culture and language's demise is all the more poignant.

The living museum claim:

The distinguishing feature of JS in the minds of many is its essentially "archaic" nature. Roughly two-thirds of the articles that I researched mentioned, even if only in passing, this aspect of JS. A typical summation is as follows:

> Due to the isolation from Spain and the conservative habits [of the Sephardim], their language preserved many words and grammatical usages that have been lost in modern Spanish. Judeo-Spanish also has a more conservative sound system. (Batzarov: 1)

Sephipha puts it somewhat more succinctly: "Judeo-Spanish, a language of fusion and a living museum for 15th century Spanish" (Sephipha: 1). Others more or less echo these sentiments, citing "el carácter arcaico" of JS (Torreblanco: 224) or its "extraordinario arcaismo" (Kovačec: 158). Others report a sort of linguistic condescension in nineteenth century Spaniards chancing upon Sephardim:

> [T]he Spanish that the Sephardim spoke sounded to the Spaniards' ears like a stammering infantile language, as if the first cry of Spanish had been frozen in time and was being offered to them miraculously revived. And so arose the commonplace that Judeo-Spanish was an archaic and fossilized language (. . .) that had been retained practically unchanged since the fifteenth century. That idea has caused many to forget that a language cannot endure without changes, without evolution (Díaz-Mas: 78).

Harris emphasizes the language's essentially mixed character, waxing rhapsodic even in her description of JS's incorporation of exotic Orientalisms:

> [JS is] a genuine Spanish before Columbus and at the same time a kind of kaleidoscope of Balkan and Romance languages; it's an oriental bazaar on top of a genuine Castilian

architecture . . . A mixture of Jewish conservatism and of Jewish molding. (Harris: 67)

While to some extent evoking the stereotype, Harris also offers a somewhat more realistic

appraisal:

> Nemer and Díaz-Mas remind us that living languages cannot remain unaltered through
>
> time (. . .) Not only did linguistic changes occur as a natural process through time, but also
>
> as a result of contact with other languages, innovations of its speakers, as well as variations
>
> due to doubt or uncertainty on the part of the speakers who were not given the opportunity
>
> to study their native language in school (Harris: 67-8).

Furthermore, she adds, "[M]any of the phonetic characteristics of Judeo-Spanish can be found in

certain Spanish and Latin American dialects today" (69). Nevertheless, the stereotype of a

language frozen in time persists. The empirical support for this claim is the subject of some

disagreement among the scholars that I researched–Penny in particular calls into question many

common assumptions about the origin of JS phonological developments (Penny: 1992). This lack

of consensus will be addressed in the following sections.

Phonological developments in Levantine JS:

While historical analyses provide invaluable insight, especially with respect to questions of

linguistic archaism, my essential focus in the following sections will be on a synchronic (i.e., more

or less contemporary) analysis of JS, as well as a comparison of the language with current varieties

of Spanish, be they peninsular or Latin American in origin. Here, as with JS, some generalizations

for the sake of argument will be made, although it is to be understood that dialectal variation might

disprove a given claim. Evidence from other languages will be introduced where they further

elucidate a particular point in my discussion.

1. Vowel Developments

1.1. The Judeo-Spanish vowel inventory includes 5 vowels: [a, ɛ, i, ɔ, u]. Penny lists Latin

inheritances in the modern Spanish vowel inventory as [a, e, i, o, u] (2002: 45). Thus, some

lowering seems to have occurred with Mod Sp [e, ɛ] > JS [o, ɔ]. In the eastern dialects of JS,

vowels "may occur both in stressed and unstressed positions, while in the western dialects in

unstressed positions may occur only [ɛ], [i], and [u]" (Batzarov: 1). Developments in the JS vowel

system involve primarily diphthongization, monopthongization, raising, and assimilation.

1.2. JS shows /ue/ diphthongs as does modern Spanish; however, the environments in which this

diphthong occurs vary notably:

Mod Sp *poder*	> JS *pueder*	to be able to, can	
Mod Sp *bondad*	> JS *buendad*	goodness	
Mod Sp *hortelano*	> JS *huertelano*	garden, gardener	(Harris: 69)

Penny (2002: 27) suggests analogical extention to be the explanation for the above; thus, these

would no longer be considered retentions but innovations.

1.2.1. Diphthongization/palatalization can also be seen on stressed syllables:

Mod Sp *adentro*	> JS *adientro*	inside	
Mod Sp *verbo*	> JS *vierbo*	verb	(Harris: 69)

1.3.1. Monophthongization occurs on some accented syllables:

Mod Sp *quiero*	> JS *kero*	I want	
Mod Sp *quien*	> JS *ken*	who	
Mod Sp *paciencia*	> JS *pasensia*	patience	(Harris: 69)

1.3.2. Some similarities with modern Italian in this process of monophthongization can also be

seen:

Mod Sp *puente*	> JS *ponte*	bridge
Mod Sp *pienso*	> JS *penso*	I think	(Harris: 69)

Penny notes that similar cases of monophthongization are also evidenced in Galician-Portuguese (27), again suggesting the origins of such developments to be other than Old Spanish. Whether the above are a result of retention of Old Spanish traits or innovations based on JS's later exposure to Italian in the Balkan states remains in question. Penny considers the alternation between /ie/ and /e/ in the examples above (1.3.1.) as an innovation (129). Although, "Zamora points out that this lack of diphthongization can also be found in certain Spanish dialects of both Spain and Latin America [Zamora 1974: 353]" (Harris: 69-70).

1.4.1. A sort of compensatory lengthening in reverse can be seen on the following developments in which diphthongs are monopthongized and undergo consonant insertion:

au > av	*kausa*	*> kavsa*	*< causa >* cause
eu > ev	*deuda*	*> devda*	*< deuda >* debt
iu > iv	*sjudad*	*> sivda*	*< ciudad >* city[4]

1.4.2. This pattern may have been extended to non-diphthong environments:

kodicja   *> kovdisja*   *< codicia >* cupidity or covetousness

1.5.1. Vowel raising, generally in final position, occurs with regularity:

e > i:	*comes*	*> komis*	you eat
	siete	*> sieti*	seven
	perseguir	*> persiguir*	to persecute, annoy (Harris: 70)

1.5.2. This process also affects indirect object clitics:

le > li	to him/her, sg	*les > lis*	to them, pl

1.5.3. In some cases, *a > e:*

criatura	*> kriature*	creature, little child
manzana	*> mansane*	apple
casas	*> cazes*	houses

1.5.4. Vowel raising also occurs with some back vowels:

o > u:	*cinco*	*> sinku*	five
	gato	*> gatu*	cat
	brazo	*> brasu*	arm

Harris notes that the *o > u* development occurs in JS dialects other than Monastir (70). Penny considers *o > u* to be an innovation (1992: 130), also noting that Balkan JS is similar to Portuguese and some varieties of Leonese Spanish in its /i/-/a/-/u/ configuration of final vowels as opposed to the /e/-/a/-/o/ configuration of Castilian (27). He thus seems to attribute these retentions to the influence of Portuguese on JS after the expulsion from Spain proper and prior to the Sephardic expulsion from Portugal as well.

1.6. Loss of prothetic *e-* occurs in *s* + consonant environments:

escuela	*> skola*	school
esperanza	*> speranza*	hope

This also raises questions as to whether JS ever really lost the prothetic *e-* in *s* + consonant environments or never developed it at all−cf. Italian which also never developed the prothetic element, e.g. *scuola* and *speranza*, not to mention *Spagna* and *spagnuoli*. Harris refers to it as a loss, implying that at one point JS manifested this feature (71).

1.7. Vowel assimilation occurs in certain labio-alveolar environments:

judio	*> dʒidio*	Jewish
venir	*> vinir*	to come
rendir	*> render*	to produce, defeat, overcome

The precise origins of such assimilation remain murky: Turkish is known for vowel harmony, but I have come across no evidence or suggestions that Turkish influence resulted in the above.

2. Consonantal developments in Levantine JS: retentions

While the JS vowel inventory inheritances from Latin remain largely intact, many more developments have occurred in the consonant inventory, particularly involving labio-alveolar stops and fricatives. Almost all the retentions preserve older phonemic distinctions that have been largely leveled in most modern varieties of Spanish.

2.1.1. The *b - v* distinction in Judeo-Spanish, all but lost in modern Spanish, occurs in loans:

      haver (Hb: companion)   vs. *haber* (Tk: news item)   (Díaz-Mas: 71)

2.1.2. Penny argues that this distinction in loanwords extends to inherited lexicon (1992: 133); however, he also notes its agreement with Portuguese (2002: 28) which seems to contradict this:

      bos (< voz > voice)   vs. *vos (< vos >* 2 ps form of address)

In any event, it would not appear to be an Old Spanish retention.

2.1.3. Harris states that the *b - v* distinction was originally retained only in initial position, although the loan words above (2.1.1.) as reported by Díaz-Mas contradict this. Harris also states that *b* regularly becomes *v* intervocalically:

bever	*< beber >*	to drink
palavra	*< palabra >*	word

Harris also alternately posits the initial and intervocalic *v* as either a retention of medieval Spanish or an innovation due to later language contact, "especially [from] French, the Balkan languages, or

even English today." Furthermore,

> [i]n Modern Spanish both Old Castilian *b* and *v* became the bilabial spirant [ß]. According to Nemer [1981: 200], there are some instances in Judeo-Spanish where [b] and [ß] contrast, although Malinowski did not find the bilabial fricative [ß] in the speech of her Israeli informants [Malinowski 1979: 26]. I only found it in the speech of some of my New York and Los Angeles informants who had studied Modern Spanish or who came into daily contact with the language (Harris: 74).

In any event, the *b - v* distinction remains a development of disputed provenance.

2.2.1. Some *v*-retentions in JS preserve the original Latin ending:

   kantaba   > *kantava*   < *cantaba* >   I/s/he was singing   (Sephipha: 2)

Harris notes that a similar development has occurred in certain inherited lexicon in modern Spanish: *Paulo > Pavlo > Pablo* (Harris: 71).

2.2.2. Conversely, *b* retention has been noted in imperfect inflections:

   keria   > *keriba*   < *quería* >   I/s/he wanted)   (Díaz-Mas: 80)

2.2.3. Retention of the Latin *mb* cluster seems to be another instance of *b* retention, albeit in a different environment:

   paloma > palomba (dove)   *lamer > lamber* (to lick)   *lomo > lombo* (loin)

Penny (27) and Díaz-Mas (81) note that this feature has also been attested in Galician-Portuguese.

2.3.1. While some of the above developments have been subject to disagreement among scholars as to their origin, the one apparently agreed upon development and, indeed, one of the most idiosyncratic characteristics of JS is its lack of the Modern Spanish *jota*. The alveo-palatal fricatives/affricate [š, ž, dʒ] in Old Spanish underwent a merge to [š] and later in Modern Spanish to [x]. JS, on the other hand, preserves the Old Spanish distinctions between [š, ž, dʒ]:

x > š	JS *pašaro*	< Mod Sp < *pájaro* >	bird
	JS *šabon*	< Mod Sp < *jabón* >	soap
	JS *dišo*	< Mod Sp < *dijo* >	s/he said
x > ž	JS *mužer*	< Mod Sp < *mujer* >	woman
	JS *ožo*	< Mod Sp < *ojo* >	eye
	JS *fižo*	< Mod Sp < *hijo* >	son
x > dʒ	JS *dʒuntos*	< Mod Sp < *juntos* >	together
	JS *dʒoja*	< Mod Sp < *joya* >	jewel
	JS *dʒente*	< Mod Sp < *gente* >	people (Harris: 72)

[dʒ] is considered by Canfield to be an allophone of /ž/. [dʒ] is apparently sometimes reduced to [ž] by modern JS speakers, attributed to French influence (Harris: 73).

2.3.2. Harris notes that [š] was initially word medial *(pašaro, dišo)* but was later extended to word initial position *(šabon)* (Harris: 72). [š] is also epenthesized in almost all 2 p pl verb paradigms (absent in much of Latin America but fully productive in peninsular and a few Latin American Spanish varieties):

Indicative:	*avlaš*	< *hablaís* >	you all speak
	komɛš	< *comeís* >	you all eat
	biviš	< *bebeís* >	you all drink
Imperfect:	*avlavaš*	< *hablaba* >	you all were speaking
	komiaš	< *comías* >	you all were eating
	*		
Preterite:	*avlatɛš*	< *hablaste* >	you all spoke
	komitɛš	< *comiste* >	you all ate

	bivitɛš	< *bebiste* >	you all drank
Future:	*avlarɛdɛš*	< *hablarás* >	you all will speak
	komɛrɛdɛš	< *comerás* >	you all will eat
	bivirɛdɛš	< *beberás* >	you all will drink

Penny notes that this appearance of [š] in 2 p pl verb paradigms [tɛnɛ'jiš] < *teneís* > is another Portuguese-inspired innovation (1992: 132).

In view of the above, Agard "points out that where Modern Spanish has a two way contrast of the phonemes /s/ and /x/ due to changes occurring in the sixteenth century after the Sephardim had left the Peninsula, Judeo-Spanish preserves a five-way distinction between /s: z: š: ž: dʒ/. These phonological distinctions or features help to give Judeo-Spanish its unique flavor" (Harris: 76-7).

2.3.3. Some of this same distinctiveness resurfaces in certain Latin American Spanish dialects:

< *tortilla* >   *tortiǯə*   (flatbread)   (Puerto-Rican Spanish)

This "unique flavor" is nowhere seen more clearly than in [s > š / # k], producing a Slavic effect to my ears (e.g., Russian *babushka),* although this too is apparently an Old Sp retention and not a result of later Balkan influence:

sk > šk	*kaška*	< *casca* >	shell
	kueško	< *cuesco* >	pit of a fruit
	buškar	< *buscar* >	to look for

Penny states that medial sibilants in both medieval and modern JS have shifted identically to Portuguese (2002: 28). Elsewhere, Penny states that [š] occurs only before [k] (2002: 27), although the examples in 2.3.1. would seem to contradict this. Torreblanca notes that [šk] has been attested in Mexican, New Mexican, and Equatorian Sierran dialects, perhaps from contact with Nahuatl or Quechua (226).[5]

2.4. The retention of the Latin initial /f/ is apparently another example of JS conservativism,

      although some modern Romance languages preserve the initial *f-* in words like It. *figlio* and

      Fr. *fils:*[6]

          JS *fižo*   > Mod. Sp *hijo*   son

          JS *ferir*   > Mod. Sp *herir*   to hurt, wound

Penny states that, like Portuguese-Galician, eastern varieties of JS show /h/ or /Ø/ in the above

environments (2002: 27); he also suggests some variation between /f/ and /Ø/, stating that this

"cannot be inherited simply from Old Castilian" (1992: 131).

2.5.. Another characteristic feature of JS phonology is its voicing of the alveolar fricative in

intervocalic environments of [VsV] > [VzV], apparently a retention of the Old Sp distinction

between [s] and [ss].

          Mod. Sp *kasa* > JS *kaza*   < *casa* >   house

          Mod. Sp *aser*   > JS *fazer*   < *hacer* >   to do, make

          Mod. Sp *kosa* > JS *koza*   < *cosa* >   thing

2.6. What is perhaps the single most distinguishable characteristic of modern peninsular Spanish,

ceceo, in which [s < θ / # i, e] does not appear to have penetrated to southern peninsular (i.e.

non-Castilian) dialects and all or most of Latin America. It has also not appeared in JS:

          Pen. Sp *θjelo*   > JS *sjelo*   < *cielo* >   sky

          Pen. Sp *maθo*   > JS *maso*   < *mazo* >   mallet

          Pen. Sp *θelos* > JS *selos*   < *celos* >   jealousy

The fact that *ceceo* has not appeared in Latin American Spanish varieties to my knowledge renders

the moniker "retention" vis-à-vis JS somewhat vacuous.

2.7. A final non-development in JS is the lack of an epenthetic *-y* in first person singular

present-tense forms of the verbs *ir, dar,* and *estar: voy, doy,* and *estoy.* Thus, JS gives *vo, do,* and

estó respectively. These are archaisms perhaps, but they also bear resemblance to their Italian

equivalents, *vado, do* and *sto.* They would thus appear to be further evidence of the inherent

relativity involved in judgments of "archaicness."

3. Consonantal innovations in Levantine JS:

3.1.1. As with retentions, innovations in JS seem to occur primarily in labio-alveolar environments,

yeísmo and consonant cluster metatheses are the chief developments. They typically show

simplification in the form of deletion or loss of segments. The well-documented modern,

predominantly Latin American Spanish phenomenon of *yeísmo* in which [lj > j] also occurs in JS:

ljorar	*> jorar*	*< llorar >*	to cry
ljamar	*> jamar*	*< llamar >*	to call
elja	*> eja*	*< ella >*	she
se ljama	*> se jama*	*< se llama >*	to call oneself

Penny notes that *yeísmo* is also typical of Andalucía (southern Spain) and the Canary Islands (2002:

28). Díaz-Mas suggests that parts of Castile manifest *yeísmo* (80).

3.1.2. *y*-deletion in diminutives seems somehow related to *yeísmo:*

famija	*> famía*	family
maravija	*> maravía*	marvel

(However, I must admit, it is hard for me to achieve the *y*-deletion in the above, particularly in the

latter example. My natural tendency is to insert the *yod* or [y] after the [i].)

3.2. Merging of trills and flaps, *r, ɾ > ɾ*, varies by region; nevertheless, some leveling of this

distinction occurs. It is clearly not widespread, but Harris apparently finds its appearance in some

Latin American dialects to be significant enough to mention it in relation to a similar trend in JS

| *gwɛra* | > *gwɛɾa* | < *guerra* > | war | |
| *pɛro* | > *pɛɾo* | < *perro* > | dog | (Harris: 76): |

3.3. Final segment deletion is also apparently a common pattern in JS:

Mod Sp. *país*	> JS *pai*	country
Mod Sp. *libertad*	> JS *liberta**	liberty
Mod Sp. *mjɛl*	> JS *mjɛ*	honey

Final segment deletion also occurs in southern peninsular Spanish dialects as well as Latin American dialects. Many Caribbean Spanish dialects stand out for their tendency to elide consonants (particularly *-s*), as with the Puerto-Rican *¿Cómo etá ute?* (cf. Mex. Spanish, with its comparatively crisp consonants: *¿Cómo está usted?).* This development has also been attributed to 19th century Italian influence–e.g., It. *libertà*–over the Balkan states to which JS found itself subject to as well; Sephardic immigration to the Italian mainland also occurred in the 19th century (Harris: 76).

3.4. *rd, st,* and *ld* consonant cluster metatheses are also regular occurrences in many JS dialects:

rd >	*drcuerda*	> *cuedra*	rope
	guardar	> *guadrar*	to watch over, protect
	verdad	> *vedrá*	true
	tarde	> *tadre*	late
st > ts	*comiste*	> *comites*	you ate
	hablaste	> *hablites*	you spoke
dl > ld	*cantadlo*	> *cantaldo*	Sing it.
	tomadla	> *tomalda*	Take it.

The *dl > ld* cluster metathesis occurs in imperative forms only. (Mexican Spanish and other LA

dialects do not use the *-d* imperative but the *ustedes -n* form: *cántanlo, tómanla*.) The *st > ts*

metathesis is also seen in modern Mexican Spanish as spoken by my parents: *comiste > comites*,

etc. This would appear to be an entirely independent development from JS.

3.5. Another highly idiosyncratic JS development has been pronominal biliabialization:

$n > m^7$ *nos > mos*   *nuestro > muestro*   *nosotros > muzotros*

3.6. On the morphosyntactic level, levelling in 1 ps and pl preterite forms toward a single

paradigm, *-í/-imos,* is another product of simplification processes:

hablé > hablí   *hablamos > hablimos*

4. Phonetic borrowings/adjustments:

In addition to the above intra-linguistic innovations, several external innovations have come in to

the language via phonetic loans from host languages, albeit in fairly restricted environments. Such

additions have expanded the phonetic/phonemic inventory of JS.

4.1. From Hebrew, [ts] was borrowed for use in words of Hebrew origin: *matsah* (unleavened

bread). Díaz-Mas reports that the Hebrew *ayin* has also been borrowed into JS, presumably in

words of Hebrew origin; however, he gives no examples of this development (Díaz-Mas: 82).

4.2. French influences seem to have mainly confined themselves to lexical borrowings,[8] although

certain words bear the stamp of the French language: "the introduction of the *k* sound in words like

akseptar 'to accept', *aksento* 'accent' instead of the Modern Spanish *s* sound as in *aceptar* and

acento" (Harris: 108).

4.3.1. JS has not always been accommodating to the languages which exercised dominion over it.

 Thus, Turkish rounding of vowels is frequently reversed, as seen in the examples below:

ö, ü > o, u   (vowel lowering/backing/unrounding)

börek   *> boreka*   filled pastry

tütün	> *tutun*	tobacco

4.3.2. At times, the Turkish umlaut has been extended upward to /i/, sometimes at the expense of Turkish vowel harmony:

ö, ü > i

bülbül > *bilbil*	nightingale
kömür > *kimur*	coal

4.4. Perhaps no modern language has had as much influence on JS phonology (among many other areas) than Modern Spanish. Many of the developments described above have been reversed or made to conform with Modern Spanish as Sephardim have come more into contact with native Modern Spanish speakers in the 20th century, chiefly in American cities such as New York and Los Angeles, and, to a lesser extent, Israel, where educational opportunities have allowed JS speakers to study Modern Spanish, sometimes firsthand through travel, and thus "correct" their errant mother tongue (Harris: 173-7). A significant number of Sephardim have also migrated to Latin American countries where they quickly assimilate to Modern Spanish.

4.4.1. Thus, *jota*-leveling asserts itself over JS's previous three-way distinction:

š, ž, ʤ > x	*kaša* > *kaxa*	< *caja* >	box
	ižo > *ixo*	< *hijo* >	son
	ʤente > *xente*	< *gente* >	people

4.4.2. The familiar *b- v* distinction is also lost, giving way to the Modern Spanish *b - ß* pattern:

v > b, ß	*livro* > *libro*	< *libro* >	book
	estava > *estaßa*	< *estaba* >	I/s/he was (imperfect)

4.4.3. Intervocalic *s*-voicing is devoiced:

z > s	*kaza* > *kasa*	< *casa* >	house

Modern Spanish-influenced developments such as the above have done much to erode much of

what is distinctive about JS.

<u>Conclusion: a synchronic view of a diachronic question</u>

No language is static; this is an essential tenet of the linguistic sciences. But when the

mythos surrounding a language perpetuate notions of stasis, an investigation is required to separate

fact from fantasy. If there were such a thing as comparative synchronic linguistics (perhaps

Typology comes closest), JS would probably more properly be seen as more closely related to Old

Spanish than Modern peninsular and Latin American Spanish (much as in class we had to infer

genetic relatedness among the Semitic language problems we were given based solely on

phonological evidence and without recourse to historical records). Even so, such conclusions are

complicated when other Romance varieties show some of the same features that some would use

to justify rendering JS archaic.[9] The evidence above suggests that JS undoubtedly shares certain

affinities with Old Spanish but also enough divergences in common with other Spanish dialects to

warrant reappraisal of the familiar tag "living museum" in describing the language. A purely

synchronic comparison of the language to modern peninsular Spanish and Latin American Spanish

without reference to historical explanations confirms as much. A diachronic evaluation (especially

as offered by Penny) would go even further in showing the errors in popular conceptions of genetic

relatedness.[10]

Rebecca Posner notes the implied relativity in conceptions of linguistic conservativeness:

"The conservative tendencies of one or other of the Romance languages have often been mentioned

(. . .) Some would go further and talk about 'conservative languages,' though what constitutes

conservatism is not always specified" (326-7). She goes on to cite Sard, Portuguese, and

Rumanian as examples of "conservative" languages that, in fact, are in some respects not

conservative. She continues: "We may wish to designate as 'conservative' those varieties that, although they have undergone phonological transformations, have not radically refashioned their morphological systems by analogical processes, and have kept intact, by default, relics inherited from Latin" (327). On the other hand, "[t]he term 'conservative' (. . .) may equally be applied to those varieties that have looked to Latin as their model, or have clung to traditions established in a prestigious past. This would embrace the standard languages, especially Italian" (327). But, unlike Italian, JS has never reaped the benefits of nationhood, of having an army and navy behind it and the status of an official language. Thus, the living museum stereotype persists for reasons about which I can only speculate.[11] Posner suggests that notions of linguistic differences are tied to politics: "[t]he perception of difference [among Romance varieties] came to prominence from the early modern period, when language began to be associated with nationhood" (283). This political reality is at the heart of the modern JS linguistic identity.

Endnotes

1. A more comprehensive list of countries home to the Sephardic diaspora is provided by Haïm-Vidal Sephipha who lists, in addition to those already mentioned, Bulgaria, Romania, Greece, Italy, Belgium, and France (5).

2. In her 1994 book on the subject, Harris cites the number of JS speakers as approximately 200,000. Penny, less optimistically, cites 100,000 speakers (2002). The reasons for the impending death of JS are clear: the atrocities of WWII resulted in the extermination of hundreds of thousands of Sephardim. Today, integration of the remaining descendants into the Western mainstream has necessitated that new generations abandon the tongue of their forefathers in favor of the reigning linguistic standard, be it English, French, or modern Spanish.

3. Harris expresses the difficulties with trying to reduce the dialectal varieties of a substandard dialect such as JS as follows: "[M]y purpose here is to give the reader an idea of the major characteristics of the language, or the Judeo-Spanish *koiné* in general, which has developed since expulsion. This means that the various linguistic features discussed in the domains of phonetics, morphology, and the lexicon, did not necessarily occur in all the Judeo-Spanish dialects spoken in the Balkans, nor do they occur in all the regions where Judeo-Spanish is spoken today in the United States and Israel" (Harris: 68). Thus, my phonological analyses here are similarly broad-based.

4. This development is possibly attributable to Greek influence in the Salonika dialect, although the trend is also apparently attested in Castilian Spanish: *Paulo > Pavlo > Pablo* (Harris: 71).

5. Torreblanca also notes the cluster [šp] in the variants *išpital* and *ešpital,* attributing the former to Monastir (south of the former Yugoslavia) and the latter to Salónica (224). He notes several diachronic trends in which Spanish dialects undergo lenition of syllable initial occlusives from devoicing to voicing or fricativization, voiced fricatives tending to become aspirated, other voiced fricatives devoicing intervocalically, and syllable final consonants tending to aspirate or disappear entirely (243-4).

6. Restricted to Salonika and parts of Bosnia and Macedonia (Díaz-Mas: 80). Some free variation between, for example, [favlar] and [avlar] has been reported. Also typically seen as a feature of women's more conservative speech habits in certain areas (Harris: 74).

7. Sephipha reports that influence from French has turned some dialects back toward the standard *nos, nuestro,* and *nosotros* (Harris: 75-6).

8. Widespread French developments in other areas, chiefly lexis, have led to the coining of a new term, Judeo-Fragnol, to describe the resulting hybrid language. French influence can be attributed to modern Sephardic immigration to France, as well as France's cultural hegemony for most of the 19th century and a significant part of the 20th century which favored French speech features over native ones. Italian influence over the Balkan states in the 18th and 19th centuries was also notable, although less so than French.

9. The most legitimate claim for archaicness, as it were, is in the realm of lexis. Even here, many of the older lexical forms the language shows are found in some modern Romance varieties: e.g. JS *butika* corresponds to French *boutique;* Italian in particular preserves many of the same "archaic" lexemes that Harris cites as examples of JS "archaisms": *camera* (JS *kamareta*), *lavorare* (JS *las(d)rar*), *magazzino* (JS *magazen,* cf. Mod Sp *almacén*), *trovare* (JS *topar*), and *mancare* (JS *mankar*), to name a few (Harris: 82-3).

10. Penny, in fact, contends that JS has been exceptionally receptive to innovations: "[I]n the period after 1492, Judeo-Spanish is likely to have undergone faster-than-average internal change" (126). He links this "movement of populations" to a "greater openness to linguistic change" (135)–i.e., migrations theory: "the openness of Judeo-Spanish to linguistic change, resulting from the breakdown of social networks consequent on the expulsion of Jews from Spain" (135). Furthermore, "the majority [of phonetic/phonemic differences between JS and modern Castilian] can be accounted for by reference to the effects of dialect contact and the disruption of social networks consequent upon the expulsion of 1492" (Penny: 134).

11. Politics and cultural chauvinism are, of course, primary reasons for the language's perceived archaic nature. Another reason might be a sort of nostalgia for simpler, older times (see "In the Appalachians they speak like Shakespeare" in *Language Myths,* Bauer and Trudgill, ed. 1998). One might also surmise that advocates for this dying language (e.g., Sephipha) have sought to muster support for its resuscitation by perpetuating a Romantic myth of Old Spain with its Hebrew-Arabic past.

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