On Judezmo Terms for the Proverb and Saying:
A Look from Within*

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Lo·ké es la mas buena koza en el ben adam? La luenga! I lo·ké es la mas negra koza?
La luenga! Máved vehayim beyad lashón (What is the finest thing man possesses? His tongue! And the worst thing? His tongue! Life and death are in the power of the tongue)

Rabbi David Ha-Lewi of Bucharest, 1860.1

1. Terminology for Jewish folklore genres

Like many other Jewish subgroups forced to migrate from one region to another, the Jewish Ibero-Romance speakers who arrived in the Ottoman Empire following the late fifteenth-century expulsions from Iberia created a vibrant new folk culture in the realm of the sultans. Ottoman Sephardic folk culture arose as a synthesis of elements brought from Iberia, elements selectively incorporated from the cultures of the new ethnic groups with whom the Sephardim came into contact, and elements from the Jewish religious core culture which had been inherited from earlier generations, reaching back long before the Jews set foot on Iberian soil. What made the Ottoman Sephardic folk culture in its totality more than just the sum of these disparate parts was the unique creative spirit and philosophy of life that embodied this Jewish subculture group, and its distinctive filtering processes, by means of which all

* This research was undertaken with support from Israel Science Foundation grant no. 1105/11.
1 David Ha-Lewi, Sefer ṭov wĕ-yafé, Bucharest, f. 16a.
potential folklore elements ultimately adopted by the group became integral parts of its unified, internally cohesive cultural world.

The folklore traditions of the Jews of modern times—those of the Judezmo-speaking Sephardim, of the Yiddish-speaking Ashkenazim, of the Judeo-Arabic-speaking Ma’aravim and Must’arabim, and of other Jewish subcultures—began to receive scholarly scrutiny in the second half of the nineteenth century, with the birth of Jewish studies. But the orientation, methodology, and lines of development of research on the folklore of those diverse subcultures were not all of one kind. The most striking divergence is perhaps to be found in the analytical approach brought to the study of Yiddish folklore, on the one hand, and that assumed by many of the most prominent researchers of Judezmo folklore, especially those active in the twentieth century, on the other.

Among scholars interested in Yiddish folklore there were some, particularly the Austrian ethnographer and folklorist Friedrich S. Krauss (1859-1938), editor of *Am Ur-Quell* and *Anthropophyteia*, who argued that the folklore of Yiddish speakers should be analyzed as a component of German folkloristics. But this approach was ultimately rejected by the majority of Yiddish folklorists, most of whom themselves belonged to Jewish communities in Germany and Eastern Europe. While taking into consideration the medieval German roots of some elements of Yiddish folk traditions, these scholars sought to establish Yiddish or Jewish folkloristics as an independent field of inquiry, the aim of which was to study all facets of Jewish folklore, reflecting all of its diverse sources. The early Yiddish folklorists, such as Abraham Tendlau (b. Wiesbaden, 1802, d. 1878), generally wrote in German. In 1898, Rabbi Max Grunwald (b. Zabrze, 1871, d. Jerusalem, 1953), who lived in Hamburg, Vienna, and Jerusalem, established a society for the study of Jewish folklore, with its own journal, *Mitteilungen (der Gesellschaft) für Jüdische Volkskunde*, which continued to appear through 1929. In their works in German, the early Yiddish folklorists tended to employ the folklore terminology commonly used by German scholars in analyzing Germanic folk traditions, such as *Redensart* ‘folk saying’, *Märchen* ‘fable’, and *Volksmärchen*

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2 Tendlau authored *Sprichwörter und Redensarten deutsch-jüdischer Vorzeit*, Heinrich Keller, Frankfurt am Main 1860, and other pioneering Yiddish folklore collections.


4 The journal is available online: http://www.compactmemory.de/.
‘folktale’. But in the writings of later Yiddish folklorists, especially those who wrote in Yiddish, English, and other languages, the German folk-genre denotations were often abandoned in favor of the native terminology and internally generated technical neologisms, such as vertl ‘folk saying’, moshl ‘fable’, and fólksmayse ‘folktale’.

From an examination of the Yiddish folkloristics literature one forms the impression that the texts which were of greatest interest to the Yiddish folklorists were those which, in form and content, were most characteristically ‘Jewish’, by which I mean rich in Hebrew-Aramaic lexical items and directly connected with distinctively Jewish religious and social life.

The study of Judezmo folklore started off on a somewhat different footing. The authors of some of the earliest collections of Ottoman Judezmo folk literature and their analysis were not members of the speech community itself, but Western European specialists in the literature and folk traditions of the Hispanic world. These scholars tended to see Ottoman Sephardic folklore through the prism of Hispanic folk traditions, and applied the terminology and categorizations accepted among scholars of those traditions to the folk culture of the Ottoman Sephardim. In choosing the specific genres of Sephardic folklore on which they chose to focus their attention, too, the European scholars were influenced by their school of research, investing almost all of their efforts in the investigation of genres which they recognized as having a historical connection to Western European, especially Hispanic, folklore traditions.

The Hispanists essentially ignored those components of Ottoman Judezmo folklore adopted from the peoples of the Ottoman regions, alongside whom the Sephardim had lived since their arrival in the empire following the expulsions from Iberia, and they also paid little or no attention to elements of Judezmo folklore having specifically Hebrew or Jewish roots. To use the term introduced by sociologist William Graham Sumner (d. 1910), the approach followed by many of these scholars exemplified the ethnocentrism characteristic of their school and times, and ran counter to the fundamental anthropological principles guiding the contextual study of culture, or cultural relativism, later established by Franz Boas (d. 1942) and others.

The earliest Judezmo folk ballad to appear in a European scholarly journal was a single stanza included in the brief article “Los judíos españoles de Oriente: Lengua y literatura popular”, published in 1885 by Haim [Moshe] Bidjarano (1850-1931) in the Boletín de la Institución Libre de Enseñanza (Madrid).7 Rabbi Bidjarano, who in 1920 would be appointed chief rabbi of Turkey, was himself a native Judezmo speaker who enjoyed great prestige in the Jewish community. His knowledge of Judezmo folk traditions was also appreciated by Hispanists. In fact, he was appointed a corresponding member of the Real Academia de la Lengua Española, and sometimes used the Castilian name Enrique—ordinarily never used among Judezmo speakers in his time—instead of Hebrew-origin Haim. As was to become characteristic of most other Sephardim of the Levant who devoted themselves to Judezmo folklore documentation and research, in his pioneering publication Bidjarano revealed his acceptance of the folklore terminology and categorizations of the Hispanists with whom he was in contact as being applicable to Judezmo. For example, although the hero of the ballad the stanza of which he published in his article is known in its Judezmo variants primarily by names such as Don Argilis, Doverdjeli, Doverchile, or Underdjile,8 Bidjarano referred to the ballad as a “canto” concerning “Don Vergil”, thus bringing it under the Virgilius ballad type by which its Spanish analogues are known among Hispanists. Judezmo does not have an exact analogue to Spanish canto;

7 Vol. 9, pp. 23-27. I am pleased to thank Elena Romero and Aitor García Moreno for supplying me with a copy of this rare article.
the closest words denoting types of ‘songs’ are kante, kantar, and kantiga/-ika.9 Rabbi Bidjarano also agreed with Hispanists of his time who classified the language of the Ottoman Sephardim as a kind of “jargon”; in an introductory letter at the beginning of his article addressed to the Spanish man of letters, Joaquin Costa (1846-1911), to whom the article was dedicated, Bidjarano wrote “Ya en otra ocasión, en la carta que vió la luz en el núm. 149 del Boletin, me lamenté de que el dialecto español en Oriente estuviese tan lejos de la verdad, que nos cuesta gran trabajo entendernos reciprocamente”.

Showing still greater acceptance of Hispanist terminology, subsequent folklore collectors who emerged from the Judezmo speech community, such as Abraham Danon (1857-1925) and Abraham Galante (1873-1961), referred to the Judezmo ballad genre by the term romance,10 the Modern Spanish word used by contemporaneous Hispanists—such as Antonio Sánchez Moguel,11 Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo,12 and Ramón Menéndez Pidal,13 who at the turn of the twentieth century took a great interest in the ballad tradition cultivated by the Sephardim of the Ottoman Empire—although Judezmo speakers generally refer to an epic song of this kind as a romansa (cf. Old Spanish romança) or romanso.14 The same deference to the terminology of the prestigious European Hispanists was later to be seen in the use by scholars from the Judezmo speech community, such as Alberto Hemsi (1898-1975), of the Spanish term copla for the rhymed verse genre more commonly known among Judezmo speakers as

11 E.g., A. Sánchez Moguel, “Un romance en el dialecto de los judíos de Oriente”, Boletin de la Real Academia de la Historia 16 (1890), pp. 497-509
12 E.g., M. Menéndez y Pelayo, “Romances castellanos tradicionales entre los judíos de Levante”, Antología de poetas líricos castellanos 10, nos. 45-56 (Madrid 1900), pp. 303-357.
kompla;\(^{15}\) and the use by Moshe Attias (1898-1973) and others of Castilian *cancionero* for a 'collection of songs’, where Judezmo has no such word.\(^ {16}\)

Following the late nineteenth-century beginnings of the ‘Hispanist school’ of Ottoman Sephardic folklore research, its orientation, terminology, and methodology tended to be adopted, consciously or unconsciously, by most subsequent Ottoman Sephardic folklore scholars, particularly those who were native speakers of Spanish. In doing so these scholars rejected the community’s own folklore lexicon and genre categorizations, often without even raising as a methodological problem the discrepancy between the terminology they preferred and that used by the community whose folklore they were studying.

Few scholars have departed from this strictly Hispanic-oriented ethnocentrism. One was Baruch ‘Uzi’el, who immigrated to Israel from Salonika and in 1927 began to contribute pioneering articles on Judezmo folklore to the Hebrew-language Jewish folklore journal *Rĕšumot*, founded by H. N. Bialik, A. Druyanov, and H. Ravnitiski, and other periodicals.\(^ {17}\) Preferring the native Judezmo terminology to that of the Hispanists, ‘Uzi’el employed *konsežas* and *maasiyod* for various types of folktales and rabbinical legends,\(^ {18}\) *ečas de Djohá* for the tales involving the folk hero Djoha, *romansas* to denote the traditional ballads, *komplas* (*de purim, del felek*, etc.) to designate the rhymed strophes on Jewish themes, *kantigas* (*de novya, de parida*, etc.) for the lyric songs (sung to brides, new mothers, etc.), and *širé kođeš* and *pizmonim* for various religious song genres.\(^ {19}\)

\(^{15}\) E.g., Alberto Hemsi, *Coplas sefardíes*, Alexandria 1932.

\(^{16}\) E.g., Moshe Attias, *Cancionero judeo-español*, Jerusalem 1972.

\(^{17}\) ‘Uzi’el’s collected works have been published as *Min ha-folklor el hasifrut bi-yhudit-sěfaradit (ladino)*, in Shmuel Refael (ed.), Hamaxon lě-ḥeqer Yahadut Saloniki, Tel Aviv 1988.

\(^{18}\) Baruch ‘Uzi’el, “*Ha-folklor šel ha-yĕhudim ha-sĕfaradim*”, *Rĕšumot* 5 (1927), pp. 332, 334. Citations here transcribed in romanization from Hebrew-letter Judezmo sources are presented in italics. The vocalization in the romanizations is based on the Judezmo dialects of the major cities, such as Salonika, Istanbul and Izmir. Note the phonetic values of the following special characters: \(ch = [č]\), \(d = [d]\), \(d\) (denoting dalet unmarked by a diacritic or syllable-final taw) = [ð] and \(dj\) (denoting dalet marked by a diacritic) = [ð] (in the dialects in which this sound occurs, otherwise = [d]), \(dj = [ǧ]\), \(g = [g]\), \(g = [γ]\) (in dialects in which this sound occurs, otherwise = [g]), \(h = [x]\), \(j = [ž]\), \(s = [s]\), \(sh = [š]\), \(u = [u]\) or, when functioning as a glide adjacent to a vowel, \(w\), \(v = [v]\), \(z = [z]\). Stress is ordinarily penultimate in words ending in a vowel or -n or -s, and ultimate in words ending in other consonants; irregular stress is marked with an acute accent over the stressed syllable.

\(^{19}\) See ‘Uzi’el, “*Ha-folklor šel hayĕhudim hasĕfaradim*” (Note 18), pp. 359, 363 and 368, 375, 395.
Another such scholar is Tamar Alexander-Frizer. Whether documenting and exploring the Judezmo folktale (Alexander-Frizer 1999, Alexander 2008a), the proverb (Alexander 2004, Alexander-Frizer & Bentolila 2008b), healing incantations, healing incantations, or other genres of Judezmo folk literature, Alexander-Frizer, and those younger scholars whose work she has influenced, have always taken into consideration the myriad sources of the Sephardic texts, and the culture bearers’ own perceptions of them.

2. Native qualifications of the Judezmo proverb and proverbial saying

One of the folklore genres highly appreciated by Judezmo speakers throughout the ages, and one which still plays a prominent role in their everyday conversational as well as written language, is that of the proverb and saying. By these terms I mean short, pithy statements in widespread use among members of the culture, generally of anonymous authorship. Stating a general truth or practical precept, or offering wise advice, the succinctness of the proverb and saying makes them easy to remember, and convenient to insert at opportune moments. Yehuda Hatsvi, a native of Salonika living in Israel, offered the following remarks on the use of proverbs and sayings among Judezmo speakers:

<“... entre los sefaradim en todos los niveles de edukasion o intelijensia, uzar los refranes era una parte integral de los moabetes i de las konversasiones, i en las derashot en las kehilot ... Los refranes eran tan konosidos por el pueblo, ke ni se nesesitava sitar el refran entero mientras avlando. Basta de pronunsiar una sola parte del refran; porke todos konosian la segunda parte del refran... Dunke, el refran era (i pekado ke ya no es mas) komo una “palavra dizidera” ke se kulaneava en kada nada. En la kreensia del puevlo, “refran mentirozo no ay”, i el refran era komo la esensia de una saviduria kolektiva”>. 21

“... among the Sephardim of all levels of education and intelligence, using proverbs was an integral part of chats and conversation, and sermons in the

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21 Personal communication from Yehuda Hatsvi dated 30 April 2012, for which warm thanks are hereby expressed. Textual citations originally appearing in the Roman alphabet are here enclosed within angular <> brackets.
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synagogue. The proverbs were so well known by the people that it was not even necessary to cite a proverb in its entirety while speaking. It was sufficient to say just a part of it; because everyone knew the rest... Thus the proverb was (but, unfortunately, no longer is) like a “wise word” that was used at every opportunity. The popular belief is that “There is no false proverb”, and the proverb captures the essence of a collective wisdom”.

Among Judezmo speakers, the ‘Jewish’ or ‘Sephardic’ quality of the proverbs and sayings in common use by the speech group is sometimes alluded to by referring to them as *refranes djidyós* (Jewish proverbs) or *<refrán sefaradi>* (Sephardic proverb).

Although in fact widely used by men, women, and children, the Judezmo speech community—especially its males—tend to attribute the use of proverbs and sayings to women in particular. In a fictional dialogue from turn of the twentieth-century Izmir, for example, a Europeanized Sephardi is portrayed as congratulating a friend on a forthcoming joyous event by means of a French expression probably learned in school; but then smiling and changing his tone, he adds familiar sayings in Judezmo, ‘as the women say’:


“Richard: And so, good day, and my best wishes too! (Changing his tone and smiling) For many years to come, as the women say, with luck and plenty!

Alberto: I thank you”.

When the earliest substantial collection of proverbs began to appear in the Judezmo press at the turn of the twentieth century, it was entitled “*Refranes de mujeres*” (Womens’ Proverbs). Around the same time, in connection with their reactions to

22 *El Rizón* 12, no. 12 (Salonika 1937).
24 Fr. Enfin, bonjour, et mes félicitations aussi!
26 *El Trezoro de Yerushaláyim* 1, Jerusalem 1901, pp. 135-136, 143-144, 160, 176, 182-184, 192; the collection is reproduced in romanization in David M. Bunis, “Una introducción a la lengua de los sefardíes a través de refranes en judezmo”, in *Neue Romania* 12 = *Judenspanisch* 1 (1992), ed. Winfried Busse, pp. 7-36.
a certain popular newspaper series, historian Abraham Galante made the following comparison between Judezmo-speaking women of the older, culturally more traditional—and often illiterate—generation in the Ottoman regions, and their younger, more westernized and highly literate counterparts:

**En la mujer apartenyendo a la vyeja djenerasyón, ... eya komenta según su pensar, i según sayer lo ke eya sintyó meldar, i adjunta en vezes algún reflán o alguna ekspresyón endjeyoza. En la lektrisa de la nueva djenerasyón, egziste el plazer de meldar i remeldar ..., de komentar las ekspresyones djudías, sin abordar akeyas turkas i gregas.**

“In the woman belonging to the older generation, ... she comments according to how she thinks, and based on her knowledge of what she has heard [someone else] read to her, and sometimes she adds some proverb or ingenuous expression [of her own]. In the woman reader of the newer generation, there is the pleasure of reading and re-reading [the series installment herself], ... commenting on the Jewish expressions, without touching on those of Turkish and Greek origin”.

In the Judezmo press one notes numerous other instances in which the use of proverbs and sayings is ascribed to ‘(Jewish) women’, for example:

“**Las mujeres djudías dizen ke ‘Enverano es kolcha de prove’**” “The Jewish women say that ‘Summer is the blanket of the poor’” (*El Djugetón* 5, no. 16 [Istanbul 1913], p. 4).

“**Las mujeres dizen ‘Enverano tyene ojos’: no es komo envyerno, ke todo está tapado i nada no se ve**” “The women say ‘Summer has eyes’: it is not like winter, when everything is covered up [by clothing] and nothing is seen” (*El Djugetón* 6, no. 50 [1914], p. 5).

“**Las mujeres uzan a dezir un proverbyo: ‘Lo·ke se uza non se eskuza’**” “The women are accustomed to saying a proverb: ‘What is customary cannot be abandoned’” (*El Punchón* 2, no. 74 [Salonika 1924], p. 3).

“**Esto es lo·ke28 dizen las mujeres: ‘Mazal de perro’**” “This is what the women call ‘A dog’s luck’” (*El Djugetón* 21, no. 20 [1929], p. 5).

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28 A middle dot (·) will be used to separate words which are written separately in modern Judezmo but appear as a single word in the cited text.
In a satirical series published in Salonika between the world wars, a cantankerous old husband accuses his wife of constantly peppering her conversation with proverbs; she answers by arguing that there is no other way of making her meaning clear to him:

**BOHOR:** Ke vamos akomer oy?
**DJAMILA:** Lo·ke trushites. Non saves lo ke dizen, “Komed kon dos lo·ke trayésh kon vos”?
**BOHOR:** En kada palavra metes un refrán.
**DJAMILA:** Otra manera se puede dar a entender kon ti?29

“BOHOR: What are we going to eat today?
**DJAMILA:** Whatever you brought. Don’t you know what they say? “Eat, you two, what you bring with you!”
**BOHOR:** You never say a sentence without adding a proverb.
**DJAMILA:** Is there any other way to make myself understood by you?”

In a brief overview of the folklore genres cultivated by Judezmo speakers, Dora Niyego offered the following comments on the proverb and saying, at the same time citing some of the native terms used today to denote them:

<“Los proverbios sepharadis ke pasaron de boka en boka son muy presiozos porke kontienen muncho saverisyo en pokas palavras. Los sepharadis dizen “refraniko mintirozo no ay”. Munchos de estos refranes son vinidos de la Espanya. Puedemos sitar unos kuantos “Ken mas tiene, mas kere”, “Mas vale un pasharo en la mano, ke sien bolando”, “Ken bien te kere, te aze yorar”.

Ay otros proverbios i dichas ke entraron al judeo-espanyol de los puevlos ke tuvieron relasyones kon los Sepharadis. Por egzamplo, los Sepharadis de Romania utilizan el proverbo “Azete amigo kon el guerko, fin ke pasas el ponte”. De las dichas ebreas, la maksima rabinika ke es sitada en Pirke Avot “Si no yo para mi, ken para mi?” es muy konosida. Ay refranes ke tienen komo sujetos los uzos i kostumbres de los Sepharadis. Todos konosemos la dicha “Duspues de Purim, platikos”.>30

“The Sephardic proverbs which passed by word of mouth are very precious because they contain much wisdom in a few words. The Sephardim say ‘There is

29 Mesajero 5, no. 1557 (Salonika 1940).
no false proverb’. Many of these proverbs came from Spain. We can cite a few: ‘The more one has, the more one wants’, ‘A bird in hand is worth more than 100 in flight’, ‘One who loves you makes you cry’.

“There are other proverbs and sayings which entered Judeo-Spanish through the peoples with whom the Sephardim interacted. For example, the Sephardim of Romania use the proverb ‘Make friends with the devil, until you cross the bridge’. Of the Hebrew sayings, the rabbinic maxim cited in Ethics of the Fathers, ‘If I am not for myself, who will be for me?’, is very well known. There are proverbs that have as their subjects Sephardic habits and customs. We all know the saying ‘After Purim, little plates [of food given as gifts are an anti-climax]’.”

Matilda Koen-Sarano contributed the following remarks on the categorization of the Judezmo proverb and saying:

<<Munchos i mas grandes de mi en este kampo krearon kategorias, komo Alkalay, Perahya, Kolonomos i Gaon. Otros los dieron en orden alfabetiko, komo Saporta y Beja i Moscona. Ay ken dio solo reflanes, komo Gaon. Ay i ken metio adientro dichas, komo Moscona. Ay ken metio adientro de todo, komo Perahya. Mi tendensia es de divizarlos en kategorias: reflanes, dichas, bindisiones i maldisiones, ekspresiones verbales i mas. Todos estos apartienen al mundo del reflan, mizmo si no lo son>>.31

“Many [scholars], greater than me in this field, created [typological] categories, such as [Arye] Alkalay, [Klara] Perahya, [Žamila] Kolonomos i [Moshe David] Gaon. Others, such as [Enrique] Saporta y Beja and [Isaac] Moscona, gave them in alphabetical order. Some, such as Perahya, put sayings of all kinds in their collections. My tendency is to divide them into [the following] categories: <reflanes> [proverbs], <dichas> [sayings], <bindisiones> [blessings] and <maldisiones> [curses], verbal expressions and more. All of these belong to the world of the proverb, even if they are not such”.

As in the collection Erensya Sefaradi, collected and edited in Istanbul, 1994, by Klara Perahya and other women,32 Niyego and Koen-Sarano distinguish primarily between

two principal sub-genres, the proverb—for which they use the seemingly synonymous terms *proverbo*, *refrán/reflán*, and diminutive *refraniko*, and the saying—denoted by *dicha* and *maksima*. Koen-Sarano adds additional categories. In fact, the terms cited by these authors are but a few of those which have been used by Judezmo speakers and by the scholars who have attempted to analyze their folk culture. The following paragraphs offer a critical look at the scholarly and popular terminology used to denote the Judezmo proverb and saying.

3. External (‘scientific’ or ‘scholarly’) terminology

In his 1885 article cited above, Haim Bidjarano also included 155 Judezmo proverbs and sayings; a much larger collection he had compiled still remains in manuscript. Again conforming to the terminology accepted among Hispanists, Bidjarano referred to his proverbs and sayings as *proverbios, máximas*, and *refranes*. The first scholar to publish a major collection of Judezmo proverbs as collected from native speakers was Rabbi Meyer Kayserling (1829-1905), who in Budapest, in 1889, published a small volume entitled *Refranes o proverbios españoles*. As its title demonstrates, Kayserling, too, used the two terms most widely employed by Hispanists in denoting examples of this genre: *refrán* and *proverbio*. His collection was soon followed by that of the French Hispanist, Raymond Foulché-Delbosc (1864-1929), who employed similar terminology in his article “Proverbes judéo-espagnols”, published in 1895 in the *Revue Hispanique* (vol. 2, pp. 312-352). So, too, did folklore collectors from the Judezmo speech community itself, who adopted the Hispanists’ terminology, or their equivalents in various European languages, in collections which, together, were to establish a rich paremiological data base.


In one of the most recent works devoted to the subject, the Judezmo proverb repertoire is referred to as *refranero sefardí*, although in Judezmo *refranero* traditionally denotes a ‘frequent user of proverbs’ rather than a ‘collection of proverbs’, as in Spanish. The work’s Spanish author characteristically refers to the proverb traditions of Judezmo speakers as “una pieza clave en la evolución cultural *española*” (emphasis mine). The author concedes that “nuevas voces […] fueron incorporándose a este español singular debido a las influencias recibidas por las distintas comunidades sefardíes”, although he felt no need to specify any of the sources of those ‘influencias recibidas’; nor did he make any mention of the fact that numerous proverbs and expressions were original creations arising within the speech group, and some others were translations or adaptations of Hebrew and Aramaic antecedents.

In prefaces to their proverb collections and analysis, Tamar Alexander Frizer, and her predecessor, Isaac Jack Lévy, devoted considerable attention to the terminology used by scholars to distinguish between various types of proverbs and sayings. Lévy in particular discussed the popular and scientific terms used by speakers of Castilian to denote types of proverbs and sayings. But, perhaps because of their literary-folkloristic rather than linguistic orientation, neither of them analyzed the internal proverb and saying terminology used by Judezmo speakers themselves. As a complement to the paremiological scholarship of Alexander Frizer and her colleagues, the remainder of this article will be devoted to an examination of the Judezmo lexicon for the proverb and saying, on its own terms and in comparison with the terminology used by Hispanists, in order to focus attention on this tradition as viewed ‘from within’.

36 See, for example, Nehama, *Dictionnaire du judéo-espagnol* (Note 9), p. 469.
4. Internal (‘native’, ‘folk’, or ‘popular’) terminology

In accordance with the distinction made by Perahya et al., Koen-Sarano, Dora Niyego, and other researchers belonging to the contemporary Judezmo speech community, the following discussion will be subdivided into sections dealing with the proverb, and the saying.

4.1 PROVERB

4.1.1 Proverbyo, proverb

In the sixteenth century, the term proverbyo (or proberbyo, פרובירביו, cf. Sp. proverbio <Lat. proverbium) appears in Moshe Almosnino’s philosophical treatise, Hanhagat ha-ḥayyim ... Rejimyento de-la vida (Salonika 1564). Almosnino used the term—and only this term—to designate both well-established popular sayings, and popular sayings supposedly derived from legal sources or Talmudic dicta, which served in his community as pithy maxims, usually of a metaphorical nature:

“... el proverbyo antig... dize 'Kyen es tu enemigo, el ke es de tu ofisio” “... the old proverb ... says ‘Who is your enemy? He who is of your same profession’” (Almosnino 1564, 111a).

“traen un proverbyo antigo en nuestro talmud ke dize esto es lo·ke los ombres komún mente dizen ke ‘Asegún es el game(l)yo, ansí es la kargá ” “they bring an old proverb in our Talmud which is like that which people commonly say, that ‘According to the [capability] of the camel, such is the weight [he is able to carry]’” (Almosnino 1564, 72b).

It must be noted, however, that Moshe Almosnino was a member of a small elitist group of intellectuals in Salonika, some of whom were linguistically de-judaized conversos who had returned to Judaism there. His work was written in a variety of language which evidently exemplified the style used by this elite group, which,

40 For lack of space I am forced to do what would be unthinkable in serious folkloristic research: I list proverbs without offering any context. I hope to rectify this error in an expanded version of the present article.

41 In the margin of Almosnino’s text he offers the Hebrew equivalent of the proverb, לשון של אזור שותא, which is attributed to Rabbi Yishma’el (Talmud Bavli, Massekhet Soṭa, Pereq 1, f. 13b).
unlike the everyday Judezmo speakers of more humble origins in contemporaneous Salonika, tended to look toward contemporaneous literary Spanish as its linguistic model. Members of this elitist group tended to refer to their language as romançe (רומאנסי), whereas the name appearing in sixteenth-century works more closely resembling the variety of language used by the popular sector of Ottoman Sephardim was ladino (לדינו).42

A parallel to this terminological divergence is to be seen in the traditional Jewish calque Ladino versus former converso ‘Spanish’ translations of the Hebrew word mišle (mišle, the construct plural of mašal ‘exemplum, parable, proverb’),43 in the opening sentence of the Book of Proverbs. From the sixteenth century into the modern era, the traditional Ladino calque translations published by the Jews of the Ottoman Empire translate mišle as enshen-/enshemplos.44 This is similar to the form <ensienplos> appearing in the fifteenth-century Bible translation, often known as the Biblia de la Casa de Alba, directed by Rabbi Moshe Arragel of Maqueda, and to the form <enxenplos> offered in the fifteenth-century Hispanic translation known as the Biblia Escorial or E3, which follows the Hebrew canon.45 The Judezmo term may be

42 E.g., Livro (l)yamado en lashón hakódesh shulhán (h)apanim i en ladino meza de el alma ‘Book Called in the Language of Holiness [=Hebrew] Table of Showbread and in Ladino Table of the Soul’, Salonika 1568, title page.
43 Mišle is the first word of the phrase מִשְלֵי שֶׁלֹּם בֶּן דַּוִּיד מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל (Mišle Šĕlomo ben Dawid melex Yisra’el) “The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel”, with which Proverbs begins.
44 E.g., the translation published in Salonika 1572 (the text is reproduced, without vocalization, in Moshe Lazar (ed.), The Ladino Scriptures: Constantinople – Salonica [1540-1572], Labyrinths, Lancaster, CA 2000, vol. 2) and in that in Yisra’el Bĕxar Ḥayyim (ed.), Sefer arba a wĕ-esrim ... ḥeleq rĕvi ... kĕtuvim ’im ... targum ladino, Vienna 1816.
45 The Latin Vulgate instead offers parabolae. It should be noted that, from the sixteenth century on, Judezmo ensemplado was used primarily in the sense of ‘example, parable, exemplum’, e.g., “Deprende a·leer turkesko i farsi i a (h)azer koplas a·metro i trovas i kantos i adevinasyones agudas i ensenplos maravi(l)yozos” “Learn to read Turkish and Persian and to compose couplets in meter and verses and songs and sharp riddles and marvelous proverbs” (Bahye ben Yosef ibn Paquda, Ḥovat halĕvavot ... en ladino, Yosef Formón (trans.), Salonika c1568, 2:67a). See also Nehama, Dictionnaire du judéo-espagnol (Note 9), p. 177; and the analysis of the use of ensemplado in Almuth Münch, “Šolomo ben Ya’aqov Hakohen: Hešeq Šolomo (Me’am lo’ez, Qohelet), Yerušalayim 1893: Aspectos retórico-poetológicos de la obra”, in David M. Bunis, Languages and Literatures of Sephardic and Oriental Jews, Misgav Yerushalayim & Mossad Bialik, Jerusalem 2009, pp. *319-340.
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compared with Old Spanish *enxemplo*, from Latin *exemplum*, which was one of the
terms for ‘proverb’ or ‘saying’ used before the word *proverbio* became popular.46

However, similar to Almosnino’s terminology for the ‘proverb’, the 1553 Ferrara
Bible, published by former *conversos* in a variety of language differing in important
respects from the traditional Jewish Ladino calque translation language, instead uses
<parabolas o prouerbios> in the title, and <prouerbios> in the text itself.47 The latter
word is also used in most of the pre-Expulsion non-Jewish Hispanic translations: E8/
E6 (13th c.), GE (13th c.), E5/E7 (copied fifteenth c.), EV (copied fifteenth c.), E4
(copied fifteenth c.),48 as in the Christian Spanish Bible translations published from
the sixteenth century on.49 In Almosnino’s *Hanḥagat ha-hayyim*, the Book of Proverbs
is itself called *Proverbyos* (1564, 123b), while in Judezmo works in more traditional
language from that and later periods, Hebrew-origin *Mishlé* is used instead;50 for
example:

“...el rey de·los savyos disho en Mishlé ke ‘La mujer savia fragua su kaza, i ke
la loka kon su mano la deroka’” “... the king of the wise men said in Proverbs
that ‘The wise woman builds her house, and the insane one with her own hand
destroys it’” (*Atias, La guerta de oro*, 1778, p. 54b).51

Following the sixteenth century, *proverbyo* does not seem to appear in Judezmo
texts until the late eighteenth century, offering support for my hypothesis that it did

46  Joan Corominas and José A. Pascual, *Diccionario crítico etimológico castellano e hispánico*,
47  *Biblia en lengua española*, Ferrara 1553, p. 31.
48  In BNM, <prouerbios> is used in the title, and <[e]xemplos> in the translation of *mišle*
in Proverbs 1:1 itself. For the exact forms in the pre-Expulsion texts, see http://corpus.
bibliamedieval.es/.
49  E.g., the Casiodoro de Reina edition published in Basel, 1569 (<proverbios>), and the
50  For examples of the use of Hebrew-origin *Mishlé* in Modern Judezmo see David M. Bunis,
*A Lexicon of the Hebrew and Aramaic Elements in Modern Judezmo*, Magnes Press,
Jerusalem 1993, no. 2727.
51  On this proverb see Tamar Alexander “‘Cast Thy Bread Upon the Waters’: Between
Sephardic Proverbs and the Hebrew Canonic Source”, in David M. Bunis (ed.), *Languages
and Literatures of Sephardic and Oriental Jews*, Misgav Yerushalayim & Mossad Bialik,
not originally constitute a part of everyday popular Ottoman Judezmo. At the end of the eighteenth century we suddenly find the word in *La guerta de oro* (Livorno 1788), by David Bĕxar Moshe ʻAtias, where it appears in the phrase “Proverbyos o sean refránin”, serving as the title placed over a column of Judezmo translations of Italian proverbs, themselves headed “Proverbi” (f. [ii]a). ʻAtias—who was born in Sarajevo but had established himself in Livorno—knew Italian and was familiar with and influenced by Western European literary terms and concepts, presumably used *proverbyos* under Italian influence (cf. It. *proverbio*), but felt the need to explain its meaning for the everyday, unwesternized Judezmo reader, unacquainted with Italian, by means of another, apparently more familiar term for ‘proverb’ used in popular Judezmo, *refrán*. Over a century later, Dani’el Balansí of Izmir, who translated the Thousand and One Nights into Judezmo, used a variant of the same word to explain *proverbyo*, suggesting that the word had still not become an integral part of Judezmo:

“El fue enganyado i el se repentía agora de averse kreído tan presto a las palavras de este indyano. Ma, era tădre! Komo dizien un proverbyo (reflán) en turko, ‘Son pishmán, faydá etméz’, ‘Después ke akontese una dezgrasya, repentirse no aze ningún provecho’” “He had been deceived and now he regretted having believed so quickly the words of this Indian. But it was too late! As they say in a Turkish exemplum (proverb), ‘After a mishap occurs, regretting what might have been does no good’” (Dani’el Balansí [trans.], *Los mas enteresantes kuentos de·la ermoza estorya de mil i una noche*, Izmir 1913, p. 31).52

We will return to the term *refrán/reflán* in section 4.1.2.1 below. Of ʻAtias’ translations or adaptations of the Italian proverbs into Judezmo ‘as we [speak it]’ (or in the words of ʻAtias, “syertos lakirdís i refranín deklarad os palavra por palavra komo nos outros” ‘certain conversations and proverbs explained word for word as we [speak them]’, f. 11a), one of them actually seems to be a Judezmo proverb preceded by an Italian translation:


The appearance of *proverbyo* became more frequent in Judezmo publications in the second half of the nineteenth century when, with the beginnings of the Europeanization

52 Cf. Tk. *Son pişmanlık fayda etmez*. “It is too late for repentance”.

27
of the ethnic groups of the Ottoman Empire—including its Jews—the folklore terminology used in the modern languages of Europe, especially in Italian (proverbio) and French (proverbe), were adopted in more popular Judezmo throughout the Ottoman regions and beyond. Primarily after the publication in European academic journals of Judezmo proverb collections, with which the Judezmo authors might have been familiar, the form proverbyo, reflecting Italian or Spanish, began to enjoy popularity in the European-influenced Judezmo press and popular literature with reference to proverbial sayings in Judezmo, Hebrew, Turkish, and other language.53 Examples of its use include:

“... asígún el proverbyo ‘En midrásh beló hidush’,54 ansí no ay estanpar koza sin renovar” “... just as the proverb says ‘There is no treating of a subject without disclosing something new,’ so there is no publishing of a book without some innovation” (Moshe David Alkalay, Ḥinnux lĕšon ivri, Belgrade 1871, [iv]a).

“La mujer en el proverbyo, i el libro para reir” “Women in the proverb, and the book for laughing” (=title of an anonymous anthology of proverbs, jokes and humorous stories published in Ruse in 1893). “Proverbyos en versos ebráikos” (Proverbs in rhymed Hebrew) (El Trezoro de Yerushaláyim 1 [Jerusalem 1901], p. 64).

“‘La okazyón aze al ombre ladrón’, dize un proverbyo” “‘Opportunity makes a man a thief,’ says a proverb” (El Meseret 8, no. 24 [Izmir 1904], p. 5).

“Proverbyos espanyoles; Proverbyos turkos” (Yā‘aqov Avraham Yona, Romansos, Salonika, before 1909, pp. 7-11 [104 proverbs]; pp. 11-13 [46 proverbs]).56

“Yo no entendí byen este proverbyo ke disho mi papú i le rogi de esplikarme” “I hardly understood this proverb which my grandfather used, and I asked him

53 See also the entries in Nehama, Dictionnaire du judéo-espagnol (Note 9), p. 454; Klara Perahya et al., Diksyonaryo Judeo Espanyol, Gözlem, Istanbul 1997, p. 184.
54 Heb. אין מדרש בלא חידוש.
55 This collection, with linguistic comments, is reproduced in Bunis, “Una introducción a la lengua” (Note 26).
56 The text is reproduced in Armistead and Silverman, Judeo-Spanish Ballad Chapbooks (Note 14), pp. 462-468. It should be noted that, on the title page, the same proverbs are depicted as ‘refranes ... en espanyol i en turco’. For a study of the proverbs published by Yona, see Leonor Carracedo and Elena Romero, “Refranes publicados por Ya‘acob A. Yoná (edición concordada) y bibliografía del refranero sefardí”, Sefarad 41 (1981), pp. 389-560.
At the end of the nineteenth century, the Judezmo variant *proverbo* became popular as well, especially among westernized speakers. This form derives from French *proverbe*, with final -e in masculine nouns replaced by -o, as is the rule in the incorporation of Gallicisms into Judezmo (e.g., Fr. *élève* > Jud. *elevo* ‘pupil [esp. in a secular-oriented school]); for example:

“No se avía araygado byen este proverbo befí aberiyod” “This proverb had not become deeply rooted in popular speech” (Y. Y. D. Abba, *Sefer lehim Yĕ’uda*, Izmir 1891, p. 95a).

“You will understand in the Prophets what is said allegorically, what is figurative (metaphoric) and what in the form of proverbs” (H. B. Arye, *Kestyón djüdia: Estuđyos*, vol. 1, Sofia 1900, p. 10).

“The proverb says, ‘One crazy person is enough to make a hundred others crazy’, and one villain–one instigator and seducer–is enough to incite a thousand to evil” (*El Djugetón* 1 [1909], p. 2).

“This week the rabbi ... just hired by the community of Kırkkilise is scheduled to arrive ... Those people who have not participated in the prayer services even on the Sabbath would do well to take advantage of the opportunity of the holidays and, as the saying goes, ‘to finally decide to do something after a long interval’ and become Jews in the end” (*El Djugetón* 5, no. 28 [1913], p. 4).

“We acquainted him with the proverb of the poet, King Solomon:

57 Cf. Tk. *şeytanın ayağını kirmak* (literally, ‘to break Satan’s foot’).
‘Say not to thy neighbor, “Go, and come back, and tomorrow I will give”’” (El Djugetón 5, no. 45 [1914], p. 1).  

“Proverbos turkos al séder álef bed” “Turkish proverbs in alphabetical order” (El Djugetón 21, no. 18 [1929], p. 5).  

“Ay un proverbio popular ke dize: ‘Te kyeres vengar? La ora de la shaká’”  

“There’s a popular proverb that says: ‘You want to take revenge? Do it when people are telling jokes’” (Aksyón 10, no. 2719 [Salonika 1938]).

A frequent user of proverbs is described in a text by a westernized writer as an “ombre a proverbos”.  

As illustrated above in Niyego’s observations, proverbo is still used in contemporary Judezmo. In 2008 Şeli Gaon wrote in the Istanbul Judezmo periodical Şalom about: 

... los proverbios, dichas i refranes i los desenes (çizim)”. And yet, unlike most of the other Judezmo words used to denote proverbs, no diminutive form of proverb(y)o seems to be documented, suggesting that this term remained somewhat literary in register, never being fully absorbed into the informal, popular spoken register.

Although most of the proverbs documented in the collections appearing in the Judezmo press and popular literature beginning in the late nineteenth century were in Judezmo (or “espanyol”), it should be noted that the number of Turkish proverbs which evidently formed part of the Ottoman Judezmo speakers’ proverb repertoire, and which also received some documentation in the Judezmo press, was not insignificant. Nor were the proverbs in the collections necessarily segregated by language: for example, in the collection entitled “Proverbyos o dichas” appearing in the literary...
periodical *El Kismet Poeta* (1, no. 9 [Izmir 1909], pp. 3-4), edited by ‘Alexander’ Benghiatt (c1863-1924), the 21 Judezmo and 7 Turkish proverbs are intermingled.

4.1.2 *Refrán*/Reflán and variants

In the first half of his dissertation on the Judezmo proverb, Isaac Jack Lévy (1969) noted the distinction sometimes made in Spanish between *proverbio*, used in certain contexts to denote a learned dictum, and *refrán*, denoting a more popular saying.61 The learned, literary, and somewhat foreign nature of *proverb(y)o* in Judezmo was already alluded to in the preceding section of this article. Of the Judezmo reflexes of Romance *proverbio/proverbe* and *refrán* (cf. Sp. *refrán* < Occitan *refranh*, Fr. *refrain*),62 *refrán*—and its variants, re-/riflán and le-/lifrán—are the more popular, spoken and widespread.63 As noted above, paralleling one of the uses of *refrán* in the eighteenth-century *La guerta de oro* of ‘Atias, the variant form *reflán* was used parenthetically by a nineteenth-century author to explain the meaning of *proverbyo*, with which he evidently suspected some readers would be unfamiliar:

“Era tadre! Komo dizén un proverbyo (reflán) en turko, ‘Son pishmán, faydá etméz’, ‘Después ke akontese una dezgrasya, repentirse no aze ningún provecho’”

“It was too late! As they say in a Turkish proverb, ‘After a mishap occurs, regrets over what might have been do no good’” (Balansi, *Los mas enteresantes kuentos...*, p. 31).64

One of the earliest occurrences of *refrán* in a Judezmo text is in the anti-Christian polemical work *Fuente klara* (Salonika 1595), in which we find:

“... dize el refrán ke ‘Muchas vezes el ortelano avla buenas sentensias’” “... the proverb says that ‘Many times the gardener speaks wise words’” (6a).65


64 Izmir 1913.

65 For a romanized edition, see Pilar Romeu Ferré (ed.), *Fuente clara (Salónica 1595)*, Tirocinio, Barcelona 2007.
In the eighteenth century the term occurs several times in David ‘Atias’ *La guerta de oro* (1788) to denote popular sayings; for example:

“... el refrán dize ke ‘Kyen avla la verdad perde la amistad’” “... the proverb says that ‘One who speaks the truth loses friendship’” (5b).

“... el refrán dize ‘De la manyana se ve el buen día’” “... the proverb says ‘One sees a good day from the morning’” (38a).

“... el refrán ... dize ‘Vende i arepyéntete’” “... the proverb ... says ‘Sell and regret’” (42b).

In his manual ‘Atias also illustrates the use of the plural of *refrán* formed with the Hebrew morpheme י- (-im > -in): *refránín* (‘Atias, *La guerta de oro*, f. iiia *refránín savyozos*, also f. 13a). Perhaps this plural marker was attracted to the word because of its formal resemblance to words of Hebrew origin with -án in the singular, -anim in the plural (e.g., מדרון *ləmdán* ‘learned man’, pl. מדרנים *ləmdanim*; זמן *zemán* ‘time’, pl. זמנים *zemanim*). *Refrán* with pluralizing –im continued to be used into the twentieth century, both in the Eastern and Western dialect regions of Ottoman Judezmo; for example:

“... en refranim o meshalim” “in proverbs or wise sayings” (Bĕxar Ḥayyim, *Sefer arba’a wĕ-‘esrim ... ḥeleq šĕliši ... nĕvi’im*, f. 2b).

<“No avia ovra ke el venerable def[o]nto [Abraham Cappon] no eksponia a mi modesto gjuzgamiento literario. »El Angustiador«, los proverbios versifikados, sus refranim arabos trasladados—jo tuve la diča de los konoser antes de mučos”>

“There was not a work which the venerable deceased [Abraham Cappon] did not expose to my modest literary evaluation. *El Angustiador*, the rhymed verses, his Arabic proverbs in translation—I had the fortune to become familiar with them before many others did” (*Jevrejski glas* 6, no. 43 [Sarajevo 1932], p. 6).

Although seemingly less popular among the rabbinical writers of the eighteenth century than *mashal*, *refrán* was prominent in the nineteenth-century rabbinical Judezmo of Yehuda Papo; for example:

“... komo dizen en el refrán ‘El ke no se konsyente no vyene de djente, i lo kita a unto de enoshiyut’” “... as they say in the proverb, ‘One who does not voice his opinion obviously comes from a common family, and he is not considered a person’” (Yĕhuda ben Eli’ezer Papo (trans.), Eli’ezer ben Yiṣḥaq Papo, *Pele yo’es ... trezladado en ladino*, [vol. 1.], Vienna 1870, p. 108).
“Lo toman por mashá el refrán ke dize ‘La linpyeza es medya rikeza’” “They make full use of the proverb that says ‘Cleanliness is half of wealth’” (ibid., p. 203).

“Dize el refrán ‘Konushea kon los buenos i serás tu uno de eyos’ “The proverb says ‘Speak with good people and you will be one of them’” (ibid., p. 272).

“Al ken le dyo el She[m] yid[barah] el byen, ... si eskarsea de dar en todas las kozas ke está enkomendado de los syelos de dar, es komo el refrán ke dize ‘Los amos lo dan, los esklavos lo yoran’, ‘Saybí verir, telal vermés’, ‘El patrón ya se kontenta darlo, el telal no lo da’. I dize otro refrán ‘Ata el azno onde te dize el patrón’ “He to whom the Name Blessed Be He has given wealth, ... if he refrains from giving generously to all things which he is commanded by heaven to give, it is like the proverb that says, ‘The owners give it, the slaves cry about it’; ‘The owner is willing to give it up, but the auctioneer won’t’. And another proverb says ‘Tie the donkey where the owner tells you’” (ibid., p. 220).

In the twentieth century refrán was widely used in the titles of modest collections of popular proverbs, and in citations of proverbial sayings, Jewish and otherwise; for example:

Refranes akojidos por Shelomó Yisrael Sherezli “Proverbs collected by Salomon Israel Cherezli” (Jerusalem 1903).

Refranes ... en turko muy djaveres “Very precious proverbs in Turkish” (Yona [before 1909], p. 1).

“Ya savésh muncho byen el refrán de vyejo: ‘Setam tinyozo es venturozo’ “You are very familiar with the old saying, ‘Someone who is just mangy is lucky’” (El Djugóton 1 [1909], p. 70).

“El refrán dize ‘Ninguno kyere sentir la ‘eshkavá’ del padre, ma el hazán se la echa’ “The proverb says ‘No one wants to hear the funeral oration for his father, but the cantor recites it over him’” (El kirbach 2, no. 19 [Salonika 1911], p. 2).


66 Cf. Fr. Tout passe, tout casse, tout lasse.
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<“Ves, yo yevi mučo en mi vida, i nunka no avli, komo tu konoses tu akel refran: ‘Por esto akea vieža no se kižo murir’”> “You see, I’ve borne a lot in my life, and I never complained, as [expressed in] that proverb you know ‘For that reason the old woman didn’t want to die’” (Jevrejski glas 2:34 [Sarajevo 1929], 9-10).

“... bueno dize el refrán ke ‘Kyen aspera, se dezespera’” “... the proverb puts it well that ‘One who is forced to wait becomes desperate’” (Aksyón 10, no. 2570 [Salonika 1938], p. 2).

<“... segun dize el refran: Todo lo ke azes kon plazer es kolay”> “... as the proverb says: Whatever you do with pleasure is easy” (Benni Aguado, Ladinokomunita, 6 April 2012).

4.1.2.1 Reflán (pl. reflanim)

In Spanish historical texts, the variant reflán is extremely rare, as it is in modern Spanish.67 In Judezmo, however, the occurrence of this form, and of its plural with Hebrew-origin -im/-ín, became increasingly documented from the early twentieth century; for example, in the popular writings of journalist ‘Alexander’ Benghiatt:

“Bizim yibí adamlar kreemos en reflanes, komo kreer en aperkantar i otros bedugilikes ansina “People like us believe in proverbs, like believing in magic spells and other such imprecations” (El Meseret 8, no. 9 [Izmir 1903], p. 5).

“Es komo el reflán ke dizen, ‘Enriva pendones i debasho … adí, bendén yelmesín [i.e., razzones/remendones]” “It’s like the proverb they say, ‘On the outside, penants; on the inside…’ well, let it not come from me! [i.e., “rags”]” (El Meseret 8, no. 19 [1904], p. 4).68

“Ay de estos reflanim ke, por mil ke pase tyempos i anyos, kon todo esto eyos están en sus lug ... Nunka no me vo burlar de los reflanim” “There are some of these proverbs that—though times may change and years may pass—continue

67 Spanish reflán occurs in the anonymous Cancionero de Pero Guíllén (written not later than 1492), Brian Dutton (ed.), Universidad de Salamanca, Salamanca 1990, f. 195r. (also plural reflanes, ibid., f. 534v); and in Cantalicio Quirós y Miterio Castro, written in a style representing local rural speech, written in 1883 by the Uruguayan Antonio Lussich (Jorge Luis Borges & Adolfo Bioy Casares (eds.), Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1955, p. 556) (REAL ACADEMIA ESPAÑOLA: Banco de datos (CORDE). Corpus diacrónico del español. <http://www.rae.es> [2.5.2012]; no examples are provided in CREA).

68 Cf. Tk. adí benden gelmesin.
nevertheless to be appropriate... I’ll never make fun of the proverbs” (*El Meseret* 9, no. 19 [1904], p. 5).

The form *reflán* is the only one cited by José Benoliel for Moroccan Haketía, and the form *re-/riflán* is still current among Judezmo speakers, as demonstrated by citations such as “36 pajinas de reflanes djudeo-espanyoles kon la traduksyon en lashon” (36 pages of Judeo-Spanish proverbs with a translation into Hebrew) and the variant proverb “Reflan mintirozo no ay”, which appeared on the internet site esefarad.com in November 2011. The expression “riflan dulse” (sweet proverb) appeared in the 20 October 2006 issue of the Istanbul Judezmo periodical *El amaneser*. Matilda Koen-Sarano offered the following comment with regard to Judezmo *reflán*: “El reflan djudeo-espanyol es una fraza lapidaria, de forma fiksa, munchas vezes en rima, ke puede descrivir una situasion o traer una similitud, enunsiar una idea o niegarla, kritikandola i burlandose de eya, para trokarla. El reflan puede ayudar, puede konsolar, puede amonestar, puede meter en guardia i puede azer riyir” — “The Judeo-Spanish proverb is a lapidary phrase, of fixed form, often in rhyme, that can describe a situation or make a comparison, express an idea or negate it, while criticizing and poking fun at it, in order to change it. The proverb can help, console, annoy, put one on guard, and make one laugh”.

A further evolved variant, *le-/lifrán*, is documented from 1914:

“‘Sivdad sin estorya es venturoza’, dize el lefrán” — “A city without a [sordid] history is fortunate’, says the proverb” (*El Djugetón* 5, no. 43 [Istanbul 1914], p. 3).

### 4.1.2.2 Diminutive *Refraniko*

One of the markers of the popular nature of the term *refrán/reflán* in Judezmo is the existence of the diminutive form *refraniko*. A fictional character with a propensity for the use of proverbs, who was regularly featured in a Judezmo satirical series appearing between the world wars in several Salonika Judezmo periodicals, prefaced...

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72 Koen-Sarrano, “Reflan djudeo-espanyol” (Note 31).
73 E.g., <refraniko> appears in the subject of a message uploaded to Ladinokomunita by Erik Calderon on 23 October 2009.
critical remarks about a westernized character in the series with the statement: “Tyene razón ... un refraniko ke dize, ‘De·los mios no kyero dezir, ma no kyero ni sentir’’” “Very true ... is the little proverb that says, ‘I want neither to talk about those close to me, nor to hear them spoken about’” (Aksyón 10, no. 2582 [Salonika 1938], p. 8).

The well-integratedness of reflán/refrán and diminutive refraniko in popular Judezmo is also illustrated by the use of the word in several variants of a proverb already noted above, which attributes supreme veracity to the proverb genre in general, and to a specific proverb of Turkish origin in particular:

“... este bayle es a·la franka... Si lo bushkávamos de antes, no topávamos este bayle, i sin bushkar lo topimos. Es por esto ke ‘Reflán falso no ay’—‘Aramaklán bulunmás, inlá rastyelir’’ “... this dance is in the European style... If we had looked for such a dance from the start we’d never have come up with it; and without looking for it we found it. It’s for that reason that ‘There is no untrue proverb’—‘If you were to look for such a thing you wouldn’t find it; it only happens by chance’” (El Meseret 8, no. 9 [1903], p. 5).74

Another variant of the first proverb, with the diminutive form, appears in a recent issue of the Jerusalem Judezmo periodical Aki Yerushalayim: <“Refraniko mentirozo no ay”>.75

Refrán is also used in the saying:

“In your worries and cares, seek advice from the proverbs”.76

4.1.3 Mashal/Masal

Although in Hebrew מְשָל (mašal) is often used in the sense of a ‘parable, exemplum’, or brief story used to make a point in an argument or to illustrate a moral truth, in the biblical Book of Proverbs—called in Hebrew מִשְׁלֵי (Mišle), which is the construct plural of mašal—it denotes a proverb, or short, pithy saying expressing a basic truth or practical, general precept. In the same way, in popular Judezmo rabbinical works

74 Cf. Tk. Aramakla(n) bulunmaz, illâ rastgelir.
75 www.aki-yerushalayim.co.il/.../004-elrefran.htm

36
from the eighteenth century on, as well as in some journalistic and other essentially secular writing, mashal—or, as the word is often pronounced popularly, masal—is the term often used for a proverb or proverbial saying.77 There may be influence here from cognate Arabic-origin Turkish mesel (or darbimesel) ‘proverb’. Although Judezmo writings of various types offer numerous illustrations of the use of mashal/masal in the sense of ‘proverb’, the term is not discussed in the research literature on the Judezmo proverb by scholars from outside the community.78 Of those emerging from within the community itself, only Baruch ‘Uzi’el noted the use of this term. In fact, ‘Uzi’el stated: “It is worth noting that, for the concept ‘proverb’, the Sephardic Jews use the Hebrew word mashal—in the plural meshalim or mishlayós (with a Spanish suffix)—and only rarely, the Spanish word refrán’ (‘Uzi’el 1927: 325). But fifty years later, ‘Uzi’el’s fellow Salonikan, Joseph Nehama (Dictionnaire du judéo-espagnol, p. 349, s. masál) cited only the other, more widespread sense in which the word is used in Hebrew and Judezmo, ‘conte, allégorie…’ The absence of the other meaning in Nehama’s dictionary was noted, with no little chagrin, by Yehuda Hatsvi, an active


78 In 1927 Yiṣḥaq Yĕhezqel Yĕhuda published a collection of 139 Judezmo proverbs under the title משלֵי אספניולית-יהודית (”Mišle espanyolit-yĕhudit”) in the Hebrew journal Ṣiyyon 2, pp. 80-96. Max Grunwald used the term משל-עם (mišle-‘am) ‘folk proverbs’ in a brief collection of Judezmo proverbs from Sarajevo which he published in Rĕšumot (new series) 2 (1946), 191-195; but when Grunwald’s article was republished in his posthumously-issued collected works (Grunwald, Tales, Songs & Folkways of Sepharadic Jews [Note 3], pp. 209-213), the editor changed the term to פתגמי-עם (pitgĕme-‘am), which was more in keeping with the Israeli Hebrew folklore terminology current at the time. In any case, both Yĕhuda and Grunwald used mĕšalim to denote ‘proverbs’ in their own Hebrew discussion of the Judezmo proverbs, but they did not raise the issue of how the Judezmo speakers themselves referred to those proverbs.
contributor to the contemporary Judezmo press and internet sites. In a message to Ladinokomunita dated 24 August 2011 Hatsvi wrote:

"El biervo ebreo ‘mashal’ no es solamente ‘fabula’, ma tambien un kuento imajinario o alegoriko, afazorizo i proverbo. El diksionario ekselente de Nehama lo ekspliko bien, en parte, ma, ‘me suvieron los fumos a la kavesa’ de notar una vez mas la lakuna del autor en la kultura judia: Nehama eskrive en su diksionario ke el biervo ‘masal’ derive del turko. I ande desho i abandono Nehama al Rey Shelomo ke peno i eskrivio, i mos regalo el livro de MISHLE, ke entro a la Biblia...?

De toda manera, me akodro de los selaniklis viejos ke konosia yo en mi chikez; eyos raramente kulaneavan los biervos ‘proverbio’ o ‘refran’. Eyos dizian: ‘mashaliko.’ Oy no topo esta palavra ni en los diksionarios…

Al kuaderno de YYY (Yitzhak Yehezkel Yehuda) el total de los mashalikos ke mos trae el autor es 139. En akea epoka del siglo 20, kada mujer de las muestras savia i empleava en sus konversasiones algunas sinko vezes mas de esta kantidad…"

"The Hebrew word mashal means not only ‘fable’, but also an imaginary or allegorical story, or an aphorism or proverb. Nehama’s excellent dictionary explains it well, in part, but ‘fumes rose to my head’ when I saw once again the gaps in the author’s knowledge of Jewish culture: Nehama writes in his dictionary that the word mashal derives from Turkish. Where and why did he abandon King Solomon, who strove and wrote and bequeathed to us the Book of Proverbs, a part of the Biblical canon...?

“In any case, I remember the elderly Salonikans whom I knew in my youth; they rarely used the words proverbio or refrán. They said: mashaliko. Today I don’t even find that word in the dictionaries...

“In the proverb collection published by Yiṣḥaq Yĕḥezqel Yĕhuda, the total number of proverbs the author brings us is 139. In that [early] part of the twentieth century, every one of our women knew and used in their conversations five times that number...”

79 https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#search/mashaliko/131fbc3d397726be
80 Actually, it is possible that the Spanish editors of Nehama’s dictionary, which was published posthumously, were responsible for the erroneous etymologies proposed for many of his entries. From Nehama’s other writings, there is every evidence that he had a thorough grounding in Jewish sources and traditions.
The earliest examples of the use of mashal in connection with Judezmo proverbs are in Hebrew. In the marginal notes in Hebrew used by Moshe Almosnino to summarize the lengthier vernacular discussion in his Hanhagat ha-hayyim ... Rejimyento de la vida (1564), he used משלי הרופוי (mašal hedyof, or ‘proverb of common people’) to characterize two proverbs cited in the body of the text:

“Suelen dezir ‘No kon kyen nases sinó kon kyen pases’” “They are used to saying ‘It is not among whom you are born but among whom you spend your time’” (14b).

“... un komún i vulgo proverbyo sakado de los djuris konsultos havlando del oficio del pretor o djuez ke dize ‘La mucha konverçaçion es ramo de menospreçio’” “... a common and popular proverb taken from the attorneys of law speaking about the office of the pretor or judge says ‘Much conversation is a kind of scorn/disrespect’” (35a).

In another Hebrew marginal note, Almosnino denoted the proverb used in his vernacular text as המשל הקדмеди (ha-mašal ha-qadmoni) ‘the early proverb’, and he added a Hebrew analogue, also used in Judezmo: "המשל הקדמוני אמ" (“The early proverb said: Ṣa’ar rabi[m] ḥaṣi nĕḥama ‘A sorrow shared by many is half a consolation’").81

“... el proverbyo antigo komún en todas las nasiones ke dize ‘Mal de muchos es k[o]nsuelo’” “... the old proverb common in all nations that says ‘The sorrow of many is a consolation’” (108a).

Interestingly, the phrase משלי הדיוט (mašal hedyof) is also used to introduce two Judezmo proverbs cited by Rabbi Yom Ṭov Ṣahalon (or ‘Mahariṭaṣ’, b. Safed, 1559–d. after 1638) to bring home points of Jewish law raised in his responsa collection (1694):

"כז הדא משלי הרופוי קין ני ראובנ נצורה אורבנא קאווה יאנסיא א
Because it is a proverb of common people: Ken no adova gotera adova kaza entera ['He who does not fix a leak fixes a whole house']")82

81 The Hebrew variant צער רבי חצי נחמה, appearing for example in Giṭṭin 58b, Maharsha 4, is employed in the context of rabbinical Judezmo in Rĕfa’el Ḥiyya Pontrémoli, Sefer me-am lo’ez Ester, 2d ed., Constantinople 1899, p. 258.

82 Yom Tov Ṣahalon, Responsa (old series), Venice 1694, no. 74.
On Judezmo Terms for the Proverb

"And everyone should warn his fellow man, as they said in the common proverb: Mas veen kuatro ojos ke dos ['Four eyes see more than two']."  

Ṣahalon introduced another Judezmo proverb by means of the cognate Aramaic expression מתלין מתלא (mātalīn mitlā) “they use the proverb”:

"They use the proverb: De basho de·mi manto a·el rey mato ['Under my cloak I kill the king’]."

In texts in Judezmo itself, the use of mashal/masal in the sense of ‘proverb’ continued from that time into the modern era. Numerous occurrences are found in the three volumes of the exegetical composition Me·cam lo lo cez authored by Rabbi Yiṣḥaq Magriso, where it is generally preceded by expressions stating that the cited expression is a mashal ke dizen (la djente) “proverb which they (the people) say”. For example:

“Esto es el mashal ke dizen la djente ‘Ken la myel menea, algo se le apeg’a’” “This is [like] the proverb that the people say ‘One who mixes honey, some of it sticks to him’” (Yiṣḥaq Magriso, Sefer me·cam lo·ez ḥeleq šeni mi-sefer šĕmot ... en la dino, Constantinople 1746, p. 109b).

“Era komo el mashal ke dizen la djente ‘A·ti te lo di go, nuera; óyelo tu suegra’” “This was like the proverb that the people say ‘I say it to you, daughter-in-law; hear it, mother-in-law’” (Yiṣḥaq Magriso, Sefer me·cam lo·ez ḥeleq šĕliši, sefer wa-yiqra ... en la dino, Constantinople 1753, 39a).

“... el mashal ke dizen la djente ‘El vyejo en kaza, entronpeso es en la kaza; la vyeja en kaza, trezoro es en la kaza’” “... the proverb that the people say ‘An old man in the house is an obstacle in the house; an old woman in the house is a treasure in the house’” (Magriso, Sefer me·cam lo·ez ḥeleq šĕliši, 181a).

“I esto es el mashal ke dizen la djente ‘El She[m] yid[barah] mos de byen i un lugar onde mete’” “And this is the proverb that the people say ‘May the Name Blessed Be He give us good things and a place to put them’” (Magriso, Sefer me·cam lo·ez ḥeleq šeni, p. 27b).

83 Ṣahalon, Responsa, no. 240.
84 Ṣahalon, Responsa, no. 231.
85 On variants of this proverb, see Alexander, “‘Cast Thy Bread Upon the Waters’” (Note 51), p. *294.
“Ansí es el mashal ke dizen la djente ‘La nave ke tyene munchos reizes, su kavo es de undirse’” “Thus is the proverb that the people say ‘The ship that has many captains is destined to sink’” (Magriso, Sefer me-żam lo’ez ḥeleq šeni, p. 63b).

“Esto es el mashal ke dizen ‘A la abizba, ni de tu myel ni de tu punchón’” “This is the proverb that they say ‘To the bee, [I want] neither your honey nor your sting’” (Magriso, Sefer me-żam lo’ez ḥeleq šeni, p. 110a).

“Esto es el mashal ke dizen la djente ‘El pozo ke bevistes a gua, no eches pyedra en·el’” “This is the proverb that the people say ‘Into a well from which you drank water do not cast a stone’” (Magriso, Sefer me-żam lo’ez ḥeleq šeni, p. 146a).86

In the Judezmo rabbinical literature produced by rabbis in diverse parts of the Ottoman Empire, the term mashal/masal continued to enjoy use in the sense of ‘proverb’ or ‘popular saying’ into the modern era; for example:

“Asemeja a el mashal … ‘El dji dyó no tyene nada otro ke sus enemigos’” “It resembles the proverb … ‘The Jew has nothing but his enemies’” (Yosef ben Ma’ir Sason and Yišḥaq Bĕxor Amarachi, Sefer darxe ha-adam, 2d ed., Salonika 1849, p. 45b).

“Según dizen mashal la djente ‘Achakes de lo seko se kema lo verde’” “As the people say in the proverb, ‘Because of the dry (wood), the green burns’” (Raḥamim Mĕnaḥem Mitrani, Sefer me-żam lo’ez ḥe[leq] a[lef] al sefer Yĕhošua, Salonika 1849, p. 104a).

“Mashal dizen la djente, ‘Dale a bever un poko de vino al soytarí del rey i te alavará onde el rey’” “The people say a proverb ‘Give the king’s clown a little wine to drink and he’ll praise you to the king’” (Avraham Fintsi, Sefer leqet ha-zohar en ladino, Belgrade 1859, p. 157a).

“Mashal dizen la djente ‘El pato non se aparta del fuego; ezmola el kuchío, vale detrás’” “The people say a proverb ‘The duck doesn’t move far from the fire; sharpen the knife, and go to it from behind’” (Fintsi, ibid., p. 141b).

In the twentieth century, the form masal (מסאל) was also employed by the popular Judezmo journalist ‘Alexander’ Benghiatt of Izmir to denote proverbial expressions used by Judezmo speakers, whether they were perceived to be of European origin, as for example:

86 For discussion of a variant of this proverb see Alexander, “‘Cast Thy Bread Upon the Waters’” (Note 51), pp. *289-290.
“Buyuk sözümé tövbe, valla ke tyenen razón los frankos ke dizen un masal ‘Ken apromete, en devda se mete’” “I hate to talk big, but by God the westerners are right to use the proverb, ‘He who makes a promise acquires a debt’” (El Meseret 8, no. 7 [Izmir 1903], p. 5; cf. Fr. Qui promet, en dette se met; Sp. Quien fia o promete, en deuda se mete).

or of Turkish/Ottoman origin, as for example:

“Dushuneo i digo de no eskrivir mas, no sea ke kachiree algún lakirdí demazía i me venga algún hal a-la kavesa, porke ay un masal ke dize: ‘Buyuk lokmá ye, buyuk lakirdí soylema’” “I think about it and say I won’t write [for the press] any more, just in case I make some blooper and bring a problematic situation on my head; because there’s a proverb that says: ‘Don’t be too sure of yourself’ [literally, “Eat a big mouthful of food, but don’t take a big word in your mouth”]” (El Meseret 8, no. 16 [1904], p. 5).  

“Un masal dize ‘Ne suyá dayán, ne kariá inán’” “A proverb says ‘Neither hold water nor believe an old woman’” (El Meseret 8, no. 24 [1904], p. 5).

The longer Hebrew-origin expression, מֵהלָל הַדיּואֵט (mashal edyot), too, was employed in Judezmo texts into the modern era; for example:

“Sus kazas están yenas de todo lo bueno, ke por esta razón no kreen a el prove, komo dizin el mashal edyot, ‘Asavea enó maamín ed araev’, ‘El arto non kree a el ambrento’” “Their houses are full of plenty, and for this reason they do not believe the poor; as the popular proverb says, ‘A man who is full does not believe a man who is hungry’, ‘The sated man does not believe the hungry man’” (Réfa’el Yiṣḥaq Ma’ir Benveniste, Me-‘am locez ‘al mĕgillat Rut, Salonika 1882, p. 167).

Like reflán/refrán, the well-integrated status of mashal in popular Judezmo is demonstrated, among others, by its use in the diminutive form, mashaliko, as insisted upon by Yehuda Hatsvi, and as demonstrated by its appearance in a variant of the popular proverb emphasizing the truth of proverbial statements: Mashal mentirozo non ay (Baruch ‘Uzi’el, “Ha-folklor šel ha-yĕhudim ha-sĕfaradim, Rĕšumot 5 (1927), p. 326 no. 1).

87 Cf. Tk. Büyük sözümé tövbe!  
89 Cf. Tk. Ne suya dayan, ne kariya inan.
4.1.4 Pasuk, mizvá

Another two terms, also of Hebrew origin, connect the popular Judezmo proverb or saying with verses in sacred sources such as the Bible and Talmud which bear a resemblance to the proverb in structure and character: pasuk (Heb. פסוק/pasuq) and mizvá (Heb. מציו/mišwa). In some instances the Judezmo proverbs are actually adaptations of verses in the sacred-sources. For example, a volume of the Me-cam locez series offers the second part of the original Hebrew text of Proverbs (14:1) with its Judezmo adaptation. For a section of La guerta de oro, the Judezmo translations of Proverbs 1:8 and 14:1 are sufficient, and then the text of Proverbs 18:22 is presented in Hebrew only. A popular periodical from Salonika advises readers to heed the message expressed in Avot 2:5, presented in Judezmo translation. In each of these texts, the proverbial statement is denoted as a pasuk:

“Dize el pasuk ‘Wĕ-'iwwelet bĕ-yadeha tehersennu’ (ואולת בידיה Teherseno), kere dezir ke ‘La loka kon sus manos deroka su kaza’” “The verse says ‘But the foolish plucketh it down with her hands’ [=JPS], meaning that ‘The insane woman with her own hands destroys her house’” (Magriso, Sefer me-cam locez ḥeleq šeni, p. 82a).

“En dita letra se deklara el pasuk ke dize ‘Oe mi ijo kastigeryo de tu padre, i non deshes ley de tu madre’ ... [En] dita letra ... se deklara el pasuk ke dize ‘Mujer savia fragua su kaza, i la loka kon su mano la deroka’, komo tambyén el pasuk ke dize (Maṣa ‘iša maṣa tov) “In this letter is explicated the verse that says ‘Hear, my son, the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the teaching of thy mother’ [=JPS] ... [In] this letter ... is explicated the verse that says ‘Every wise woman buildeth her house, but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands’ [=JPS], as well as the verse that says ‘Whoso findeth a wife findeth a great good’ [=JPS]” (‘Atias, La guerta de oro, [iib], 55b-56a).

“No saves ke el pasuk dize: ‘I no djuzges a tu haver asta ke ayeges a su lugar’?” (“Don’t you know the verse that says, ‘Do not judge your fellow man until you have been in his position?’”) (El Rizón 13, no. 15 [Salonika 1938]).

In the popular satirical press the same term is also used, perhaps facetiously, to denote Judezmo folk proverbs and even international political mottoes bearing no direct relation to verses in sacred texts. In some instances the apparent irony is intensified by referring to adherence to the message of the proverb as afirmar la mizvá del pasuk (to fulfill the commandment of the verse). For example:
“El pasuk dished ‘Ija fuetes, madf re, lo ke azes resivirás’ Los masadjís kijeron este anyo afirmar la mizvá del pasuk: ‘Ni pan ni agua por mano de djudyó’” “The verse said … ‘You were a daughter, you shall be a mother, what you do you will receive’ … The matzah bakers wanted to fulfill the commandment of the verse ‘Neither bread nor water from the hands of a Jew’” (El DJujέ́tό́n 6, no. 5 [1914], p. 4).

“Este chiko negosyo está muncho reushendo grasyas a·la ahadud de sus aderentes; por esto disho el pasuk: ‘La unyón aze la fuerza’” “This little business is thriving thanks to the unity of its members; for this reason the verse said ‘In unity there is strength’” (El DJujέ́tό́n 6, no. 11 [1914], p. 8; cf. Fr. L’unión fait la force).

“El pasuk dize ‘Ala dolo de lo seko se kema i lo vedre’” (“The verse says: ‘Near dry wood, green wood too will burn’”) (El Rizό́n 13, no. 7 [1938]).

In some contexts this phrase is abbreviated to (la) mizvá (de), which then functions as a denotation for a proverb—even one of Turkish origin; for example:

“Kerēḥ afirmar la mizvá de ‘Kuando vesh el igtó, apareja el vestiđiko’” “Do you want to fulfill the commandment of ‘When you see a little fig, prepare the little suit [to give to children of the poor]’?” (El DJujέ́tό́n 5, no. 24 [1913], p. 4).

“Kijimos afirmar la mizvá de ‘Ya ich, ya uch’” “We wanted to fulfill the commandment of ‘Either nothing or everything’” (El DJujέ́tό́n 5, no. 1 (13), p. 3).

4.1.5 Literary terms of restricted use

In addition to the terms for ‘proverb’ discussed thus far, there are several denotations which are restricted to literary Judezmo. The first of these terms is already documented from the turn of the seventeenth century, and appears in the writing of an author whose language was influenced by contemporaneous Castilian. The other terms are documented from the end of the nineteenth century or later, and are found in the writings of authors influenced by modern Western European languages and literatures, from which they probably borrowed them:

90 For discussion of variants of this proverb, see Alexander, “‘Cast Thy Bread Upon the Waters’” (Note 51), pp. *287-288.

91 Note that, in an example in the preceding section, a variant of this proverb was referred to by a rabbinical author as a mashal.

92 Cf. Tk. Hiç üç, or Ya üç, ya hiç.
4.1.5.1 *Sentensya*
This may be compared with Castilian *sentencia* (< Lat. *sententia*), denoting a succinct, sober statement:

“... lo·ke dize el refrán, ke ‘Muchas vezes el ortelano avla buenas sentensias’”
“... what the proverb says, that ‘Many times the gardener speaks wise words’”)  
(*Fuente klara* 1595, 6a).

Probably under the influence of French *sentence*, Spanish *sentencia* or Italian *sentenza*, the word appears again in the modern era; for example:

<“sentensyas dogmatikas i refleksyones de vyejos savyos”> (dogmatic sentences and reflections of old sages) (Perahya 2008).

4.1.5.2 *Adadjyo*
Given the presence of word-medial -dj-, the term probably reflects Italian *adagio*:

“Por dezir ke una persona persiste en su idea, en sus demandas, dizen ‘Está en sus tredje.’ No es solamente onde los djudýos espanyoles ke emplean este adadjyo, ma tambyén en los kristyanos de·la Europa, onde los almanos partikolarmente”
“To say that a person persists in maintaining his own idea, or his own demands, they say ‘He keeps to his thirteen’”. 93 It is not only the Spanish Jews who use this adage, but also the Christians of Europe, and especially the Germans” (*El Enstruktor* 1:18 [Constantinople, 9, August 1888], 171).

4.1.5.3 *Máksima*
The term is apparently a late-nineteenth century learned borrowing from Spanish (*máxima*), perhaps with influence from French *maxime* or Italian *massima*:

“Mi buketo ... dichas de oro, máksimas i proverbyos” (My bouquet ... golden sayings, maxims and proverbs) (title of a folklore collection published in Salonika c1920).

93 Cf. the Thirteen Articles of Faith of Maimonides.
4.1.5.4. (pl.) Refleksyones
Seemingly an adaptation of French (réflexions) or Spanish (reflexiones), perhaps with influence from Italian riflessioni.\(^94\)

Sharl Limozín, Kontra el antisemitizmo: máximas i refleksyones, imitado por un eskrivano djudyó (title of a book published in Vienna 1889).

4.1.5.5 Aforizmo
Apparently a twentieth-century adaptation of French aphorisme, Italian aforismo/-a, or Spanish aforismo.

<“El biervo ebreo ‘mashal’ no es solamente ‘fábula’, ma tambien un kuento imajinario o alegoriko, aforizmo i proverbo”> “The Hebrew word mashal means not only ‘fable’, but also an imaginary or allegorical story, or an aphorism or proverb”.\(^95\)

4.1.5.6 Ekspresyón
This is a general term for an ‘expression’ of various kinds, and may be compared with French expression, Italian espressione, and Spanish expresión.

<“... muchos de mozotros konosen bien la ekspresion ke dize: ‘Ya vendio el kezo!’”> ‘... many of us well know the expression that says: “Now he’s sold the cheese”’ (Yehuda Hatsvi, Ladinokomunita, 26 August 2011).

4.2 SAYING
In this section we discuss Judezmo terms for concise expressions of wisdom or truth, as well as various types of idioms.

4.2.1 Dicha
To denote a ‘saying’, Castilian generally uses masculine dicho, the past participle of decir ‘to say’, and this is the term used in the sixteenth century by Rabbi Moshe Almosnino of Salonika, whose literary language, as was noted, represented that of the small elite group of his time which saw Castilian as its normative model. For example:

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95 Yehuda Hatsvi (https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#search/mashaliko/131fbc3d397726be).
“... el vulgo dicho ‘El tyempo pasado parece mejor ke el prezente’” “... the common saying ‘Past times seem better than the present’” (Almosnino 1564: ‘44b’ [=45b]).

“... el dicho del vulgo, ke komun mente (l)yaman ‘kruel’ a el muy airado” “... the saying of the popular sector, who commonly call a very angry person ‘cruel’” (Almosnino 1564: 88b).

Masculine plural (mis) dichos is also used as the translation of Hebrew אמרי (‘ămaray) ‘my words (or sayings)’ in Proverbs 2:1, in the Bible translation published in Ferrara, 1553, by former conversos, as it had been in the pre-Expulsion Hispanic Bible translations E5/E7, EV, E4, BNM.

In the traditional Jewish translations of Proverbs, however, the feminine gender of Hebrew אמרה (‘imra) ‘word, saying’ instead led to the innovative use of feminine dicha, for example, mis dichas in Proverbs 2:1 (dichas also appears as the translation of ‘ămaray in Proverbs 4:10 and 4:20) in the Ladino calque translation published in Salonika, 1572, and in that edited by Yisrael bĕxar Ḥayyim in Vienna, 1816. Dicha continued to be employed among Judezmo speakers to denote a ‘(proverbial) saying’ into the modern era, for example:

“Proverbyos o dichas” ‘Proverbs or sayings’ (El Kismet Poeta 1:9 [Izmir 1909], 3-4).

“Siempre estaba kon lu uno i lo esteso komo ke de eia veniva akeja diča: »La vieža kon sus tarajinas«” “She was always preoccupied by the same thing, as if it were about her that the saying arose, ‘The old woman with her noodles’” (Jevrejski glas 2:5 [Sarajevo 1928], 4).

“Mi buket... dichas de oro, máksimas i proverbyos” “My bouquet ... golden sayings, maxims and proverbs” (title of a folklore collection published in Salonika c1920).

“Ay otros proverbos i dichas ke entraron al judeo-espanyol...” “There are other proverbs and sayings that entered Judeo-Spanish...” (Dora Niyego, Şalom, 9 January 2008).

96 Reproduced, without vocalization, in Lazar, Ladino Scriptures (Note 44), vol. 2.
97 Cf. Perahya, Diksyonaryo Judeo Espanyol (Note 53), p. 82 s. <diça>.
98 It is a pleasure to thank Eliezer Papo for providing me with a copy of this source.
4.2.2 Palavra, byervo

The use of the terms palabra (Lat. parabŏla) and verbo (Lat. vĕrbum), literally denoting ‘word’, in the sense of ‘saying’ or ‘expression’, is old in Spanish. The use of corresponding Judezmo palavra and byervo probably has a long history as well, although documented examples seem to appear only in the modern era; for example:

**Palavra**

“‘Varda’ es una palabra que signifika ‘dar el paso’ a uno ke está koryendo; i ke los arabadjis de Bey oglú, en pasando, grian ‘Varda’ después ke ya echan en basho a las personas” “Varda ['Look out! Keep clear! Cf. Tk. varda < It. guarda] is a saying which means ‘to give way’ to someone who is running, and which the wagon drivers of Beyoğlu [Constantinople] shout after they have deboarded their passengers) (El Tyempo 1, no. 75 [Constantinople 1873], p. 17).

“Avlimos ... por la kriatura ke se topó sola en su kamareta i ke su madre se divertía en la kaza de djugo... Syertos ombres dezían ke si se muryó la kriatura, no es la kavza del djugo si no ke su mazal, la ora, ke le vino; i kon una palavra byen dicha en turko: 'Edjil imish, edjil!’” “We spoke about the child who [died when he] was left in his bedroom while his mother was enjoying herself in a gambling casino. Some people said that if the child died, it wasn’t because of the gambling, but rather his fate, his time, had come; and using a well-formulated saying of Turkish origin, ‘His hour of death had come’” (El Djugetón 5, no. 13 [1913], p. 2).

**Byervo**

“‘Enkoyamal’ ... dizen este byervo kuando avlan de alguna koza triste o de algún muerto i se boltan agora adresándosen a un amigo. Entonces le dizen ‘En kuyo mal’, lo ke kere dezir en espanyol puro: en akel esté el mal. El byervo ‘enkoyamal’ lo dizen tambyén en vezes por burla. Entonces el depende del lashón akódesh ‘im ko yomar’, lo ke iguala a ‘sozum yabaná’” “Enkoyamal ... they say this expression when someone speaks of something sad, such as a death, and then he begins to address his companion. In pure Spanish en cuyo mal means ‘may misfortune be upon him.’ But sometimes enkoyamal is said in jest. Then it reflects Hebrew אֶל כָּה יֵאָמַר [im ko yomar], meaning the same as Turkish sözüm yabaná ['pardon the expression’]” (El Meseret 8, no. 52 [Izmir 1904], p. 5).

100 Cf. Corominas and Pascual, Diccionario crítico etimológico (Note 46), vol. 4 (1985), s. palabra; ibid., vol. 5 (1986), s. verbo.
“No saves... el byervo ke dize ke ‘Kuanta mas eskura está la nochada, mas deprisa amanese?’” “Don’t you know ... the saying that says ‘The darker the night is, the earlier the day dawns’?” (Mesajero 4, no. 1069 [Salonika 1939]).

4.2.3 Palavra de-/dizidera
This phrase designates a ‘turn of phrase’, ‘manner of speaking’, or ‘common saying’, not to be taken literally, or a ‘proverb’ or ‘wise saying’:\textsuperscript{101}

<“Esta madre kitó al mundo bulá de fižos; palavra deziđera: tyene očo kriaturas”>
“This mother produced a flood of children; that’s just a manner of speaking: she has eight children” (Nehama, Dictionnaire du judéo-espagnol, p. 138 s. deziđera: palavra deziđera).
<“...el refran era ... komo una “palavra dizidera” ke se kulaneava en kada nada”>
“... the proverb was like a ‘wise saying’ that was used at every opportunity” (Yehuda Hatsvi, e-mail dated 30 April 2012).

4.2.4 Memrá
This Hebraism in Judezmo denotes a ‘saying’ or ‘expression’ and is documented in the early-twentieth-century manuscript dictionary of Nissim de Yehuda Pardo of Izmir: “Una memrá de fulano” “Someone’s expression”.

4.2.5 Fraza/Fraze
Another term for ‘expression’ or ‘saying’ which was probably part of the language of the elite Hispanizers in the sixteenth century and then disappeared from Judezmo, only to re-emerge in the modern era under the influence of Italian frase, French phrase, or Spanish frase is fraza or fraze:

“Yo veo kon mis propyos ojos ke todo el ke melda mis artíkolos se topa muy kontente, i la fraze ke kita despues de eskar es estos byervos: ‘Bueno darsa si[nyor] haham, si ay ken lo oya’.”
“I see with my own eyes that everyone who reads my articles is very content, and the expression he utters after finishing them consists of these words “You lecture well, honored Rabbi, but is anyone listening?”’ (El Djugetón 5:13 [1913], p. 1).
<“El reflan djudeo-espanyol es una fraza lapidaria, de forma fiksa...”>
“The

\textsuperscript{101} Cf. Šelomo Rosanes, Divre yême Yisra’el bê-Togarma, vol. 1, Dvir, Tel Aviv, 1930, p. 291.
Judeo-Spanish proverb is a lapidary phrase, of fixed form...” (Koen-Sarano, 2004, “El reflan djudeo-espanyol: Espejo de las komunitas sefaradis”, Aki Yerushalayim 75 (http://www.aki-zerushalayim.co.il/ay/075/075_08_reflan.htm)

4.3 Expressions of *Vox Populi*, the Voice of the People

In both speech and writing, proverbs and proverbial sayings are perhaps most often introduced not by stating terms denoting the genre, but rather by employing various phrases expressing the fact that they are statements reflecting the *vox populi*, what ‘we’, or ‘they’, or ‘the people’ say. Some of the most frequent of these formulations in Judezmo are the following:

4.3.1 *Dizen* ‘They say’ / *Uzan a dezir* ‘They are accustomed to saying’ / *Me dizen*

‘They tell me’

“*Kuando keren dezir por algún ombre ke es muy vyejo, dizien ‘Fulano tyene los anyos de Térah’*” “When they want to say of some man that he is very old, they say, ‘So and so is as old as Terah’” (Xuli 1730: 95a). “*Me dizen ke ‘Non kale despertar a·kyen durme’*” “They tell me that ‘One should not wake someone who is asleep’” (*Atias, La guerta de oro*, f. 48b).

“*Dizen ke ‘Las parás tyenen alas. Beemé ke es vedrá’*” “They say that ‘Money has wings’. Really it is true” (Jacques Danon, *La Epoka* 28, no. 1373 [Salonika 1903], p. 9).

<“De ay es ke dizien: “Guadrarse en las aldas de la madre”> “It is from this that they say ‘To hide/take refuge under your mother’s skirts’” (Rachel Amado Bortnick, Ladinokomunita, 8 October 2011).

When an author disagrees with the lesson apparently taught by a saying, he may refer to its users as *algunos dezmeoyados* ‘senseless people’ or some other derogatory expression; for example:

“... *algunos dezmeoyados* ... dizien, ‘Los males no kaminan por las montanyas’, ... *esta es una avla muy fea*” “... some senseless people ... say, ‘Troubles don’t travel through mountains’, ... this is a very ugly expression” (Šabbētay ben Ya’aqov Vitas, *Sefer mēšivat nefēš*, vol. 1, Constantinople 1743, p. 50b).
4.3.2 Komo/Asegún/Konforme dizen (la djente / el olam / el mundo) ‘As they (the people / the world) say(s)’

“Komo dizen la djente, ‘El ke tyene enforkado en su mishpahá, no le digan, “Enkólgame este peshkado”’” (“As the people say, ‘To one who has had someone in his family hanged, they should not say, “Hang this fish for me”’”) (Avraham ben Yiṣḥaq Asa (tr.), Yiṣḥaq Abohav, Sefer měnorat ha-ma’or … en ladino, Constantinople 1762, p. 28a).

“‘Lo medyano es syempre lo bueno’, aseguń dizen la djente; ‘Emsaí shalem (אמסא שלם)” ‘The middle road is always best’, as the people say; ‘The middle road is perfect’) (Yiṣḥaq Magriso, Sefer me-c-am ló’ez heleq šēliši, sefer wa-yiqra … en ladino, Constantinople 1753, 129a).

“Según dizen la djente, ‘Kuando el Dyo está kon ti go no te espantes de tu enemigo’” “As the people say, ‘When God is with you, do not fear your enemy’” (Mitrani, Sefer me-c-am ló’ez he[leq] af[leq] ‘al sefer Yĕhošuá, p. 29b).

“Konforme dizen la djente, ‘En pleyto no se desparte konfites sinó malas kuchiadas’” “As the people say, “In a fight one does not distribute hard candies but piercing words” ’ (Mitrani, Sefer me-c-am ló’ez he[leq] af[leq] ‘al sefer Yĕhošuá, p. 114b).

“Ya dizen la djente, ‘De-la manyana ya se vee el buen día’” “The people say, ‘From the morning a good day is seen’” (Eli’ezer ben Šem Ṭov Papo, Sefer Dammeseq ’Eli’ezer, vol. 1, ’Oraḥ ḥayyim, Belgrade 1862, p. 41b).

“Komo dizen ‘A la bizba, ni tu myel ni tu punchón’” “As they say, ‘To the bee, [I want] neither your honey nor your sting’” (Fintsi, Sefer leqet ha-zohar en ladino, 180b).


<“… dizen la djente ke ‘El camino al Gan Eden esta basho de los pies de la mujer”’> “… the people say that ‘The road to heaven is under the feet of a woman’” (Eliezer Papo, esefarad.com, 11 December 2011).

4.3.3 Es verdad lo-ke dizen ‘It’s true what they say’

“La tos i el balgam ke nos salia por la naríz era a karar ke no podiamos yorushear kon ningún adam hay… De kuando meldimos el avizo … por el raki ke vende si[nyor] Ventura, … mandamos a tomar kon bilik, i kon poko ke bevimos mos
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alegra, i ... birdén bírè mos se kurtó la tos. Es verdad lo·ke dizên: ‘Ne versan onû alırsın, ekmek isterSAN ekmekchidén al’” “The coughing and the phlegm that came out through our nose was such that we couldn’t speak with a living soul. But since we read the advertisement for the rakı that Mr. Ventura sells, we send for it by the demijohn; and with the little that we’ve drunk, it gladdened us, and all at once our cough stopped. It’s true what they say: ‘Whatever they give, take, if you want bread, buy it from the baker’” (El Djugetón 5, no. 4 [1913], p. 7).102

<“Es verdad lo ke dizên los turkos, ke ‘El guerko se meskla en todo lo ke se aze kon adjele’”> “It’s true what the Turks say, that ‘The devil mixes into everything that one does with haste’” (Rachel Amado Bortnick, Ladinokomunita, 7 March 2012).

4.3.4 Komo/Según dezimos ‘As we say’

“As we say when we want to praise some work, ‘Blessed are the hands that did such a thing’” (Fuente klara 1595, 49a). “No egziste ke un solo órgano seryo ke ‘Syerve por patah i por kamês’, komo dezimos vulgarmente” “There’s only one periodical that’s ‘Worth it’s salt’, as we say in the vernacular” (Aksyón [Salonika 9.2.1936], p. 1).

4.3.5 Non dezir ‘One shouldn’t say’

“... non dezir ‘Aspricos i diavlikos non pueden estar solikos’, ni menos dezir ke ‘El ganar enbeza a·la persona a·gastar’” “... one shouldn’t say ‘Little money and little devils shouldn’t be alone’, nor should one say ‘Earning money teaches a person to spend’” (“Atias. La guerta de oro, 57a).

4.3.6 Es ditađo ‘It is said’
The spoken-language character of the Judezmo proverbial saying is also alluded to in introductory remarks such as es ditađo ‘it is said’; for example:

“Es ditađo, ‘Asegún sale el hamín i el yerno’ ‘It is said, “How one’s Sabbath stew and one’s son-in-law turn out [is a matter of luck]’” (Asa 1733: 81b)

102 Cf. Ne verirsen onu alırsın, ekmeği isterSEN ekmekçiden al.
In introducing sayings, verbs of expression other than ‘say’, such as *responder* ‘to reply’, are also used; for example:

“Si me responderá alguno akí ke ‘Kyen non se resyente, non vyene de djente’, le diré ...” “If someone here replies to me that ‘One whose voice is not heard is not of respectable background’, I shall say ...” (*Atlías*, *La guerta de oro*, 25a).

5. Concluding remarks

The present article has focused on some significant divergences between the terminology denoting Judezmo proverbs and sayings used by members of the Judezmo speech community, and that employed by Hispanists who have collected and studied this Sephardic folk genre. For over a century, Hispanists have analyzed Judezmo folk traditions in terms reflecting Hispanic culture and its accepted academic lexicon and categorizations. But demonstrating a cultural independence of their own, Judezmo writers today, like Baruch ‘Uzi’el in the 1920s, increasingly employ terminology and categorizations rooted in the folk traditions of the Judezmo speech community itself, for example, the denotation of the ‘proverb’ as *reflán* by Matilda Koen-Sarano, as *mashaliko* by Yehuda Hatsvi, and as *proverbo* by Dora Niyego, and of the ‘saying’ as *dicha* by all. Perhaps one day scholars too will honor the bearers of this culture by analyzing its folk genres using the terminology and categorization preferred by Judezmo speakers, thereby adhering to a fundamental principle in the study of anthropology and culture.