

JUDÆO-ARABIC PRINTING IN NORTH AFRICA, 1850–1950

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Introduction

For almost four hundred years, since the first book was printed in Hebrew characters—Rashi’s commentary on the Pentateuch in Reggio di Calabria, Italy in 1475, nearly all Hebrew printing presses were located in European cities (Rome, Venice, Krakow, Prague, Amsterdam, Istanbul, Salonica, Izmir, Livorno, and Warsaw), where the Arabic language was not used by local Jewish communities. Some Hebrew books were printed in Spain and Portugal, prior to the expulsion of the Jews in 1492/96. In the sixteenth century, attempts to establish Hebrew printing presses in Arabic-speaking countries, namely in Fez (Morocco), Cairo and Safed (Palestine), were carried out by Jews from Spain, Italy, and Poland respectively. However, the production output of these printing presses, which survived for only a few years, was very small, not exceeding half a dozen books.¹ In any case, none of them was in Judæo-Arabic (henceforth JA).

JA refers to the Arabic language, written—or, in our case, printed—with Hebrew characters, as was customary among Arabic speakers in Jewish communities of old, a custom already prevalent in pre-Islamic (Ġāhīlī) Arabia.² JA was the main literary vehicle by which Jews, scholars as well as laymen, expressed themselves in mediaeval Arab lands, especially from the tenth to mid-thirteenth centuries. For reasons that do not fall within the scope of our present enquiry, the Jewish communities in Arab lands, save Yemen, almost totally abandoned Arabic as a literary, written language, and reverted to Hebrew, in particular, the scholarly writings of the rabbis.³ This, then, accounts for the lack of printed books published in JA until the mid-nineteenth century. Prior to this time, JA had been

¹ Vinograd, *Otsar ha-sefer ha-’ivri* (Jerusalem: Institute of Digitized Bibliography, 1993–95); Iakerson, *Catalogue of Hebrew Incunabula* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 2004–05).

² Tobi, “The Orthography of the pre-Saadianic Judæo-Arabic,” *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 34 (2004): 343–349; idem, “Literature, Judeo-Arabic,” *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 3:271–273.

³ Tobi, “Literature, Judeo-Arabic,” 3:274.

used in printed books solely by Christian scholars, from as early as the sixteenth century, for printing works of famous Jewish scholars, such as Saadia's *tafsīr* (Arabic translation of the Hebrew Bible), for the polyglots, and for Maimonides.⁴ Moreover, owing to the absence of printing presses in Arab countries, the rabbis in those countries had no choice but to print their Hebrew books in European cities where there were Hebrew printing presses, mostly in Venice, Istanbul, Amsterdam, and Livorno. Considering the means of transport used at that time, this was not an easy task to accomplish, to say the least.

Even so, JA had never been used solely as a spoken language by the Jews in Arab lands, despite the fact that there existed many separate dialects of Arabic, some of which were mutually incomprehensible. Rather, it was also used for their limited liturgical needs, such as for writing poems and biblical translations recited in the synagogues. These texts were not printed but kept in manuscript form. At that time, nearly all folk literature of the different genres (e.g., tales, songs, proverbs, and riddles) was written in JA script, by and large as oral literature, and intended for very wide and diverse segments of society, more notably the lower social stratum, whose exposure to rabbinical Hebrew and/or canonic literature was rare and exceptional.

The Beginnings of JA Printing in North Africa

The penetration of European powers into North Africa (henceforth NA), in particular by France, which took control of Algeria in 1830, brought about social and cultural changes, as well as innovative ideas affecting the lifestyle of peoples in the region. Many of these ideas were directly influenced by the French and industrial revolutions. One of the most significant results of this process was the establishment of Hebrew printing presses in every NA country:⁵ Algiers (1853) and Oran (1856) in Algeria,

⁴ E.g., Saadia's *tafsīr* of the Pentateuch, which was first printed in Hebrew characters in the Polyglot of Constantinople, 1546, and was later printed in Arabic characters in the Polyglots of Paris (1629–1645) and London (1657).

⁵ Not all Hebrew publishers in NA were privileged to have their publications fully listed. Many studies have been conducted on this subject, especially by the late Abraham Attal. The following is a list of the comprehensive bibliographies showing the publications of these presses, based on the chronological order of their founding: Algeria—Abraham Attal and Me'ira Harosh, "Ha-defūs ha-'ivrī be-Ālgīr," *Kiryat Sefer* 61 (1986/7): 561–572; Robert Attal, "Ha-'iton ha-yehudi ha-rishon ba-Magreb: l'Israélite Algérien (אִזְרִי), 1870," *Pe'amim* 17 (1984): 88–95; idem, "Ha-defūs ha-'ivrī be-Wahrān," *Kiryat Sefer* 68 (1998):

Tunis (1860) in Tunisia, Tangier (1891), Casablanca (1919) and Fez (1926) in Morocco, and Tripoli (1911) in Libya. The first books printed in Algiers and Tunis by Jews were, however, in Arabic, using Arabic characters, and clearly not directed to the Jewish public. Neither of these were printed by a Hebrew printing press:

- (a) The first, *Nuzāhat al-muštāq wa-ḡuṣṣat al-‘uṣṣāq fī madīnat Tiryāq fī l-‘Irāq* (1847), was a play by Abraham Daninos of Algiers, composed in the local dialect.⁶ However, as already noted, it was printed in Arabic characters, either because there was no Hebrew printing press in Algiers, or because the author himself wished to have it distributed among an Arab readership, comprised of both Muslims and French occupiers. We can assume that Daninos was influenced by the French plays that had been printed and performed in Algiers since the 1830s for the growing French population in that city, after its occupation in 1830.
- (b) A book of Hebrew blessings and a poem,⁷ as well as an Arabic poem composed in Arabic characters in praise of the Muslim Bey of Tunis,

85–92; Tunisia (including Livorno)—Robert Attal, *Ha-sifrut ha-‘Arvit ha-Yehudit be-Tunisyah: me’ah shenot yetsirah (1861–1961): tsiyunim bibliyografiyim* [Un siècle de littérature judéo-arabe tunisienne (1861–1961)] (Jerusalem: Institut Ben-Zvi, 2007); Jacqueline Fraenkel, “L’Imprimerie hébraïque à Djerba: étude bibliographique” (Thèse du doctorat, Paris III, 1982); Robert Attal, “‘Ittōnōt yehūdīt be-Tūnīsyah,” *Qešer* 5 (1989): 87–96; Morocco—Joseph Tedghi, *Ha-Sefer yeha-defus ha-‘ivri be-Fas* [Le livre et l’imprimerie hébraïques à Fès] (Jerusalem: Institut Ben-Zvi, 1994); Eliyyahu Marciano, *Sefer benē melakhīm ve-hū tōledōt ha-sefer ha-‘ivri be-Marōqō mi-šēnat 277–749 [1511–1989]* (Jerusalem: Makhon ha-Rašam, 1989); Robert Attal, “Ha-‘ittōnōt ha-‘ivrit be-Marōqō,” *Pe‘amim* 57 (1994): 125–131; Pierre Cohen, *La presse juive éditée au Maroc 1870–1963* (Rabat: Bouregreg, 2007); Libya—Me’ira Harosh, “Ha-defūs ha-‘ivri bi-Ṭrīpōlī še-be-lūv,” *Kiryat Sefer* 59 (1984): 625–634; 61 (1986): 375–376. For short, but exhaustive summaries on the history of Hebrew printing in NA during recent years, see Robert Attal, *Haggadat Algir: faqsimile šel ha-haggadā ha-rišonā še-nidpēsā bi-Zfon-‘Afriqā, Algir 5615* [La haggada d’Alger: fac-similé de la première haggada de Pessah] (Jerusalem, 1975), 5–9; idem. “Ha-defūs ha-‘ivri ba-Magreb,” in *Mi-Mizrah u-mi-Ma‘arav* 2 (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1980). For a bibliographical list of Jewish journals in the entire region of NA, see Robert Attal. *Kitve ‘eṭ ve-‘ittōnīm yehūdiyyim bi-šfon afrika* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1996).

⁶ For a publication of the text, see Shmuel Moreh and Philip Sadgrove, *Jewish Contributions to Nineteenth-century Arabic Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); see also, concerning the play itself, Moreh, “The Nineteenth-century Jewish Playwright Abraham Daninos,” *Judaism and Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2000): 409–416.

⁷ The name of the poem’s author is penned in acrostics at the start of each rhymed verse: **מִרְדְּכֵי כֹהֵן גִּוְנָא חֲזֵק**. He died in 1886. A eulogy of him by R. Šim‘on Nataf at the first anniversary of his passing (21 Sept. 1887) was brought to the printers in the year 1889; see Eusèbe Vassel, *La littérature populaire des israélites tunisiens* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1905–07): no. 103; Attal, *Ha-sifrut ha-‘Arvit -ha-Yehudit be-Tunisyah*, no. 1279. I could not find

Muḥammad Ṣādiq Bāšā (1859–1882), on the occasion of his accession to the throne. The Hebrew texts are accompanied by an Arabic translation in Arabic characters, to make them legible to the person who is being praised. As is known, this ruler took it upon himself to implement the statutory law declared by his brother, the Bey Muḥammad, in 1856, which promised equal rights to religious minorities. This publication⁸ was printed at the government press, an establishment managed at that time by an Englishman, Richard Holt (Tunis 1860).⁹

The establishment of these Hebrew printing presses was closely related to the proliferation of JA literature in NA. In this case, there is no reason to concern ourselves with the question about which came first. It is quite evident that the establishment of the North African Hebrew printing presses preceded the flowering of JA literature. Actually, it was the main factor, albeit not the sole one, for the natural increase and variety of JA publications.¹⁰

Let us begin with the most important, unequivocal fact: most of the printed materials published by these NA Jewish publishers were in JA script, the vast majority being small books and booklets, and even

any information on Mordechai Ganuna in other sources; it is likely that a certain Joseph Ganuna was Mordechai's son, one of the enlightened leaders of the Jewish community in Tunis at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century, and one of the more active persons involved in JA journalism in that city. Concerning him, see Yosef Tobi and Zivia Tobi, *Ha-Sifrut ha-'Arvit-ha-Yehudit be-Tunisyah (1850–1950)* [La littérature judéo-arabe en Tunisie (1850–1950)] (Lod: Orot Yahadut ha-Maghreb, 2000), 299 (index, s.v. כהן גנונה, יוסף).

⁸ This pamphlet is exceptionally rare. I have seen a copy of it only in the archives of Alliance Israélite Universelle in Paris. No mention or reference is made in it about the Jewish printing presses in NA, neither is there any historical record in it concerning the Jews of NA, nor has it been listed in the catalogue of any library, including the Hebrew National Library of Jerusalem. Nevertheless, it should be noted that an entry was given by Friedberg, *Bet Eked Sepharim I* (Tel Aviv: M.A. Bar-Juda, 1951), 167 (letter "bet), no. 1393, for the following: בקשת החיים והשלום, בעד מושל תונס. ע"ת (=עם תרגום) לערבית. תונס תר"ך 4⁰ a petition for life and peace, submitted to the ruler of Tunis, with an Arabic translation, Tunis 1860 4⁰). I do not know Friedberg's source. It should be noted that this was not the only case of blessings issuing from the Jewish community in Tunisia on the ruler's accession to the throne, but was apparently a common practice with the Jewish community. From Vassel, *La littérature populaire*, I have noted another four similar publications, most of them belonging to R. Juda Darmon (1812–1912) who was proficient in classical Arabic.

⁹ Concerning Richard Holt, see G. Zawadowski, "Richard Holt, pionnier de la presse tunisienne," *Revue Tunisienne* (1939): 127–131; André Demeerseman, "Une page nouvelle de l'histoire de l'imprimerie en Tunisie," *IBLA* 75 (1956): 301.

¹⁰ Concerning the proliferation of JA literature in Tunisia during this period, and the openness of the Jews of northern Tunisia toward Arab and European literature during that same period, see Tobi, *Ha-sifrut ha-'Arvit-ha-Yehudit be-Tunisyah*.

leaflets.¹¹ The question which naturally arises is: for whom were these printed copies made?

Since the JA used in all these printed editions was basically the vernacular that was spoken in each place, and not the classical JA known throughout the Middle Ages, which is a kind of middle Arabic, we may undoubtedly conclude that the target was not the narrow social stratum consisting of the rabbis and other scholars, but rather, the general public. We should note here that, in principle, all Jewish males could read Hebrew characters without any difficulty, as they were extensively educated for that end from the age of three or four. In any case, the rabbis and the scholars could certainly understand Hebrew texts. So colloquial JA was deliberately chosen to answer the needs of the general public.¹² This cultural exercise expressed most pointedly the trend toward democratisation in education, that is to say, providing literature that was written in the spoken language used by all members of the community, unlike the liturgical and rabbinical literature written in Hebrew, which would only be understood by small circles of religious students.¹³

The inability of the Algerian Jewish community to make use of the Hebrew language and their need to resort to books that were composed in the local dialect of JA to which they were accustomed, was expressly noted by several authors, as well as those publishers responsible for their printing, for example, by Rabbi Abraham al-Naqāwa, who initiated the translation project of *Dat Yehūdīt*, from Ladino into JA (Algiers 1855, p. 1, see below).

This leads us to the second most important question: what kinds of books were being printed in JA? Let us begin with the books printed in the oldest printing press, which was founded in Algiers. The first book, printed in 1853, was *Yedē Davīd*, novellae on Tractate *Nazīr* of the Babylonian Talmud (29 cm, 160 pp.), written by David Mu'attī, a local Jewish scholar.¹⁴ This Hebrew book, designated for rabbinical scholars, was printed in a local French printing house, Imprimerie Gueymard, by Ḥayyim Ze'ev

¹¹ Attal, *Ha-sifrut ha-'Arvit -ha-Yehudit be-Tunisyah*.

¹² Tobi, "L'ouverture de la littérature judéo-arabe tunisienne à la littérature arabomusulmane," in *Entre Orient et Occident: Juifs et Musulmans en Tunisie* (Paris, 2007), 255–275.

¹³ It appears that this trend is true also of JA publications in other Middle Eastern countries, including Egypt, which are outside the scope of the present enquiry.

¹⁴ For a photograph of the book's title page, see Attal, *Haggadat Algir*, iv; Attal, "Ha-defūs ha-'Ivrī ba-Magreb," between page 122 and 123; Attal, *Ha-sifrut ha-'Arvit -ha-Yehudit be-Tunisyah*, 24–25.

Aškenazi, an emissary of the Jewish community in Jerusalem to Morocco in 1834, who eventually settled in Algiers.¹⁵ It is probable that he brought with him Hebrew types from Jerusalem.¹⁶ We may assume that, as an outsider, he acted in accordance with his own view that such a scholarly work would be positively and widely accepted by the local Jewish community. Then, in the year 1853, Aškenazi printed a book in JA, more precisely, a booklet measuring 16 cm and containing 46 pp., entitled *Seder Havdala bi-l-'arabī*, or what was to be a liturgical compilation recited on the night of the Sabbath, replete with Hebrew and Arabic texts. There was nothing new or innovative about the Hebrew texts, which were already found in hundreds of printed prayer books. By contrast, the Arabic texts were unique to the Algerian rite, hitherto kept only orally or in manuscripts, but presented here for the first time for the use of the public.

Moreover, this imported innovation attracted two members of the local Jewish community, the brothers Ḥayyim and Jacob Cohen-Šolal, and in July 1853, they began to operate the first Hebrew printing press, using the Hebrew fonts of Aškenazi, who taught them the art of printing. Later, they even bought the Hebrew fonts from him.¹⁷ Eventually, these two brothers took on a much more substantial role, namely, to provide the Algerian Jewish communities with books written in their native vernacular and in the characters they knew, that is to say, in JA. However, the main focus here was not on the liturgical texts, but on the religious stories taken from Jewish history, fables, morals, and *halakhic* material, all of them conglomerated as novellae (commentary) on the book of Genesis, the first book of the Pentateuch. The publishers arranged the compilation, which was called *Šay La-Mōrā* (17 cm, 422 pp.), from the works of two

¹⁵ Yaari, *Šelūḥē ereš yisra'el* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1951), 860; Attal, "Ha-defūs ha-'Ivrī ba-Magreb," 122–123.

¹⁶ A comparison of the fonts used in printing the first books in Algiers and the fonts used in printing the Hebrew books in Jerusalem for the same years suggests a striking similarity between them. Certainly, the typefaces used by Aškenazi were not like those used in the Livorno printing presses. Ḥayyim Ze'ev Aškenazi is not mentioned as a publisher of books, nor in any other context by Shoshanna Halevy, *Sifre Yerushalayim ha-rishonim: ha-sefarim, ha-hovrot yeha-dapim she-nidpesu be-otiyot 'Ivriyot ba-ḥamishim ha-shanim ha-rishonim li-defūs ha-'Ivrī bi-Yerushalayim, 601–650, 1841–1890* [The first Hebrew books printed in Jerusalem] (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1975). Attal, "Ha-defūs ha-'Ivrī ba-Magreb," 123–124n8, makes note of the similarity between the decorative artwork on the title pages and on the other pages of the first books printed in Algiers, Oran, and Tunis, and books printed in Salonica during the same period, and surmises that Aškenazi had brought the types from Salonica.

¹⁷ Attal, "Ha-defūs ha-'Ivrī ba-Magreb," 124; Attal and Harosh, "Ha-defūs ha-'ivri be-Ālgīr," 561–562.

Algerian rabbis, Solomon Zaraqā and Juda Ḍarmon. This comprehensive book was aimed at the Jewish public, with an extensive JA commentary on the book of Genesis, having “novelties and *halakhic* rules [...] proverbs and fables, tales and ethical homilies.” This most challenging work was not completed until 1854, and it became the first comprehensive JA book ever to be printed, if we ignore the earlier JA books printed in India.

In the following year, 1855, Cohen-Šolal printed another rabbinical book, a *halakhic* dissertation directed, in this case, at women, regarding their duties at home, such as the laws governing their menstrual cycle and dietary foods: *Dat Yehūdīt bi-l-‘arabī* (16 cm, 217 pp.). This work was not an original one, but translated by R. Jacob al-Naqāwa from a Judæo-Spanish (Ladino) work having the same name (save, of course, *bi-l-‘arabī*), the authors of which were Abraham Laredo and Isaac Ha-Levi. It should be noted that the initiative to publish the JA translation was not made by the printers themselves, but by Abraham al-Naqāwa, one of the leading North African rabbis, who summoned his brother, Jacob, to produce the translation and who took advantage of the new Hebrew printing press in NA for his socio-religious needs.

Cohen-Šolal possessed the only Hebrew printing press in Algiers until 1886, when Šalom Bekāche, who had come from Bombay eight years earlier, and Abraham al-‘Asrī, opened two additional Hebrew presses in the city.¹⁸ Their publications, all of them in JA, had essentially the same characteristics found in Cohen-Šolal’s books, but the new printing presses could do more than their predecessor in terms of specialized functions used in transliterating the colloquial JA into Hebrew characters. As mentioned above, Cohen-Šolal purchased from Aškenazi the Hebrew fonts he had brought from presses in Jerusalem. These were not the regular square typefaces, but a semi-cursive typeface, known also as Rashi fonts. In addition, they were very small and extremely eroded, to the extent that the printed text was hardly legible. Another failure of the printers, which is discussed in the following pages, was the highly inconsistent method of transliteration used, remote not only from classical Arabic but also from traditional JA, which had been used in manuscripts since the Middle Ages.

The real competition with which Cohen-Šolal had to contend was from the more established and experienced Hebrew printing presses in Livorno, the most renowned and highly acclaimed centre of Hebrew printing

¹⁸ Robert Attal, “Les publications judéo-arabes du rabbin Chalom Bekache imprimeur et publiciste à Alger,” *Alei Sefer* 2 (1976).

during the nineteenth century, and known in particular for its clear-cut Hebrew typefaces. No wonder, then, that the second part of *Šay La-Mora* was printed in Livorno (1864), rather than in Algiers, as was the first part of the book. Actually, sundry and diverse JA texts had been published by printing presses in Livorno since the beginning of the nineteenth century, many of them appearing in different liturgical compilations based on the rites of the several NA Jewish communities: Moroccan, Algerian, Tunisian, and Libyan.

The first NA Hebrew printing press established after the one in Algiers was in Oran, or Wahrān, as originally pronounced. It was built in 1856, but it did not offer any improvements, as it was operated by the same Ḥ. Z. Aškenazi with the same flawed fonts. The first book printed was *Ševaḥe ʔlohim*, a corpus of religious poems, most of them in Hebrew, but some also in JA, compiled by Nissim Kresenti. At the end of the said work is appended *ʔaseret Ha-Devarim*, a widespread and highly popular JA composition on the Ten Commandments, and one that is recited by all NA congregations on the Feast of Pentecost. The work has been attributed to Saadia Gaon.

A major turning point took place in Tunis in 1860. Special fraternal ties had developed between Livornese Jewry and the Jews of Tunis, owing to the reputable community of the Livornese Jews who migrated to Tunis at the end of the seventeenth century, and who were very insistent on living as a separate and independent community there. This fact, in addition to the geopolitical location of Tunis as the closest place in NA to France and to Italy, made the Jewish community of Tunis the most populous one in NA during the nineteenth century, as well as the one most exposed to European culture, civilisation, and technology. Therefore, the trend of the Jewish printers of Algiers, which was to provide the Jewish public at large with digested, popularised material, was continued in Tunis. However, its openness to the surrounding, larger Arab population and to European culture also signified an abrupt change of course. Historically, we have to connect this new trend with the new constitution published by the Tunisian Bey, Muḥammad Šādiq Bāšā, in 1857, which granted the Jews, as well as other minorities, equal rights, bringing to an end the long-standing discriminatory regulations levelled against non-Muslims. In 1861, two Jews of the local Livornese community asked Moses (Bīšī) Šemāma, one of the few Jews who could read and write Arabic characters fluently, to translate the new constitution, *Qānūn al-dawla al-Tūnisīya*, into JA for the Jewish public. Since there was no Jewish printing press in the city, they petitioned the help of Ḥayyim Ze'ev Aškenazi of Algiers to provide them with

the state-of-the-art Hebrew types which he had purchased in Livorno, in order to print therewith the JA version of the *Qānūn* in a local printing house owned by an Englishman named Mansfield.¹⁹ The following year, they established their own printing press, and in the years to come many others followed.

Between the years 1860 and 1950, no fewer than 1,400 JA items of all literary and social genres were printed in Tunis, in Livorno, and in Sousse. These texts, by and large, were unrelated to the traditional, religious life-style of the Jewish community. Very few religious texts were published, such as prayer books and *halakhic* works. It seems that the Jews of Tunis, as well as the adjacent Jewish communities in the north of the country, discovered the cultural and sociopolitical power of the art of printing and took advantage of it to express themselves, and to fulfill their aspirations. They thereby created a new school of JA literature. Yet, after two generations, it became evident that JA publications were merely used as a spring-board to something else: an attraction to European, or more precisely, to French culture. After the end of World War II, there was virtually no demand for JA prints in northern Tunisia, as the Jews there adopted French as their spoken and written language, leaving behind the JA culture of their ancestors. This was not the case in southern Tunisia, where since the 1910s, Hebrew printing presses had been established for the purpose of countering the secular trends in the north. Southern rabbis created a huge industry of JA prints, all of them intrinsically connected to Jewish religious themes and nationality, in order to nullify the 'destructive' impact of JA publications from the north. Unlike those from the north, JA publications from the south continued to be sold, and held by Jews from southern Tunisia in great esteem, even after their emigration to Israel or France.

¹⁹ For a photograph of the title page of this extremely rare booklet, see Attal, *Haggadat Algir*, vi; Attal, "Ha-defūs ha-ʿIvri ba-Magreb," 122–123. On the title page is written the name of the publisher thus: במטבעת מיסתר מונץ פילד אלאנגליו (= in the printing press of Mr. Mansfield, the Englishman). Attal (*Haggadat Algir*, 8n6; idem, "Ha-defūs ha-ʿIvri ba-Magreb," 123n7) thinks that Richard Holt is meant, but he offers no support for his assumption. From the Hebrew words referring to Richard Holt's printing press, in the booklet בקשת החיים והשלום (p. [8]), i.e., "printed in the government press by Richard Holt" (same in Arabic, p. 12: طبع بالمطبعة الملكية الكابنة لشارد هولط), it would appear that these were two separate printing presses, although both were run and operated by English craftsmen: the one belonging to Mansfield was privately owned, whereas the one operated by Holt was government owned.

The Cultural Trends of the Printed JA Literature

The obvious aim of Cohen-Šolal and al-Naqāwa, who recruited honourable rabbis for the purpose, was educational: to equip the Jewish public at large with digested popularised rabbinical material. The brothers continued their project with some other books, most of which were JA translations or compilations, not original works, aimed at the general public. Thus, for instance, they asked the same two rabbis—Solomon Zarqā and Juda ʔarmon—to prepare another compilation of translated texts, this time about one of the most popular stories in Jewish history, the story of the righteous Joseph and Zulaykha, Potiphar’s wife (*Yosef Hen*, 1854, 17 cm, 44 pp.). The core of the story is, of course, biblical, but it was augmented with witty details from later Jewish and other sources. Undoubtedly, this was a popular love story, but one should not ignore its moral lesson, namely, how a Jewish man ought to keep himself from the temptations and deceitfulness of a gentile woman.

However, the educational tendencies of Cohen-Šolal were by no means limited to those wanting to study religion and traditional Jewish studies, but also included what might be identified as secular scholarship, and expressed the messianic aspirations of the Jewish people at that time. Two booklets published by Cohen-Šolal in the year 1854 attest to this fact; these books tell of the Ten Tribes living somewhere in India, beyond the mythological river of Sambatyōn, in an independent state (*Hādā al-māsaḥif min naʿt masāḥif al-musammā*²⁰ *meʿen nesiʿat yisraʿel*, 16 cm, 28 pp.; *Šeʿerit yisraʿel*, 16 cm, 42 pp.).

This tendency is clearly shown from the preface of Mordechai Šimūl, who translated *Sefer Yōsīfūn* into JA. It finds expression even more clearly in the second preface, whose anonymous author elaborates on the advantages of reading *Sefer Yōsīfūn* when translated into the Arabic dialect spoken by the Jews of Algiers, and not merely from the standpoint of expanding one’s knowledge and familiarity with customs, but toward developing writing skills in small children.²¹ It is hard to ignore the lack of consistency in the words of the writer, where he says the printed

²⁰ The Arabic transliteration is based on its phonetic sound and reflects the pronunciation of the Jews of Algiers. The spelling, based on classical Arabic, should rather have been: *hādhā al-maṣāḥif min naʿt maṣāḥif al-musammā*, etc. In the list of Algiers publications in Attal and Harosh, “Ha-defūs ha-ʿivrī be-Algīr,” 563, no. 6, there are errors in the title given for the book.

²¹ *Sefer Yōsīfūn bi-l-ʿarabī*, part II (Algiers, 1855): [6]–[7].

translation will serve as a model for learning the correct pronunciation and acquiring a knowledge of *plene* and *defective scriptum*. This is despite the fact that a transliteration of the translation reflects, presumably, the Arabic dialect spoken by the Jews of Algiers, but is certainly far from revealing anything about constancy or stability (see below).

A different tendency, related to the Jews of Algiers and their lack of proficiency in Hebrew, and which merely points to their being drawn toward French secular literature, finds expression in Rabbi Mordechai Şrūr's preface to the book, *Qōl sasōn*, "a collection of stories written in the colloquial tongue of Arabic which is spoken amongst us here in the city of Algiers, may God protect her: vol. I, collected and extracted from different books, such as the book, *Ōseh pele*, and those like unto it":²²

Unto this very day, they have not so much as voiced their opinion about this matter [i.e., the study of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Mishna, Talmud, etc.], for they say [even] at this time: "Whatsoever I can't understand, I'd say I shall not read!" Yet, to enhance their knowledge, they buy story books belonging to the Christians (romances), and for the majority of people who buy newspapers, it is not so that they can see the news in them, but rather, to read the stories in them (*feuilleton*). Wherefore, I have deemed it fitting to make this book in Arabic, a book that tells of the miraculous works and wonders that the Holy One, blessed be He, has wrought for our forefathers in every generation.

The intent of Rabbi Mordechai Şrūr was, in effect, to distance the Jewish community from reading secular French literature, whether books or newspapers, which, in those times, published romances as serials in order to increase their readership, since readers who had no interest in the news would purchase the newspaper simply for its *feuilleton*, meaning, the same romance section which was published in that daily or weekly edition. It should also be noted that the newspapers printed in JA in Tunisia and in Algeria adopted the method of publishing *feuilletons*. Complete romances in JA were initially published in newspapers that had follow-ups to the stories, and only afterwards were they published as books by themselves.

One can also conclude from the words of Mordechai Şrūr that JA and French were the two languages that competed with each other among the Jewish community in Algiers during the 1880s—this is similar to what was happening in the Jewish communities in northern Tunisia. This eventually culminated in a French victory; whereas Hebrew—who even

²² *Qōl sasōn* (Algiers, 1885), [3]–[4].

remembered its name? It was rejected outright, not only because of JA, but also because of French.²³ In general, not only did French become pre-eminent among Jews of NA (with the exception of the inhabitants of small towns and villages), but also the Latin alphabet usurped the place of the Hebrew alphabet.²⁴ Furthermore, we see a phenomenon that characterises the Jewish communities of northern Tunisia; after World War I, texts that were printed in JA were accompanied by a transliteration in Latin characters for those readers in the community who still understood JA, but who found it hard to read Hebrew characters. Another good example of this process is the romance novel, *Bayn ḥuyūt Tūnis* [Among the walls of Tunis] by Michel Uzan, which was first published in Tunis in 1926, in its original JA, but whose author, in 1956, had it republished in Tunis, this time with a French translation: *Entre les murs de Tunis*.

This natural process resulted in a great decrease in JA publications, because those who understood JA and who could read the Hebrew alphabet had, themselves, declined in number. Jewish intellectuals in NA adopted the French language for written works, and these publications did not require Hebrew printing presses. This, then, was the state of affairs, with the one exception of the Hebrew printing presses in Djerba, where the industry of JA book publication, with its diverse literary genres, had developed to its greatest extent.²⁵

*The Correlation between neo-JA Orthography of North Africa
and Mediaeval JA Orthography*

As noted, the years 1850–1950 yielded a great harvest of publications of varied and diverse genres in JA, which were produced in Jewish-owned printing houses in NA communities, especially in Tunisia, and which were intended for large social groups among the Jewish communities. The central question that confronted the publishers—like many other questions that are not directly related to our enquiry here, such as the literary genres of the printed material—was how to represent in a graphic way the Arabic language, which, as noted, was colloquial Arabic rather than classical Arabic. Naturally, the Hebrew alphabet was selected, in keeping with the

²³ Concerning the growing popularity of French among the Jews of northern Tunisia, see Tobi, “L’ouverture de la littérature judéo-arabe tunisienne.”

²⁴ Attal, “Ha-defūs ha-‘Ivri ba-Magreb,” 129.

²⁵ Fraenkel, “L’Imprimerie hébraïque à Djerba.”

ancient tradition preserved by the people of Israel of writing the foreign languages that they adopted, whether as a mode of communication or creativity, in Hebrew characters. Indeed it is almost certain that already before the rise of Islam, Jewish communities in the northwestern parts of the Arabian Peninsula rendered an Arabic translation of the Hebrew Bible by using Hebrew characters. The orthography found in these texts is not compatible with the rules of grammar used in classical Arabic, which were consolidated and settled just prior to the tenth century.²⁶

Rav Saadia Gaon (henceforth Saadia) came along at the beginning of that century and renewed JA orthography, based on the rules of classical Arabic.²⁷ Saadia's method quickly spread among all Jewish communities, those living in the far reaches of Arabic-Muslim culture, but, in particular, in the works of the scholars. Even so, the old orthography was never completely rejected, particularly in the old biblical translations before Saadia, which apparently even after his radical innovation, continued to be copied from the earlier forms. These preceded him, so in practice, the old method was preserved.²⁸ The one fundamental difference which distinguishes the old method from the one established by Saadia is that it is based on phonetic sounds, meaning, it represents the pronunciation of the Arabic dialect spoken by a people in a certain place and is, therefore, not bound by the classical Arabic way of spelling, as we have noted above.

This principle of writing phonetically repeats itself and is most felt in the orthographic base used in writing JA over the last few hundred years, but, especially, with the establishment of Hebrew printing presses in NA countries. Just as its creators chose the colloquial JA dialect in each place to express their thoughts and disseminate knowledge among the masses, so, too, did they apply to this dialect the conventional spelling system of words based on their phonetic sounds. This is because proper reading—which would enable a person to understand texts that were written by the conventional spelling (orthography) used in mediaeval classical JA—

²⁶ See Tobi, "On the Antiquity of the Judeo-Arabic Biblical Translations," *Ben 'Ever La-'Arav* 2 (2001), 17–27; Tobi, "The Orthography of the Pre-Saadianic Judaeo-Arabic," 271–273; cf. Haarman, "An Eleventh-century Précis of Arabic Orthography," *Studia Arabica & Islamica* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1981). Much has been written in recent years about Arabic orthography during the first centuries following the rise of Islam, and its close connection with JA orthography during that period. However, this subject does not fall within the scope of our present enquiry.

²⁷ Tobi, "On the Antiquity of the Judeo-Arabic Biblical Translations," 23–29.

²⁸ The orthography used in JA which preceded Saadia has been described in different studies. See Tobi, *Ha-Shirah, ha-sifrut ha-'Arvit-ha-Yehudit yeha-Genizah* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2006), 22n53.

requires a certain familiarity with classical Arabic. Certainly, this was not a decision based on ideological considerations, such as those that prompted the few authors in modern times who have written their works in flowery, highbrowed Hebrew, or in classical Arabic with Arabic characters. There was no real market for these works, in contrast to the large consumer market for colloquial and phonetic JA literature.²⁹ In the event that Arabic texts were printed in Arabic characters, this was not done to meet any need of the Jewish community, but rather to maintain a good standing with the Muslim government—blessings and songs in honour of the beys in Tunisia, or in honour of the Ottoman sultan (above, note 5). The increase in activity in literary work written in JA, and its submission to the publishers for printing, especially in Tunisia (whether in Tunis or Sousse in the north, or Djerba in the south), presented the printers with a challenge never before confronted by earlier generations of writers of JA.

The main sources for examining JA orthography printed in NA in modern times are the thousands of publications that have been printed at the Hebrew presses in that area, beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century. A close examination of them clearly reveals that from the standpoint of JA orthography in these publications, one must divide the Jewish communities of NA in modern times into two principal groups: East—Libya, Tunisia, and eastern Algeria (Constantine); and West—western Algeria (Algiers and Oran) and Morocco. These two groups are alike in that both used a phonetic method of spelling. But in the eastern group, this method is closer to the spelling of classical JA that was used in the Middle Ages, than the one employed by the western group. We can assume that this was influenced to a great extent by their different pronunciations of Arabic, by which we can also divide, diametrically, the respective Jewish communities in NA into these two groups.

²⁹ For extravagant Hebrew writing in Tunisia, see Tobi, “The Attitude to the Hebrew Language and its Study in Tunisia,” in *The Jews in Tunisia* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2009), esp. 273–279, 304–307. In the year 1885, the Jewish newspaper *Al-Šams* was published in Paris, the only newspaper belonging to the Jews of Tunisia in which there were printed Arabic characters (two pages in Arabic characters and two pages in Hebrew characters). However, the newspaper did not last very long (only thirty-five issues), since only a few Tunisian Jews took an interest in it. Proof of this can be seen in the renewal of its printing in 1904 as a weekly journal, but this time, only in Hebrew characters. See Vassel, *La littérature populaire des israélites tunisiens*, 28, 40–41; Tobi, “L’ouverture de la littérature judéo-arabe tunisienne,” 269.

The JA Orthography in the Early Printings of Algeria

As already stated, the first JA printing in this area was at a press owned and operated by a non-Jew in the city of Algiers in the year 1853, in Rashi's script, using fonts brought either from Jerusalem or from Salonica. These types were very worn-out, resulting in the print being far from aesthetic. The first comprehensive book was the aforementioned *Šay La-Mora* (1854), an expanded JA commentary on the Book of Genesis, intended for the general Jewish public. Beside the fact that the Arabic reflects the Jewish dialect spoken in eastern Algeria, its orthography is identical to that of JA manuscripts before the invention of the printing press, aside from one important matter: the distinction between the phonetic sound of *ǧīm* (ج) and *ǧayn* (غ) has been made not by the insertion of a diacritical point above the Hebrew letter *gimal*, but rather by a diacritical point beneath the *gimal* on account of the *ǧīm* (ج), while a point is made above it on account of the *ǧayn* (غ), apparently owing to the influence of the diacritical points in the corresponding Arabic letters. An example is לְגַמְעָא לְכָל מִשְׁגָּוֹל (p. 65). Even so, it is difficult to say that the printers were sensitive to orthography, while the JA texts themselves were not always faithful to phonetics, particularly as concerned the use of the letter *aleph* as a *plene letter*: e.g., באעד > בעד (p. 169); יאעמל > יעמל (p. 192); חב שי > חאבש (p. 193); נאחרק לי > נחרק לי (ibid.); ישעאל > ישעל (p. 328); as also in the doubling of the letter *wāw*, even at the beginning of a word: e.g., וואחאד > ואחד (p. 49); ווצט > וסט (p. 49); ווליד > ולדת (p. 142).

The augmentation of the phonetic character is evident in the orthography of the book, *Dat Yehūdīt*, a different JA composition (Algiers, 1855), which, too, had the Jewish public in mind, but especially women, whose knowledge of Hebrew was mediocre at best, as Rabbi Abraham al-Naqāwa, who initiated the translation of the book into JA in the dialect spoken by the Jews of northwest Africa, explained in his introduction (see above). Rather, in this composition is found a phenomenon that is not known from earlier JA texts, that is to say, the doubling of the accentuated consonant when enunciating: אללי > אלי (p. 1); יתמששא > יתמשא (p. 3); ברא > בראא (p. 20); סלא > סלאא (p. 57); יתעללם > יתעללם (p. 90); ויתכֹּלס > ויתכֹּללס (p. 90); יכֹּרְגֹו > יכֹּרְגֹוּ (p. 105). This phenomenon is not known in classical JA scripts from the Middle Ages, neither has it been seen in JA scripts from an earlier period. It is presumed that this phenomenon was influenced by the transliteration of Arabic texts into Latin

characters, which European scholars of Oriental studies in the nineteenth century had predetermined.³⁰ The confusion between the emphatic letters and the regular letters is recognized in the phonetic shift: קאן > כאן; ק > כ (p. 1); קאנית > כאנת (p. 20); קבירה > קבירא (p. 21); קלאם > כלאם (p. 15); לקאמון > אלכמון (p. 93), as opposed to: ולכאמון (p. 98). ג > כ: וּגְסַלְתָּהָא > וּכְסַלְתָּהָא (p. 20), as opposed to: וּתְגַסְלָא (p. 44). In some rare instances there is given a graphic expression also for the phenomenon known as the *imāla*: קאנית > כאנת (p. 20).

Actually, these phonetic phenomena are known also from JA texts printed before the establishment of the Hebrew press in Algiers, e.g., *Sefer Sekhiyyōt haḥemdah wehū pesaḥ me'ubbīn*, which Eliyahu Ben Amozeg had had printed in Livorno in the year 1852, at the press belonging to the brothers Moshe and Israel Palache and Solomon Belforti.³¹ The lack of sensitivity to classical spelling in Arabic, stemming most likely from their not knowing classical Arabic writing in Arabic characters, is especially notable in the Moroccan JA *šarḥ* (commentary) on the Passover Haggadah (Algiers 1855): מצר > מאצר (p. 8); וּאִכְתָּר > וּאִכְטָאר (p. 16); וּסְמַע > וּאִסְמַאע (p. 20); וּנְטָר > וּאִנְדָר (ibid.); וּאִלְצָפָאדַע > וּדוּוּאִדִיעַ (p. 26). This method is actually typical of Moroccan JA in MSS and in printed texts.

Or Ne'erav: *Translation of the Pentateuch into JA at the Initiative
of Rabbi Eliyahu Ben Amozeg, and its Orthography*

It seems that the strengthening of the vulgar character of JA orthography in the first printed texts of Algiers and Oran did not sit well with the printers in Livorno and with the scholars of Tunisia. Rabbi Eliyahu Ben Amozeg (1823–1900), an enlightened man of the rabbinate, born in Mogador in Morocco, who emigrated to Livorno with his parents while he was only three years old, and who, at length, came to officiate there as rabbi for fifty years, initiated the publication of a wide range of JA compositions, which are, from a linguistic standpoint, free from the spoken dialects. Ben Amozeg's image is that of a thinker in the academic world, an innovative rabbinic fighting figure, but nothing is mentioned in academic

³⁰ For meetings between Orientalists of Europe and Jewish scholars of NA, see Joseph Fenton, "He-Ḥakham Mordekhai Najjār," *Mahut* 25 (2002), 116–119.

³¹ The JA texts (pp. 44a–52b) are instructions treating the ritual performed on the night of Passover, interspersed between liturgical passages. Based on the language it can be determined that the JA dialect of northwest Africa is most likely that of Morocco, the birth place of Ben Amozeg.

literature about his efforts to prepare a new JA translation based mainly on the *tafsīr* of Saadia, either with respect to its language and orthography, or its wording. In this regard, it differed from *Šay La-Mōrā* which had been printed only a few years before in Algiers (1854), and which was a homiletic translation, compiled in the colloquial tongue and in highly phonetic orthography. Likewise, even the scholars of recent generations who have dealt with JA translations in NA have not so much as hinted at this translation, which presumably served as the basis for many of the later ones. On this matter, Ben Amozeg turned to Rabbi Michael Maḥlūf, the son of Abraham ‘Allūn, a wise man of NA descent whose proficiency in the Arabic language far exceeded that of the spoken dialects.³² Even so, since the *tafsīr* written by Saadia was no longer understood by the members of the Jewish community in those days, Rabbi Michael ‘Allūn made adaptations in the book, largely so that it would be understood by its readers. This translation, which was called *Or Ne‘erav*, was intended to be used in place of the translation that Jewish school teachers had used in the different Arabic-speaking communities in eastern lands and in NA (*šarḥ*). In his view—and, presumably, this view was shared by Ben Amozeg—it was corrupt, as he had determined in his introduction to the translation of the Book of Genesis (the page following the title page).

The indecisiveness of the printers in Livorno about the orthography of JA is evidenced by the note (*mūda‘ā Rabbā*), at the end of the Book of Numbers in *Or Ne‘erav*:

The language that we have used for this translation is based upon the pure Arabian tongue, and upon the Arabic translation left to us by our Master, Saadia Gaon, may peace be upon him, aside from the variations in text which we have placed between parentheses, according to the changes that are found among each and every people, according to the languages used in their respective countries, in accordance with their nationalities, in order that it may be accepted by all our brethren the sons of Israel, who dwell, some in the lands of the East, Egypt and Aleppo, others in the countries of the Maghreb, Tunis, Algiers and Morocco. [...]

In every place where you find in the Arabic translation a *gimal* with a dot above it, read it as a guttural letter. For example: אגִּי, meaning, ‘aside

³² I have not seen any reference to the translator or to the name of his family (‘Allūn) in other sources. However, the family name ‘Allūn is known from the Jewish communities in Morocco, such as Fez and Meknes (I thank Prof. Moshe Bar-Asher for this information). In any case, the translation is not indicative of the provincial dialect of any particular community, although I have found that the translator (having merely checked the Book of Genesis) usually makes use of the provincial Arabic word *tawwa* (JA: תווא), customarily used by the Jews of Tunisia as a translation for the Hebrew word עתה (=now).

from, 'גַּצֹּב, 'wrath and anger,' גַּסֹּל, 'bathe.'³³ In every place where you find it with a dot below it, read it as a dental letter, like in גַּמֶּל, for 'camel,' יַגְרִי, for 'he will run,' רַגַּע, for 'he returned.'³⁴ Let this general rule be set before you, that the nature of this dot is genuine and is based on the tongue of the Ishmaelites and on their writing, which are a principal thing with the Arabic language.³⁵ In like manner, the ancient Jews in Arab lands had been accustomed to write in this way, just as everyone can see in the old manuscripts that are with me.³⁶

Also, to this very day, they still make use of this pointing in the interior of the Maghreb, and in the countries of Algiers and its environs.

It should be pointed out that the orthography in this composition is stable and rigidly applied, in stark contrast to that in the printed works in Algiers. However, as for the letters *yod* and *waw*, although not the letter *aleph*, there are times when they serve as *matres lectionis* also in places where they would not serve that way in classical Arabic. It is interesting to note that in the orthography of Hebrew names, the copyist allows himself to add *alephs* in *plene scriptum* in an exaggerated manner, as if they were *matres lectionis*: עמינדב > עמינדב (Num. 31:1); צורישדאי > צורישדי (ibid.); and even after the vowels *šewā na'*, *šere* and *segol*, something which I cannot explain: e.g., זבולן > זבולן (ibid.); גארסון > גארסון (ibid.); ממלכת > ממלאכת (ibid., 90a). It is also worth noting how the copyist doubles the accentuated consonant: e.g., ברית > בררית (ibid.); ונתכללם > ונתכללם (ibid., 33a); כַּרְגֹּו > כַּרְרֶגֹּו (ibid., 42a). However, there is no regularity in this matter: e.g., ומדברינהו (ibid.); תנקלת (ibid., 34a); ותכלמת (ibid., 35a). Incidentally, I do not know if the doubling of the accentuated consonants is due to the influence of European transliterations of Arabic texts. In any case, one sees a very clear trend of scrupulous adherence to the rules of orthography.

The Orthography of JA Printed in Tunisia

The orthography of JA in Tunisian manuscripts reflects, in principle, the orthography of JA literature printed also in Tunisia from the beginning of

³³ That is to say, as in the Arabic letter اغير, غضب, غسل: غ.

³⁴ That is to say, as in the Arabic letter جمل, يجري, رجع: ج.

³⁵ The diacritical point used for the Arabic letter *gayn* is found above it: غ غ غ; whereas the diacritical point used for the Arabic letter *gīm* is found below it: ج ج ج.

³⁶ This testimony is inaccurate, seeing that in the Geniza manuscripts, the Arabic letter ج is not usually marked by any diacritical point, and certainly not with a point below it.

the 1860s, and represents a good example of the provincial dialect of the Jews of Tunisia, not only from the standpoint of lexicon, morphology, and syntax, but also from the standpoint of phonetics. Of course, this does not have any past association or link with the orthography of classical JA from the Middle Ages. The same can be said about the many compositions of Youcef Renassia, the rabbi and mentor of the community of Constantine in eastern Algeria, not far from the Tunisian-Algerian border.³⁷ One may thus determine unequivocally that the rules governing the JA orthography in Tunisia were not introduced with the advent of JA literature printed in the nineteenth century, but, in fact, reflect a tradition that continued from previous centuries and was formed over a long period of time. This stands in contrast to the JA literature from the school of Saadia, whose creative work was deliberate and planned and adhered from the start to the rules of orthography used in classical Arabic, after these same rules had reached their final formulation prior to the tenth century; likewise that of Rabbi Michael 'Allūn in *Or Ne'erav*. In my humble opinion, it constitutes a natural continuation of the orthography that was prevalent in the Middle Ages, albeit with certain variations, leading by a continuous process of phonetic adaptability toward the provincial dialect of JA. It is also to be noted that no small number of the first Jewish intellectuals in Tunisia knew classical Arabic, some of them being rabbinic figures like the aforementioned Rabbi Juda Ḍarmon, besides distinguished Orientalists.³⁸ This fact no doubt influenced the orthography of texts printed in JA.

Without any doubt, the orthographic influence of JA literature printed in Livorno can be felt in the JA literature printed in Tunisia, as it was there that the Jews of Tunisia printed their books, until Vittorio Finzi, the son of a political exile from Livorno, established the first Hebrew printing press in Tunisia after he had received a licence from the Muslim Bey in 1880.³⁹ It should be noted that Livorno was known as the most important city of Hebrew book printing in the nineteenth century on account of the Jewish community in NA and in eastern countries, while books printed there

³⁷ Concerning him and his publications, see Youssef Charvit, "Renassia, Joseph," *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 4:157–159; concerning the JA orthography in his printed works, see Ofra Tirosh-Becker, "A Characterization of the Judeo-Arabic Language of Constantine," *Massorot* 2/3 (1989): 285–312.

³⁸ Such as Isaac Cattan who at the beginning of the twentieth century published many articles in the Orientalist journal, *Revue Tunisienne*, but whose work did not attain any recognition in research literature on the Jews of Tunisia; and like him, many other Jewish intellectuals of Tunisia during the same period.

³⁹ Attal, "Ha-defūs ha-'Ivri ba-Magreb," 23 and n. 11.

were considered of exceptional quality and were highly valued. Indeed, the typeface used in the presses of that city was square, sharply cut, and well-designed: comely to the sight and illuminating. The Jewish printers in Livorno, such as Rabbi Eliyahu Ben Amozeg and Israel Costa, men with vast general knowledge and experts in the art of printing, demonstrated great sensitivity to JA orthography. It was not surprising, then, that Jewish printing presses in Algiers and Oran met their demise because of the competition with those in Livorno, while the scholars of Tunisia began to print their own JA literature for the masses.

This trend was further strengthened by the JA publications of the illustrious Tunisian-born rabbi, Eliezer Farḥī (b. 1850), whose father came from Jerusalem and spent many years in Livorno. This learned man translated an extensive literary work from classical Arabic into the Arabic dialect spoken by the Jews of Tunisia; it was entitled *Sīrat al-malik sayf al-aḡal* (Livorno, 1885). This composition already uses the orthography of classical Tunisian JA, which was preserved, to some extent, in all the publications in that language in Livorno, Tunis, Sousse, and Djerba. The chief characteristics are their scrupulous application of the distinction between the emphatic letters and the regular letters, preventing the use of *aleph* as a *mater lectio-nis*, the marking of the Arabic letter ج with a diacritical point above the Hebrew letter *gimal*—e.g., ֶג, and the Arabic letter غ with a diacritical point below it—e.g. ג, ⁴⁰ a mark showing the soft-spoken double-sounding consonants (*raphe*), in this case written above the Hebrew letter *pe*, and the doubling of the accentuated consonants, although not on a regular basis. It is without any doubt that the enlightened men of the early generations in Tunis and their direct acquaintance with classical Arabic written in Arabic characters influenced them to treat with greater severity and respect the orthographic method employed in the writing of the local dialect. Unlike Muslim scholars, the Jewish intellectuals of Tunisia saw JA as a legitimate and respected language, as did the German and

⁴⁰ In the book, *Sefer ma'aseh ša'ašū'im* (Livorno: Costa Press, 1868), being the first book published by a Tunisian Jew in Livorno, as also in *Šay La-Mōrā*, in the Livorno edition of 1888, the Arabic letter ج is still distinguished by a diacritical point beneath the Hebrew letter *gimal*—ג, and the Arabic letter غ is distinguished by a diacritical point above it—ֶג, just as decided by the editors of *Or Ne'erav*, but in *Sīrat al-Aḡalīya* which was printed by the Jews of Tunisia in Livorno (Costa Press, 1885–1887), the Arabic letter ج is distinguished by a diacritical point above the Hebrew letter *gimal*—ֶג, and the Arabic letter غ is distinguished by a diacritical point below it—ג, just as had ordinarily been the practice in the orthography of JA literature printed in Tunisia.

French scholars who documented the local Arab dialects and the literature composed in them, or the enlightened Jews of Eastern Europe with regard to Yiddish, or the Jewish intellectuals in the Balkans with regard to Ladino. This view led them, on the one hand, to translate into it many works taken from Arabic, Hebrew, and French, and even to create in it original works of different literary genres, including a vibrant and burgeoning press; while, on the other hand, they treated it with respect and were strict in matters of orthography. In fact, the Jewish intellectuals of Tunisia during the second half of the nineteenth century succeeded in creating by these very texts printed in JA—based on the old Tunisian JA—a rich literary language full of expression, one set apart also by its rules of orthography, similar to the classical language.

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