בס"ד

**The Blessings of the *Amidah* Prayer in the Judeo-Italian, Ladino, and Provencal Traditions**

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The *Amidah* may have been the most well-known Jewish text in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period. According to the *halakha*, the *Shema* has to be recited only twice a day, while the *Amidah* has to be said three times a day. The various translations of the Siddur (e.g., the Yemenite *Tiklal*) contain translations of the *Amidah,* including translations into Romance Jewish languages like Judeo-Italian, Ladino (Judeo-Spanish), and Jewish Provencal. In this article, I would like to compare the translations of the *Amidah* in five Judeo-Italian translations of the Siddur (a critical edition of these translations is in preparation) with some representative Ladino and Provencal translations. בסדר תודה

The blessings of the *Amidah* in the Judeo-Italian, Ladino, and Provencal translations are similar in many respects, as the three languages are interconnected, as are also the narratives of these three cultures. Generally speaking, all three traditions of translation are literal (according to the medieval *volgarizzamenti* tradition), but the Judeo-Italian translations are much closer to what can be called “normative” Judeo-Italian than the Ladino one to “living” Judeo-Spanish and the Provencal translation to Judeo-Provencal. For example, the Hebrew participle is translated in Judeo-Italian as a verb in the present tense, while in the Ladino translation we find the present participle (with the suffix -n), which is artificial and mechanical in Judeo-Spanish and does not fit the syntax (Bunis 2021: 407). The Judeo-Provencal translation of the Siddur shows similar characteristics (Baricci 2022: 47). Another difference is that the Hebrew component is richer in the Judeo-Italian translations than in the Ladino translation and especially in comparison to the Judeo-Provencal translation.

The Judeo-Italian translations I will discuss were described by the author previously (Ryzhik 2013).[[1]](#footnote-4) They include three manuscripts of 15th-century translations (Q1, Q2, Q3),[[2]](#footnote-5) one printed edition (F = Fano 1506), and one 17th-century manuscript (S).[[3]](#footnote-6)

Q1, Q2, and Q3 are generally similar;[[4]](#footnote-8) F is closer to Q2 (not always), and Q1 is closer to Q3 (but not always). They are written in classical medieval Judeo-Italiano, called by Sermoneta (1976) and Cuomo (1976) the “koinè centro-meridionale.” This dialect is similar to the type of Judeo-Italiano described by Cuomo (1988) in her book on the translation of the Book of Jonah (yet not identical in various ways). The 17th-century translation (S) is distinct in terms of its phonological, morphological, lexical, and syntactic characteristics.

As a Ladino translation, I used the 16th-Century Saloniki manuscript and translation published by Schwarzwald (2012b).[[5]](#footnote-12) In this article, I use the transliteration made by Schwarzwald in the book (designated by the sigla SN, *Seder Nashim*).

As a Judeo-Provencal translation of the *Amidah,* I used the translation found in Ms. Roth 32 Brotherton Library (Leeds), written at the end of the 15th Century. This translation of the Siddur is described by Baricci (2022) and contains interesting linguistic phenomena. Baricci generously gave me her transliteration of the *Amidah* in this manuscript, which I use here (under the sigla PR), and for which I am profoundly grateful.

As expected, all seven translations (F, Q1, Q2, Q3, S, SN, PR) are somewhat similar. As an example of this general similarity, I will cite the translation of a part of the second benediction of the *Amidah*, here recording the Judeo-Italian versions in both Hebrew characters and in transliteration[[6]](#footnote-16) (below I’ll sometimes use only transliteration, sometimes both), as well as the Ladino and Judeo-Provencal versions in transliterations:

Hebrew text: **ומקיים אמונתו לישיני עפר**

English translation: **‘and keeps his faith with those who sleep in the dust’**

F: אֵי **אַפֵֿירְמַה** לַה **וְוירֵיטַאדֵי** סוֹאַה אַ**קְוֵוילִי קְי דוֹרְמֵינוֹ** אַה לַה **פוֹלְוֵוירַה**

e afferma la u*e*retade soa a-quel*l*i ch*e* dormeno a la *p*oluera

Q1: אֵי אַפֵירְמַּה לַ**לִיאַלְטַאדי** סוֹאַה אַ**קְוֵילִי קֵי דּוֹרְמֵינוֹ** נֵילַּה **טיַּרה**

e a*ff*erma la-lialtad*e* soa a-quel*l*i che dormeno nella terra

Q2: אֵי אָפְירְמָה לָ**וְוירְיטַאמְינְטוֹ** סוּאוֹ אַלְּי**דוֹרְמְיטוֹרי** דְלַ**טֵירָה**

e a*ffe*rma la-u*e*r*e*tam*e*nto suo all*e*-dorm*e*tor*e* d*e*l*l*a-ter*r*a

Q3: אֵי אַפֵֿירְמָה לַ**וֵירֵיטָאדֵי** סוֹאָה אַ**קְוֵילִּי קֵי דוֹרְמֵינוֹ** נֵילַּ**פוֹלְבֵֿירֵי**

e afferma la-ueretade soa a-quelli che dormeno nella-*p*olvere

S: קוֹנְפֵירְמָה לַה **וֶוירִיטָה** סוּאַה אַ' **קְוֶוילִי קֵי דוֹרְמוֹנוֹ** נֶי לַה **פוֹלְוֶוירֶי**

con*f*erma la uerita sua a' queli che dormono ne la *p*oluere

SN: i afirman su verdad a adormientes de polbo

PR: e afermant sa fizeltat a dormentz de terra.

The following characteristics are evident:

(1) F, Q1, Q2, Q3, SN, and PR use the same verb ‘affermare / afirmare’. Only S uses ‘confermare’.

(2) F, Q2, Q3, S, SN use different derivates of the stem ‘verità’; while Q1 and PR use lialtade / fizeltat.

(3) F, Q3, S and SN use the word ‘polvere / polbo’; Q1, Q2, PR use the word ‘terra’.

Two important conclusions can be drawn from this very limited example: (1) The general lexicon seems to be common enough in these Judeo-Romance translations that its variant distributions can be accidental and not dependent on the genetic relationship (some Judeo-Italian translations accord with Judeo-Spanish, while others with the Judeo-Provencal). (2) The similarity is evident only in this general, common lexicon; while the syntactic traits are very different: ‘la verità sua’ vs. ‘su verdad’; ‘quelli che dormeno’ vs. ‘adormientes / dormentz’. These differences will be discussed below.

**The use of the definite article**

In Judeo-Italian translations, the use of the definite is regular and follows the general rules in common Italian. In contrast to this, in SN and PR the use of the definite article depends entirely on its presence or absence in the Hebrew original. In other words: In SN and PR the article is used only and always if it is present in the Hebrew original.[[7]](#footnote-17) The article is absent if there is no article in the Hebrew original. For example:

Hebrew text: **ומביא גואל לבני בניהם למען שמו באהבה**

English translation: **‘and brings a redeemer to their children’s children for the sake of His name, in love’**

F: e fai uenire **lo** scon*p*eratore a-**l*le*** filjoli d*e* **li** filjoli loro per **lo** nome suo en amore

Q1 (and similar[[8]](#footnote-18) Q2 and Q3): e-*f*a uenire escon*p*erator*e* a-**l*li*** *f*iljoli de-**lli** *f*iljoli loro *p*er **lo**-nome suo con amore

S: e conduce scom*p*erator a' **li** *f*iljoli de **li** *f*iljoli loro *p*er **il** nome suo con amore

SN: i trayen regmidor a hijos de sus hijos por su nombre kon amor

PR: e aduzent rezement a enfanz de lur enfanz per son nom en amor.

In SN and PR there is no definite article because they are absent in the Hebrew original. Nevertheless, the Judeo-Italian translations are not the same: Only in F is the definite article used before the word ‘sconperatore’ (Judeo-Italian for ‘redeemer’) (Ryzhik 2013: 239-240).[[9]](#footnote-19) In other Judeo-Italian versions, there is no article before this word. This redundancy of a definite article is present also in other places in F, as we will see below.

An even more ungrammatical feature is the repetition of the definite article before the noun (and the adjective) in the group adjective + noun, for example:

Hebrew text: **האל הגדול הגבור והנורא אל עליון גומל חסדים טובים**

English translation: **‘the great, mighty and awesome God, God Most High, who rewards the good deeds’**

F: **lo** Det gran*n*o e barone e t*e*muto Det Altis*s*imo ch*e* r*e*mer*e*t*i* misericordii boni

Q1 (and similar Q2 and Q3): Det gran*n*e e *b*arone e temuto Det Altis*s*imo che r*e*merita misericordie *b*oni

S: Idio grande e *p*otente e temuto Idio ecelso qual rimerita misericordie *b*one

SN: **el** Dio **el** grande **el** baragan i **el** temerozo Dio alto gualardonan merçedes buenas

PR: **lo** Dieu **lo** gran, **lo** vasalh, e **lo** temoros, Dieu sobeira, guizardonant bonetats bonas

Here we see that the definite article is repeated four times in SN, but also in PR, showing the affinity between SN and PR (as contrasted to the Judeo-Italian translations) which we have already seen and that we will also see further below. A definite article is completely absent from these passages in Q1, Q2, Q3, and S, but it appears in F before Det, the classical Judeo-Italian word for God (Cuomo 1988). However, in ordinary Italian (and also in ordinary Judeo-Italian) the name of God (Dio) usually appears without a definite article. In Ladino translations, the definite article is used when it is present in the Hebrew original (האל) even though that conflicts with ordinary Judezmo syntax (Bunis 2021: 409). In F, the use of the definite article does not appear to be a function of simple correspondence to the Hebrew ה, as the definite article is used with the word גואל (in the previous passage discussed) despite the fact that there was no definite article in the Hebrew original. We can see the same tendencies in the following example:

Hebrew text: **ברוך אתה ה' האל הקדוש**

English translation: **‘blessed are You Lord the holy God’**

F: b*e*n*e*det*t*o sii tu Dom*e*det **lo** Det santo

Q1 (and similar Q2 qnd Q3): *be*nedet*t*o tu Domedet Det santo

S: laodato tu Sinjor Idio santo.

SN: Bendičo tu YY **el** Dio **el** Santo.

PR: bendig tu sant e benezet **lo** Dieu **lo** sant.

The definite article is absent in Q1, Q2, Q3, and S (following Italian grammar); it is repeated in SN and PR (contrary to Spanish and Provencal grammar), and it is found before God’s name *Det* in F (contrary to Italian grammar, but without the repetition as in SN and PR). It must be remarked that in some cases F is slightly similar to SN and PR.

**The verbal copula**

The second trait that is characteristic of the literal translations of SN and PR is the absence of the verbal copula (*ser*, *estar*).[[10]](#footnote-23) In contrast to it, the Judeo-Italian translations' use of the copula is very complex, and according to context or to a particular tradition that can be used in the present tense or in the subjunctive mood (Ryzhik 2009).

The verbal copula is absent in the formula of benedictions (ברוך אתה ה'...), for example:

Hebrew original: **ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו [...] ואלהי יעקב**

English translation: **‘blessed are You Lord our God’**

F: b*e*n*e*det*t*o **sii** tu Dom*e*det Det nostro [...] e lo Det de *Ya'aqov*:

Q1: *be*nedetto tu Domedet Det noštro [...] e-Det de-*Ya'aqov*

Q2: *be*n*e*d*e*tto **sie** tu Dom*e*det Ded noštro [...] e Ded d*e*-*Ya'aqov*

Q3: *b*enedet*t*o tu Domedet Det noštro [...] e Det d*e*-*Ya'aqov*

S: lodato **sei** tu Sinjor Idio nostro [...] e Idio de *Ya'aqov*

SN: Bendičo tu YY nueso Dio [...] i Dio de Yaʕaqob

PR: Bendig tu Sant Benezet, nostre Dieu [...] e Dieu de *Yaakov*

In this case, as in other translations of this form (ברוך אתה ה'), the copula is absent in SN and PR, but also in Q1 and Q3. This is not contrary to the normative language, since in such benediction forms (ברוך..., אשרי...) the absence of copula is usual, including in non-Jewish sources. Perhaps this came about under the influence of the Biblical text which in its turn was influenced by the Hebrew syntax (Ryzhik 2009: 136).

There are other cases where the nominal sentence in Hebrew has to be translated with a copula, and the verbal copula appears in all Judeo-Italian translations (including Q1 and Q3 in which it is omitted in the translations of the form ברוך אתה ה') but is absent in SN and PR:

Hebrew text: **אתה גבור לעולם ה' מחיה מתים אתה רב להושיע**

English translation: **‘You are mighty in eternity, You resuscitate the dead and You are great to save.’**

F: tu **si** barone a-sen*p*re Dom*e*det rabbef*e*chi li morti. tu **si** gran*n*o a-saluare:

Q1: tu-**si** *b*arone a-sen*p*re Domedet che ar*r*abbe*f*ichi li morti. tu-**si** gran*n*e a-sal*v*are

Q2: tu **si** *b*aron*e* a-sen*p*r*e* Dom*e*det abb*efe*ca li-morti

Q3: tu-**si** *b*arone a-ssen*p*re Domedet che ar*r*a*bb*efichi li morti tu-**ssi** granne a-salvare

S: tu **sei** *p*otente in eterno Sinjor qual *f*a reuiuer li morti **sii** tu e *p*adron a' saluare

SN: Tu baragan para sienpre YY abediguan muertos tu grande por salvar

PR: Tu vasalh a segle, <*aviugant mortz*> tu, gran a salvar,

In such a case, i.e. in cases of a simple attributive sentence, the verbal copula is obligatory according to Italian (and generally Romance) syntax and is present in all Judeo-Italian translations, yet it is absent in SN and PR.

The absence of the copula combined with the calque use of the definite article can lead to incomprehensible phrases in SN and PR. For example (in this case, F is similar to SN and PR):

Hebrew text: **ברוך אתה ה' הטוב שמך**

English translation: **‘blessed are You Lord whose name is good’**

F: *be*n*e*det*t*o sii tu Dom*e*det lo nome tuo

Q1: benedet*t*o tu Domedet che bono **è** lo-nome tuo

Q2: b*e*n*e*d*e*t*t*o sij*e* tu Dom*e*ded ch*e*-**è** *b*ono lo-nom*e* tuo

Q3: *b*enedet*t*o tu Domedet che *b*ono **è** lo-nome tuu

S: lodato sii tu Sinjor qual **è** *b*ono il nome tuo

SN: Bendičo tu YY **el bueno tu nombre**

PR: bendig tu sant e benezet **lo bon ton nom**

The Hebrew text is complex and means roughly ‘Blessed are you Lord, whose name is good’; the definite article ה functions here as a relative pronoun. Translations Q1, Q2, Q3, and S all add the copula ‘è’ in different places; Q1 is similar to Q3 as usual. SN and PR translate ה as a definite article without adding a copula, rendering the phrase incomprehensible.

**Translation of the Hebrew participle in the present tense**

Another trait that clearly distinguishes the Judeo-Italian from the Ladino and Judeo- Provencal translations is the translation of the Hebrew participle (*beynoni*). Judeo-Italian translations use different ways to achieve it, according to the demands of context (present tense, different *nomina agentis*, relative clauses) (Ryzhik 2019). In contrast, in the Ladino *sacre* text translations, the *beynoni* is rendered by its Ladino *calque*, an apocopated present participle (Bunis 2021: 407) and similarly in PR (Baricci 2022: 49).

Let us see an example from the *Amidah* translations:

Hebrew text: **אל עליון גומל חסדים טובים וקונה את הכל וזוכר חסדי אבות ומביא גואל לבני בניהם**

English translation: **‘the Most High who rewards the good deeds and who acquires all and remembers the merciful deeds of the fathers and brings a redeemer to their children’s children.’**

F: Det Altis*s*imo **ch*e* r*e*mer*e*t*i*** misericordii boni e **aquest*i*** on*ne* cauosa **ar*r*encorda** li misericordii al*l*i *p*atri e **fai uenire** lo scon*p*eratore al*le* filjoli d*e* li filjoli loro

Q1: Det Altis*s*imo **che r*e*merita** misericordie *b*oni e **aquištatore** d*e*-on*n*e ca*v*osa e **rincorda** li-misericordii del*l*i *p*atri e-***f*a uenire** escon*p*erator*e* al*li* *f*iljoli d*e*l*l*i *f*iljoli loro

Q2: Ded Altis*s*imo **r*e*m*e*r*e*tator*e*** d*e*-misiricord*ee* *b*on*e* **aquištator*e*** d*e*-on*ne* caosa **ar*r*incorda** li-misiricord*i*i d*e*lli-patri [e ***f*a u*e*nire**] *e*scon*p*arator*e* alli-*f*iljoli d*e*l*l*i-*f*iljoli loro

Q3: Det Altissimo **che** **remerita** misiricordii *b*one e **aquištatore** de on*n*e cavosa **ar*r*encorda** la-misiricordia delli *p*atri e **fao** **uenire** scon*p*eratore alli filjoli delli filjoli loro

S: Idio ecelso **qual rimerita** misericordie *b*one et **aquistator** del tuto e **si** **ricorda** de li misericordie de li antichi e **conduce** scom*p*erator a' li *f*iljoli de li *f*iljoli

SN: Dio alto **gualardonan** merçedes buenas **krian** lo todo i **membran** merçedes de padres i **trayen** regmidor a hijos de sus hijos

PR: Dieu sobeira, **guizardonant** bonetats bonas e **acaptant** lo tot e **renembrant** bonetatz de pairons e **aduzent** rezement a enfanz de lur enfanz

We can see the variety of methods and the relative freedom by which the Judeo-Italian translations render the *beynoni*. The same Hebrew word may be translated into different Italian forms: **גומל** by **ch*e* r*e*mer*e*t*i***, **che r*e*merita**, **qual rimerita** or **r*e*m*e*r*e*tator*e***; **קונה** by **aquest*i*** or **aquištatore**, and so on. In contrast, in the Ladino and Judeo-Provencal translations we find only the ancient Romance participle: **gualardonan**, **krian**, **membran** and **trayen** in SN;, **guizardonant**, **acaptant**, **renembrant** and **aduzent** in PR.

This is also the case when the subject is neither divine nor human; for example, the expression השנה הבאה עלינו לטובה is translated in PR:

bendisi sobre nos, sant e benezet nostre Dieu, **l’an aquest lo venent sobre nos a ben** e totas especias de son blat.

**Participle with a definite article**

*The beynoni* with a definite article often serves as a relative clause. In such cases, Judeo-Italian translations of the *beynoni* use the relative pronouns corresponding to the Hebrew definite article and verb in the present tense, while SN and PR follow their usual literal translation style:

Hebrew text: **ברוך אתה ה' המחזיר ברחמיו שכינתו לציון**

English translation: **‘blessed are You Lord who restores His presence to Zion in his mercifulness.’**

F (and similar Q1, Q2, Q3): b*e*n*e*det*t*o sii tu Dom*e*det **ch*e* fao tornare** n*e*l*l*i ra*pp*jitamenti soi la *šekhina* soa a *Sijon*

S: laodato tu Sinjor **qual ritorna** la gloria sua a’ *Sijon*.

SN: Bendičo tu YY **el fazien tornar** su Šekina a Ṣiyon.

PR: Bendig tu sant e benezet **lo fazent tornar** sa pauzanza a *Zion*.

In place of relative clauses, SN and PR use the literal construction ‘definite article + participle.’

However, there are some special cases where the Ladino and the Judeo-Provencal use a construction similar to the Judeo-Italian, like the translation of the word גואל ‘redeemer’:

Hebrew text: **ומביא גואל לבני בניהם**

English translation: **‘and brings a redeemer to their children's children.’**

F (and similar Q1, Q2, Q3): e fai uenire lo **scon*p*eratore** a-l*le* filjoli d*e* li filjoli loro

S: e conduce **scom*p*erator** a' li *f*iljoli de li *f*iljoli loro

SN: i trayen **regmidor** a hijos de sus hijos

PR: e aduzent **rezement** a enfanz de lur enfanz per son nom en amor.

Judeo-Italian translations always use the term *scomperator* to translate the Hebrew גואל. [[11]](#footnote-29) PR translates as he always translates the Hebrew *beynoni*, namely by the present participle: *rezement*. But SN uses another grammatical form of the verbal noun: *regmidor* (the usual Judezmo term for ‘redeemer’).

Only in two cases do we find the use of the present tense in SN and PR; in the first of them they use an adjective and in the second they use the *beynoni* that is very similar to an adjective. The first one is the adjective נאה in the ending of the 18th blessing:

Hebrew text: **ברוך אתה ה' הטוב שמך ולך נאה להודות**

English translation: **‘blessed are You Lord whose name is good and to whom it is suitable to be thankful.’**

F (and similar Q1, Q2, Q3): *be*n*e*det*t*o sii tu Dom*e*det lo nome tuo e a-ti **è bel*l*o** a-lauodare

S: lodato sii tu Sinjor qual è *b*ono il nome tuo e a’ te **conuien** a’ laodare

SN: Bendičo tu YY el bueno tu nombre i ati **konviene** por loar

PR: bendig tu sant e benezet lo bon ton nom, e a tu **tanh** a lauzar

Here the classical Judeo-Italian medieval-Renaissance translation uses an adverb *(bello*) with a verbal copula. The later Judeo-Italian translation S uses the verb *convenire* ‘be convenient’ and the sense is adverbial (= good, well). So also do SN and PR. Instead of their usual ancient present participle (\*konvenien, \*tant), they use the verb in the present tense: **konviene**, **tanh** (‘touches, is convinient’), in the same adverbial sense.

In this example, the exceptional use of the present tense when there is no verb in the present tense in the Hebrew original may be explained by the fact that the נאה is not a *beynoni*. However, there is another example, in which the *beynoni* proper (דומה) is translated in the present tense only in SN (PR follows the usual literal translation by the participle):

Hebrew text: **מי כמוך בעל גבורות ומי דומה לך**

English translation: **‘who is like You Master of mightiness and who is similar to You.’**

F (and similar Q1, Q2, Q3): ch*e* e come ti *p*atrone de baronii e **chi s*e*-ras*s*omilji a-ti**

S: che e come tu *p*adron de le *p*otenze **e chi si ras*s*imilja** a' te

SN: kien komo ti duenyo de baraganias i kien **asemeja** ati

PR: Qui tal con tu, don de vasalhs, e qui **semblant** a tu

All Judeo-Italian translations use the verb *rassimiliarsi*, ‘to be similar’. PR translates in the usual present participle *semblant*. But SN uses the present tense instead of the expected participle: *asemeja*. It seems that in both cases, נאה = *konvien*, *tanh* and דומה = *asemeja*, the unusal translation can be explained by the adverbial sense of the translated word and the translated verbal form.

Another case of an unusual translation is the translation of the Hebrew substantive מָגֵן ‘shield’ by the participle in SN and PR, as if it was the Hebrew participle מֵגֵן. The Judeo-Italian translations render this word using their regular method of translating the Hebrew participle (Ryzhik 2019: 224-226). To illustrate:

Hebrew text: **מלך גואל עוזר ומושיע ומגן. ברוך אתה ה' מגן אברהם**

English translation: **‘King, Redeemer, Helper and Savior and Shield. Blessed are You Lord Shield of Avraham.’**

F: re scon*p*eratore aiutatore e saluadore e **scudiatore**. b*e*n*e*det*t*o sii tu Dom*e*det **ch*e* scudii** *Avraham*:

Q1 (and similarly Q2 and Q3): re escon*p*eratore e aiutatore e sal*v*atore e-**scudiatore**. *be*nedet*t*o tu Domedet **escudiatore** de *Avraham*.

S: re aiutator e saluatore e **scudo**. laodato sii tu Sinjor **scudo** de *Avraham*

SN: rey ayudan i salvan i **manparan**. Bendičo tu YY **manparo** de Abraham.

PR: Rey ajudant e salvant e **amparant**, Bendig tu Sant Bendig, **amparalh** de *Abraham*.

We see that the classical Judeo-Italian translations (F and 15th-century manuscripts) translate in various forms (verbal noun and relative clause), but always as if the Hebrew מגן was a participle. The later S translates by the substantive *scudo*. In contrast, like SN, PR translates two different occurrences of מגן in two distinct ways. This confirms the possibility that מגן could serve as a participle and was translated so in the first part of the blessing, where it follows two other participles (*ayudan i salvan* in SN, ajudant e salvant in PR), while it was translated as a substantive at the end of the blessing (*manparo* and *ampralh*), where it remains alone. Nevertheless, this case is surprising and exceptional, as these translations are literal and always translate the same Hebrew word in the same way. In this case, SN and PR seem to show more sensitivity to precise meanings in different contexts.

**The place of the possessive pronoun**

Thus far, the Judeo-Italian translations were less literal and less dependent on the Hebrew original and its linguistic traits than SN and PR (in the use of the definite article, of verb copula, translation of *beynoni*). In contrast, the place of the possessive pronoun is more independent in the Ladino and Judeo-Provencal translations.

In Judeo-Italian translations, the possessive pronouns always follow the noun, as a *calque* of the Hebrew in which the possessive pronoun is added at the end of the noun. In contrast, in SN and PR the possessive pronoun precedes the noun, rendering the syntax more Spanish and more Provencal. For example:

Hebrew text: **תקע בשופר גדול לחרותנו ושא נס לקבץ גליותנו: ברוך אתה ה' מקבץ נדחי עמו ישראל**

English translation: **‘sound the great shofar for our liberation and raise the banner to gather our exiles. Blessed are You Lord who gathers the dispersed of His people Israel’**

F (and similarly Q1, Q2, Q3): sona *e*n corno gran*n*o al*l*a **libertade nostra** e alza confal*l*one *p*er fare aradunare li **d*e*cat*t*iuati nostri**. b*e*n*e*det*t*o sii tu Dom*e*det ch*e* raduni li spentiati **d*e* lo *p*o*p*olo suo** *Isra’el*:

S: sona con il corno grande *p*er **liberare noi**[[12]](#footnote-31) e alza il stendardo *p*er ridure li **ca*p*tiuata nostri** e riduna noi unitamente da li quatro cantoni de la tera. lodato sii tu Sinjor che riduci li s*p*inti **del *p*o*p*olo suo** *Isra’el*.

SN: tanye kon ***šofar*** grande a **nuesa alhoria** i alça pendon por apanyar **nuesos katiberios** a una aina de kuatro arinkones de la tiera a nuestra tiera. Bendiči tu YY apanyan enpušados **de su pueblo** Iśrael.

PR: toca en corn gran a **nostra** **franqueza**, e leva bandiera a amasar **nostre caitiu** e amasa nos ensens de quatre angles de la terra a nostra. Bendig tu sant benezet amasant enfanz **de son pobol** *Israel*.

Baricci (in press) suggests that the different order (noun + pronoun) is impossible in Provencal (Jensen 1986: 127), and it seems that the same is true for Judeo-Spanish.

**Peculiar translations of Hebrew words**.

These peculiar translations show some *ad hoc* decisions made by the translators, perhaps depending on cultural or linguistic tendencies.

**(1) Translation of the Hebrew קונה** ‘acquires’.

Hebrew text: **האל הגדול הגבור והנורא [...] וקונה את הכל**

English translation: **‘the great mighty and awesome God […] and acquires all.’**

F: lo Det gran*n*o e barone e t*e*muto [...] e **aquest*i*** on*ne* cauosa

Q1 (and similarly Q2 and Q3): Det gran*n*e e *b*arone e temuto [...] e **aquištatore** d*e*-on*n*e ca*v*osa

S: Idio grande e *p*otente e temuto [...] et **aquistator** del tuto

SN: el Dio el grabde el baragan i el temerozo [...] **krian** lo todo

PR: lo Dieu lo gran, lo vasalh, e lo temoros, [...] e **acaptant** lo tot

All the Judeo-Italian translations and PR use different forms meaning ‘buy’. In contrast, SN translates *krian,* ‘creating’. This translation is similar to the translation of the expression **קונה** שמים וארץ (Gn 14:19) found in the Vulgate: benedictus Abram Deo excelso qui **creavit** caelum et terram. This understanding of קונה in this verse as ‘creator’ is found also in comments of Rashi and R. Saadya Gaon on this verse, but perhaps the use of the same word as the Vulgate by SN is not accidental.

(2) **Translation of Hebrew מודים, נודה, להודות ‘to confess, to be thankful’**

The verb הודה is translated by different Romance lexemes in different places of the 18th blessing of the *Amidah*.

Hebrew text: **מודים אנחנו לך [...] ולך נאה להודות**

English translation: **‘we are thankful to You […] and to You it is suitable to be thankful.’**

F (similarly Q2 and Q3): **confes*s*emo** noi a-ti [...] e a-ti e bel*l*o a-**lauodare**

Q1: **con*f*es*s*emo** noi a-ti [...] e a-ti e (bono) [bel*l*o] a-**rengraziare**

S: **con*f*esamo** noi a’ te [...] e a’ te conuien a’ **laodare**

SN: **atorgantes** nos ati ke [...] i ati konviene por **loar**.

PR: **lauzanz** nos a tu [...] e a tu tanh a **lauzar**.

In all Judeo-Italian translations and in SN, the first מודים is translated by lexemes meaning ‘confess’. However, להודות, the last word in this blessing, is translated by the verb *laudare* / *loar* / *lauzar* ‘to glorify’ in almost all versions (except Q1). This word, להודות, is always translated in this way in F (Ryzhik 2022: 427) and it seems that the reason for this is the phonological similarity between להודות and *laodare* (Ibid.). In this case (in contrast to the case of מגן translations, see above), the translations of different occurrences of the verb הודה are harmonized in PR: *lauzanz* [...] *lauzar*, contrary to all other translations, including SN.

**Hebrew component**

Generally speaking, there is a greater Hebrew component in the Judeo-Italian translations (there are many more Hebrew words in 15th-century versions than in S) than in SN, [[13]](#footnote-36) and in PR, the Hebrew component is mostly absent (with some significant exceptions).

Let us first see the case in which Judeo-Italian translations and SN are similar:

Hebrew text: **על החסידים ועל הצדיקים ועל גירי הצדק**

English translation: **‘to the pious, to the righteous and to the righteous converts.’**

**(SN:** **על הצדיקים ועל החסידים [...] ועל פליטת בית חכמיהם ועל גרי הצדק ‘to the righteous, to the pious […] and to the remnants of the house of our Sages and to the righteous converts.’)**[[14]](#footnote-38)

F: *p*er li ***ḥasidim*** e *p*er li ***ṣaddiqim*** e *p*er li ***pe*legrini** de justizia

Q1: so*p*re al*l*i ***ḥasidim*** e-so*p*re al*l*i ***ṣaddiqim*** e-so*p*re li ***gerim*** jušti

Q2: so*p*re l*e*-**misiricordiosi** e so*p*r*e* l*e*-**jušt*e*** e-so*p*r*e* (l*e*-***gerim***) [l*e*-***p*el*i*grini**][[15]](#footnote-39) d*e*-juštizia

Q3: so*p*re li ***ḥasidim*** e so*p*re li ***saddiqim*** e so*p*re li ***gerim*** de-juštizia

S: so*p*ra li **justi** e so*p*ra li **misericordiosi** [...] e so*p*ra li ***p*elegrini** justi

SN: sobre los ***ṣadiqim*** i sobre los ***ḥasidim*** [...] i sobre eskapadura de kaza de sus ***ḥakamim*** i sobre **pelegrinos** de la justedad

PR: sobre los **justz** e sobre los **bons** e sobre **pelegrins** de justizia

We find *ḥasidim* and *ṣaddiqim* in most translations: F, Q1, Q3, and SN; *gerim* in Q1, Q2 (but see the marginal note) and Q3;[[16]](#footnote-40) *ḥakamim* is in SN (but only the Hebrew original of SN contains this word). Q1 and Q3 are the richest in Hebrew components, F and Q3 have somewhat fewer, and there is no Hebrew component in the translation of this phrase in S and PR. This is a good illustration of general tendencies.

In many cases, SN makes use of Hebrew components much less than the Judeo-Italian translations and (it seems) limits them to a more sacred lexical level (which is also often more difficult to translate). For example:

Hebrew text: **ואל תפלתם שעה [...] ואשי ישראל ותפלתם [...] ברוך אתה ה' המחזיר ברחמיו שכינתו לציון**

English translation: **‘and turn to their prayer […] and sacrifices of Israel and their prayer […] blessed are You Lord who restores His presence (*Shekhina*) to Zion’**

F: e n*e*l*l*a ***tefilla*** loro ascolta [...] e li ***qorbanot*** de *Isra’el* e la ***tefilla*** loro inajino *e*n amore r*e*ceuirai [...] b*e*n*e*det*t*o sii tu Dom*e*det ch*e* fao tornare n*e*l*l*i ra*pp*jitamenti soi la ***šekhina*** soa a *Sijon*:

Q1: e al*l*-**orazione** loro t*e*-re*v*olta [...] e-li ***qorbanot*** d*e*-*Isra’el* e l-**orazione** loro inaina con-amore rece*v*erai [...] *be*nedetto tu Domedet che-*f*a tornare *p*er li-*p*jatadi soi inaina la-***šekhina*** soa en-*Sijon*.

Q2: e al*l*a-**orazion*e*** loro t*e*-r*ev*olta [...] e-l*e*-***qorbanot*** d*e*-*Isra’el* e la-**orazion*e*** loro *e*n t*e*n*n*a [con amore] ar*re*c*ev*a [...] b*e*n*e*d*e*t*t*o sji tu Dom*e*ded che *f*aj*e* tornar*e* *p*er l*e*-*p*jatad*e* soj*e* en najina la-***šekhina*** soa *e*n *Sijon*.

Q3: e alla-***tefilla*** loro te-revolta [...] e li ***qorbanot*** de *Isra’el* e la-***tefilla*** loro inajino con amore receuerai [...] *b*enedet*t*o tu Domedet che-fa tornare *p*er li-*p*jatade soi l-**al*b*ergamento** suu in *Sijon*.

S: e ne li **orazioni** loro e ritorna la seruitu de li **sacre*f*icii** alo oracolo de la casa tua e li **sacre*f*icii** a*f*ocati de *Isra’el* e li **orazioni** loro tosto con amore aceterai [...] laodato tu Sinjor qual ritorna la **gloria** sua a’ *Sijon*

SN: i asu **oraçion** reçibe i fas tornar el serbiçio a palaçio de tu kaza i **ofriçiones** de Iśrael i su **oraçion** aina kon amor reçebiras [...] Bendičo tu YY el fazien tornar su **Šekina** a Ṣiyon.

PR: Bendig tu sant e benezet lo fazent tornar sa **pauzanza** a *Zion*.[[17]](#footnote-42)

In this case, F is the richest in Hebrew components: *tefilla*, *qorbanot,* and *šekhina*. Q1, Q2 (*qorbanot* and *šekhina*), and Q3 (*tefilla* and *qorbanot*) have fewer and S has none. In SN we find only *šekhina*; perhaps because of its very sacred meaning. These are general tendencies, and there are some exceptions.

This also applies to the Hebrew words in translations of *Birkat ha-minim*. First of all, the word *malšinim*, which is translated only in S:

Hebrew text: [[18]](#footnote-43) **ולמלשינים בל תהי תקוה וכל הזדים כלם כרגע יאבדו וכל אויביך מהרה יכרתו ומלכות זדון מהרה תעקר ותשבר ותכניע אותם במהרה בימינו**

English translation: **‘and for the informers, there will be no hope, and all the villains let perish in an instant. And all your enemies swiftly will be cut down, and the kingdom of wickedness swiftly will be uprooted and broken, and cast them down swiftly in our days.’**

F: e al*l*i-***malšinim*** non sara s*p*eranza e tut*t*i **es*s*i** come *p*onto siano d*ep*erduti

Q1: *e* all*i* ***minim*** e li ***malšinim***[[19]](#footnote-44)

Q2: al*le*-***malšinim*** non ci-sia s*pe*ranza e-tut*te* l*e*-***malšinim*** tut*te* quant*e* *e*s*se* com*e* uno *p*onto siano d*epe*rdut*e*

Q3: e alli ***malšinim*** non sia s*p*eranza e tut*t*i quanti **essi** come un *p*onto se-de*p*erdanno

S: e ali **s*p*ioni** non ui sara s*p*eranza e tuti li **em*p*ii** come un mumento si di*p*erdirano

SN: a-los ***mešumadim*** no sea esperança i todos los **erejes** i todos los **malšinim** kumo punto se deperderan

PR: Als **mesonzer** non sia esperanza, e totz los **aireis** e los ***malsenh*** e los ***masorot***, totz con ora deperdan

Only S translates the word *malšinim* (*spioni*); in all other versions, this word remains untranslated. In SN and PR other untranslated Hebrew words designate informers and traitors: *mešumadim* and *masorot*. The relative richness of Hebrew components in this blessing is perhaps connected to the taboo associations of these terms.

In many cases, a Hebrew word remains untranslated only by one textual witness, mostly in F, for example, the word ישועה:

Hebrew text: **ברוך אתה ה' מצמיח קרן ישועה**

English translation: **‘blessed are You Lord who makes the horn of the salvation flourish’**

F: b*e*n*e*det*t*o sii tu Dom*e*det ch*e* fai fiorite la-fortez*z*e de la ***ješuʕa***: [[20]](#footnote-45)

Q1 (and similarly Q2 and Q3): *be*nedet*t*o tu Domedet che-*f*a *f*lorire corno d*e*-**sal*v*azione**

S: lodato sii tu Sinjor qual *f*a *f*iorir sinjuria di **salute**

SN: Bendičo tu YY ermolyeçien reino de **salbaçion**.

PR: Bendig tu sant benezet fazent germinar cabaleza de **salvazion**.

This is the case with less sacred words, for example in the translation of the word שעה. Only F uses שעה, all others[[21]](#footnote-46) translate it thus:

Hebrew text: **בכל עת ובכל שעה**

English translation: **‘at all times and at each hour’**

F: *e*n on*ne* ten*p*o *e*n on*n*i ***šaʕa*** la *p*ace toa.

Q1 (and similarly Q2 and Q3): enn-on*n*e ten*p*o enn-onne **ora**

S: in onji tem*p*o e in onji **ora**.

PR: en tot temps e en tota **ora**.

The reason for this use in F is not the possible alliteration with the *orazione* that may have Christian associations, as *orazione* is found several times in F. For example, ואני **תפלתי** לך ‘and my prayer is to You’ is translated אֵי אִיאוֹ לַה **אוֹרַצִיאוֹנֵי** מֵיאַה אַטי.[[22]](#footnote-47)

However, in some cases even SN may be the only translation with the Hebrew component, for example in translations of שופר:

Hebrew text: **תקע בשופר גדול ‘sound the great shofar’**

F (and similarly Q1, Q2, Q3): sona *e*n **corno** gran*n*o

S: sona con il **corno** grande

SN: tanye kon ***šofar*** grande

PR: toca en **corn** gran

The reason for the use of the word *corno* by other translations may be its phonological similarity to קרן, which is a synonym of שופר and often is used instead of שופר.

**Some short concluding remarks**. Many general and particular traits distinguish the Judeo-Italian translations of the *Amidah* (chosen as a representative case of a prayer) from the Ladino and Judeo-Provencal translations. In most cases, Ladino and Judeo-Provencal versions are much more literal, and this style of translation often renders the result incomprehensible. This can be seen in the use of the definite article; the absence of verbal copula; the translation of the Hebrew participle using an ancient Ladino and Judeo-Provencal present participle; and other traits separately and together with these. At least in one way, the Ladino and Judeo-Provencal translations were less literal: in the placing of the possessive pronoun added to the noun.

The use of Hebrew components is richer in classical (15th Century) Judeo-Italian translations, and it varies from one Judeo-Italian translation to another. There are fewer Hebrew components in the Ladino translation, and it is almost completely absent from the Judeo-Provencal translation, the exception being the words for informer and traitor (that have taboo connotations) such as *malshinim*. The Judeo-Italian translations are freer and are written with more respect to vernacular, perhaps because of the importance accorded to language and its use in Italy.

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1. For the first description of the Judeo-Italian translations of the Siddur see Cassuto 1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
2. Q1 = Parma de' Rossi ital. 7, year 1484; Q2 = Ms. London 625 [Or. 2443], year 1483; Q3 = Ms. JTS Mic. 4076, cen. 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
3. S = London Or. 10517, sec. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
4. See Ryzhik 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
5. The book also contains a very important chapter (pp. 28-52) by Aldina Quintana on the written language but it is dedicated to the language of the author of instructions and commentaries, not to the language of the translation itself. For the characteristics of the language of SN see Schwarzwald 2012b. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
6. The principles ot the transliteration are delineated in Ryzhik 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
7. For SN see Bunis 2021, p. 409. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
8. Similarity with regard to the use of the definite article, not other details. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
9. See also Cuomo 1985: 111. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
10. For Ladino translations see Bunis 2021: 407; for Judeo-Provencal, Baricci 2022: 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
11. See above. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
12. S understands the form **לחרותנו** as an infintive with object pronoun suffix? [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
13. For the list of Hebrew components used in SN see Schwarzwald 2012a, pp. 257-261. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
14. The Sephardic version of *Amidah* is different in this blessing. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
15. *Le-gerim* is crossed out and *le-pelegrini* is written above the line. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
16. For the translation of *gerim* as *pelegrini* see Ryzhik 2022: 428. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
17. The first part of this blessing is missing in the manuscript. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
18. I cite the Italian version; Sefardic and Provencal, are somewhat different. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
19. The rest is cancelled by the censor. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
20. But in the first part of this blessing F also uses the Italian words - la-fortez*z*a soa en*n*alza n*e*l*l*a **saluazione** toa ch*e* al*l*a **saluazione** toa noi sper*e*mo tut*t*a la-di (for **וקרנו תרום בישיעתך כי לישועתך קוינו כל היום**). [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
21. There is no שעה in the Sefardi version, so the translation for it is absent in SN.. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
22. In ובא לציון. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)