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**THE STRUCTURE OF THE SEPHARDIC TOSEFET
IN THE REPUBLIC OF RAGUSA**

ABSTRACT. The structures of the Sephardic marriage relations in Adriatic area are analyzed on historical ethnology perspective. The hypothesis of the research tried to verify a relationship between endogamic marriages and family alliances on the basis of the documents of the Jewish families in the Adriatic, particularly in the Republic of Ragusa, in comparison to Italian peninsula and Balkan cities in 17th century. The dowry was the primary way of conveyance of capitals and mobile property to Sephardic woman. And its amount was crucial to prove the social status of the bride's family. At the same time the *tosefet*, the gift of the groom to his wife, in the Balkan and Adriatic contexts reached surprisingly high levels. To compare the Sephardic marriage market to the contexts of the external societies during the research were analyzed the data transcribed in the registers of wedding the Republic of Ragusa in the seventeenth century and the average the Jewish dowries surpassed those of artisans, captain vessels and merchants and often approached the values of the merchant-aristocracy of the Republic. These research conclusions are the out come of a comparative and syncretic analysis on the Sephardic marriages in Adriatic and Balkans, which highlights the dynamics and trends of the Jewish women's economy and of the marriage market in the Early Modern Era.

KEY WORDS: endogamy, family economy, social network, wife's safeguard

УДК 392.31:316.3(=411)

DOI 10.31250/2618-8600-2019-2(4)-23-31

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After the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492 as a result of the Edict of Granada (Rozen 1993: 296–352; Artigas 1997: 203–213; Assis, Miović 2007: 241–260; Prospero 2011), the Republic of Ragusa (Dubrovnik) became the new homeland for a small Jewish community, intensively involved in commercial activities between the Balkans and the Adriatic (Ligorio 2016: 31–50). In the Balkans the Sephardic families in 16th century gradually formed an ethnic-religious community which formed a human capital of considerable importance in the Mediterranean commercial markets (Tadić 1967: 33–46). In Dubrovnik Sephardim grafted their economic interconnections in a strategical commercial hub. Dubrovnik in fact was a link between two conflictual civilization: the Christian western Europe and the Balkans under the rule of the Ottomans (Goldman 1996: 73–192). The Republic of Ragusa was able to build positive trade relationships with the both of the shores of the Adriatic Region and maintain the position of political watchful neutrality. The history of the Republic is a privileged observatory for the Mediterranean economic dynamics in Early Modern Era, for its central role in inter-Adriatic and Balkan trade (Anselmi 1994: 25–55). The Archive of Dubrovnik State, which for good reason Fernand Braudel called “one of the most important for understanding the history of the Mediterranean,” has preserved a considerable number of sources relating to the trading diaspora of the Balkans’ Sephardim (Ligorio 2018: 123–137).

The structures of the Sephardic marriage relations in Adriatic area are being analyzed on ethnological, economic and social history perspective. The hypothesis of the research on course is trying to verify the relationship between endogamy and family trade on the basis of the archival sources regarding the Jewish families in the Adriatic Region in, and use those data to enable comparisons to be made between the socio-economic aspects of the Jewish wedding models of Italian peninsula and Balkan cities on *longue durée* perspective (Miović 2013; Delille 2013; Miović 2014: 97; Bisello 2015: 113–124). The research focus is the comparative and syncretic analysis on the Sephardic marriages in Adriatic and Balkans, which highlights the dynamics and trends of the Jewish women’s economy and of the marriage market in the Early Modern Era.

The Sephardic families adopted twin strategies to strengthen business alliances and to prevent an unfavorable splintering of the patrimony. The dowry was the primary way of conveyance of capitals and mobile property to Sephardic woman; in most of case this economical practice was far from the concept of gender equity. In the dowry strategies prevailed the pragmatic priority of the family alliance. The marriage were mostly economic agreements. The minimum age for the Jewish wedding, according to the halakhic prescriptions was 13 years of age for the groom and 12 years of age for the bride. The marriages were meticulously organized by the relatives of the betrothed (Milano 1637: 85). The traditional betrothal involved the fidelity commitments and was formalized in the *Erusin* (Moscati 2002; Schirone 2003:

165–198). The adultery was strictly forbidden both during the engagement of the future spouses and after the formalization of the marriage bond. On the occasion of the engagement ritual, an agreement was sealed between the families that in fact was a temporary marriage (Milano 1992: 556–557), theoretically the engagement was devoid of physical relationship because the latter was considered the perfecting of the union after the celebration of the wedding. On this phase is officially established the amount of the dowry by the families. On the one hand it was a manifestation the social status of the bride's family within the community, on the other it was a credit of the family of the bride to the groom in economic perspective. The dowry was composed of the dowry of the bride with the addition of the *tosefet* of the groom. The *tosefet*, was a gift in money and goods of the groom to his bride.

$$d_t = d_b + t$$

d_t total dowry; d_b bride dowry; t *tosefet*

In Early modern Era in the contexts of Balkan and Adriatic the *tosefet* reached surprisingly high level of monetary amount. In a comparative perspective the average the Jewish dowries in Dubrovnik surpassed those of Christian artisans, vessel captains and merchants and often approached the values of the dowry of the aristocracy of the Republic. The dowry contracts were a guarantee of an emergency economic resource for the family economy and a model of protection of the offspring in case of death or 'ghet' (the divorce of the parents). In the case of second marriage of the woman the percentage of the *tosefet* on the bride dowry sensibly decrease. For example, Judith, daughter of Leon Costantini, married in 1748 Gabriel Valenzin, recieved from the groom a *tosefet* of 950 ducats, the 51,35% of her dowry of 1 850 ducats for a total dowry of 2 800 ducats. In 1769 Judith married remarried with Samuel Benphorath with a dowry of 1 000 ducats but in this case the *tosefet* was of 200 ducats, off course a considerable value, but equivalent only to the 20% of the bride dowry, for a total dowry of 1.200 ducats (Državni Arhiv u Dubrovniku, Diversa de Foris, vol. 140, ff. 225v.-228r.).

In Italy the percentage of *tosefet* in Sephardic tradition was higher than Roman/Italian Jews and Ashkenazim communities. In Ancona the *tosefet* was about the 20%, in Rome the 25%, in Piedmont the percentage was variable but under the 50% (Galasso 2003: 191–198), only in the Sephardic marriage, for example in Livorno, in Venice and in Puglia the *tosefet* was at the level of the range of 50% (Vitale 1997). The same dynamics can be observed in Balkans. The *tosefet* of Sephardic marriage was usually equivalent to the 50% of the bride dowry, it was a tradition of the Sephardim of Dubrovnik, but it was also structural in the tradition of the Sephardic Ottoman communities in Balkans: in Sofia, in Sarajevo, and in Salonika was adopted the same dowry system.

In fact the family networks of Dubrovnik Sephardim covered the Balkans and the Italian Peninsula and responded to specific economic interests aimed at consolidating of family alliances. Inter-community exogamous marriages strengthened ties. The Sephardim of Dubrovnik built net which contains Jewish Dubrovnik in Belgrade, Sarajevo, Skopje, Sofia, Salonika, Split, and on western Adriatic Ancona, Senigallia Livorno and Venice (Miović 2014).

$$t = \frac{d_b}{2}$$

d_t total dowry; d_b bride dowry; t *tosefet*

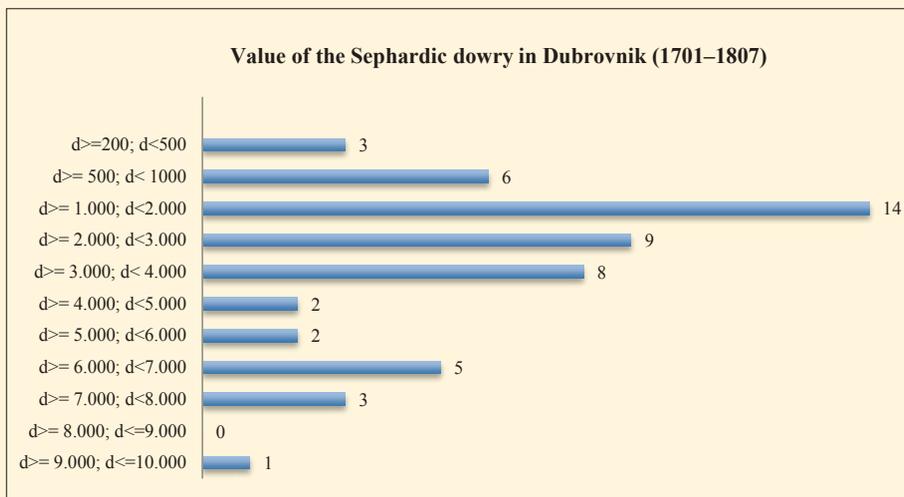
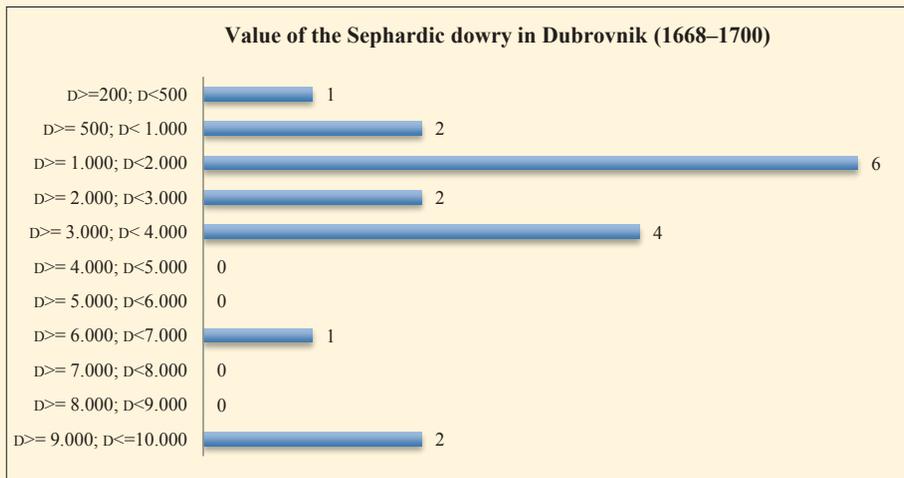
The monetary value of the Sephardic dowries in Dubrovnik was high in: only 10 of 90 dowries recorded in the archive amount at less than 1 000 ducats usually were worth 2 000 ducats and sometimes up to 6 000 and 7 500 ducats. In the last quarter of the sixteenth century, only a dowry under of 1 000 ducats: was the dowry of Chiara daughter of Salomon who married Jacob Levi on 15 January 1592, with a dowry of 400 scudi and a *tosefet* 200 scudi (the traditional 50 %) for a total of 600 scudi, corresponding to 540 ducats. The highest for this period is that of the Gaon Rabbi Josef, son of Rabbi Abram, and David Luna Cidi who brought with her a dowry of 2 500 scudi and received a *tosefet* of Josef of 1 500 scudi (60 %) for a total of 4 000 scudi, equal to 3 600 ducats.

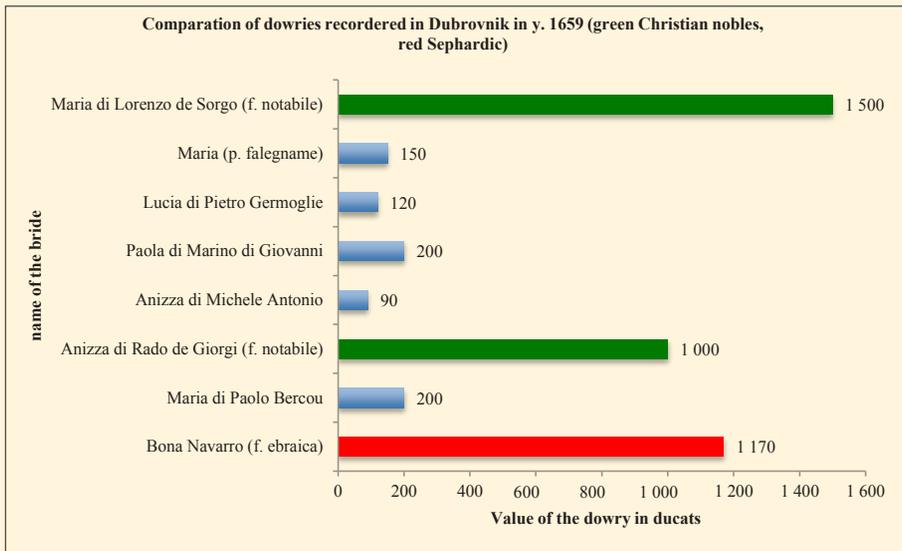
In the first half of seventeenth century, before the tragic earthquake of 6 April 1667, on the basis of 12 wedding contracts only two of them had a monetary value lower than 1 000 ducats, 5 were up to 2 000 ducats, and the dowry of Ester Cohen for her wedding with Josef Franco in 1635 reached the peak of 6 200. Particularly interesting is the structure of this conspicuous dowry, composed from 2 800 ducats in money, 300 ducats in vessels and 1 050 ducats in gold, jewelry, clothing, furniture and equipment for the house, the dowry of Ester was of 4 150 ducats which was compounded by the *tosefet* of Josef 2 050 ducats. Even from 1667 until the end of the seventeenth century the Sephardic bride continued to equip their daughters with high figures: on 16 qualities only 2 were less than 1 000 ducats, while 10 significantly exceeded 2 000 ducats, of which 7 to above 3 000 ducats.

In the eighteenth century the dynamics of the marriage policy was confirmed: on 44 contracts 10 amounted to below 1 000 ducats, 13 in the fax between 1 000 and 2 000 ducats and were up to 3 000 ducats, with bits of 6 000 and 5 100 ducats. In the last five years of the Republic all the registered dowrys except one exceeded the value of 2 500 ducats.

Jacob Namias from Sofia cemented his family alliance in the wedding with Grazia daughter of Efrahim Namias. The average of the *tosefet* was of 100 000 Ottomanakçe and the *tosefet* was the traditional 50 % of the bride dowry 50 000 Ottoman akçe. Similarly the family alliance between the Oef of Dubrovnik and the Cohen from Skopje is sealed through the union of

Isac Oefand Reina Cohen, the wedding was held in June 1616 with dowry of 1 200 ducats and a *tosefet* 600 ducats (50%) for a total amount of 1 800 ducats. Reina David's father and his brother Aron have been in business for several years with Isac and his father Aron. It is also interesting to note that the commercial interests of Oef and Namias intersect in Dubrovnik, as the former were as intermediaries of seconds for the trade of Cordovan from Sofia towards Ancona (Ligorio 2016), the Namias were a Ponente diasporic family, their commercial and family network in Italy covered Venice, Ancona, Ferrara. The family after the expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula spread throughout the Mediterranean and became a Levantine trade family (Leoni 2011: 263).





The terms of the wedding contract were a kind of protection of the wife interest. The husbands were obliged to strictly monogamous relationships with the prohibition of concubinage, polygamy and adultery, and obliging the divorce in the contract was possible only on after the consent of the wife, or her strict relatives. In the case of husband's death, the wife had the right to get back her dowry and it would be divided in 2/3 to the widow and 1/3 to the descendants. In the case of the death of his wife, the husband would inherit the half of his wife's dowry, while the other half would return to the parents of the wife. While in the case of survival of the offspring after 60 days of the woman's departure, the groom would be entitled to inherit the whole dowry. This system of guarantee was an exception in the Sephardic and Jewish tradition (Colafemmina 1992: 114–122; Delille 2013), because in theory the polygamy was practiced possible in the form of levirate, and usually the *ghet* (the divorce bill) was an unilateral decision of the husband without the acceptance of his wife. It is possible to compare to the standardized norms about the wedding. «Rav. Gershom decreed excommunication to the wedding [with another woman] in addition to his wife, but he did not decree excommunication for yebama, nor for erusa» (Caro) and continued: «A man who marries a woman who has stopped being able to give birth, and has made an oath that will not marry any other woman against [the first wife will] can't undo from his oath without the consent of his wife» (Caro).

For the Sephardim, the polygamy was a peculiar condition, an exception to the common monogamy, although in theory it was never considered prohibited or illicit, provided that the use of the local community contemplated it (Delille 2013). Joseph Caro in his *Shulkan Aruch* subordinates the matrimonial structure to the social context of reference and to the cultural tradition.

«A man can marry a certain number of women on the condition that he has the means to support them, the sages have thought possible that a man does not marry more than four women so that he can fulfill his obligations once a month. In places where it is customary to marry only one woman, men are not allowed to marry another woman. It is forbidden to marry two women in two different places» (Caro); «A man who establishes in the ketubah that he will not marry another woman after his first wife, does not sign a clause contrary to the Torah» (Caro). Leone da Modena confirmed the lawfulness of polygamy for the Levantines, unlike the Ashkenazi and Roman Jews. «It is licit to take more than one and how many wives they want, as in many places of writing, we see the license and the cases followed, so do Levantine; but among the Germans it is neither permitted nor used, and in Italy very rare, and only in case, that it has been many years with the first, and has not been able to have children» (Modena 1637). However, the families of the Dubrovnik brides were always very careful to include in the clauses of the ketubot the prohibition of polygamy in any form. The note was presented in a standardized form, exemplifying the ketubah of Luna by David Cidi and her husband Josef Gaon for the marriage contracted on 2 June 1582 and registered in Dubrovnik on 2 March 1593 in an anciet form of Italian speaked in Dubrovnik

Si obbigò detto Josephs sposo che non pigliarà altra moglie vivente donna Luna in nessun modo benanche sia serva, concubina o servitrice in modo o forma alcuna del matrimonio del mondo e non si possi partir da quella dandoli libello del repudio, eccetto che ella si contentata, consentandosi il poi propinquo parente di essa e non la si possa ingannar ne farli paura ne forzarla a vi li dirà (Državni Arhiv u Dubrovniku, Diversa de Foris, vol.1, ff. 71r.-75r.)

The same formula was also used among the families of Thessaloniki, Sofia and Sarajevo.

Through the dowry contracts prove the relevant social and economic role of the Jews Dubrovnik, and quantify the level of protection of the family of the wife reached by in the perspective of a pragmatic wedding policy. The results of this policy was a consolidate family networks across the Balkans in Early Modern Era.

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СТРУКТУРА СЕФАРДСКОГО ТОСЕФЕТА В РЕСПУБЛИКЕ РАГУЗА

АННОТАЦИЯ. В статье с точки зрения исторической этнологии рассматриваются структуры брачных отношений сефардов Адриатики. Выдвигается гипотеза, предполагающая связь между эндогамными браками и семейными альянсами на основе документов еврейских семей Адриатики, в частности Республики Рагуза, сопоставляемых с источниками с Итальянского полуострова и из Балканских городов XVII в. Приданое было основным способом передвижения капиталов и мобильной собственностью сефардской женщины. Его размер играл важнейшую роль в подтверждении статуса семьи невесты. В то же время, тосефет — подарок жениха своей жене — в балканском и адриатическом контекстах достигал неожиданно больших размеров. Для сопоставления сефардского брачного рынка с ситуацией во внешних сообществах автор провел анализ материалов брачных регистров республики Рагуза в XVII в. Среднее еврейское приданое превосходило приданое ремесленников, морских капитанов и купцов и зачастую достигало размеров приданого торговой аристократии республики. Эти данные являются результатом сравнительного и синкретического анализа сефардских браков в районах Адриатики и Балкан, что выявляет динамику и тенденции экономики еврейских женщин и брачного рынка Раннего Нового Времени.

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА: эндогамия, семейная экономика, социальная сеть, опекун жены

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