

THE SEPHARDIC JEWS IN CURAÇAO AND THEIR ROLE IN THE FORMATION OF PAPIAMENTU

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- **ABSTRACT:** This study aims to analyse the participation of Jews in Papiamentu's linguistic configuration, based on original research and on published literature (HENRIQUEZ, 1988, 1991; MARTINUS, 1996; JACOBS, 2012). The analysis of 18th century documents reveals that Sephardic Papiamentu, which is more similar to Portuguese, influenced the general variety. Prayers and epitaphs in Portuguese confirm that this was the language used by several Sephardic Jews as well. Additionally, Martinus (1996) and Jacobs (2012) present records that may point to a relationship among Senegambia/Upper Guinea, Amsterdam and Curacao through the slave trade conducted by the Jews. Thus, this study intends to show that the Jews had an important role in Curaçaoan society, influencing the configuration of Papiamentu. In addition, we follow an approach similar to the one supported by Faraclas et al. (2014): a convergence of elements has to be considered in studying the Atlantic Creole formation, namely the agency of different languages speakers.
- **KEYWORDS:** Sephardic Jews. Papiamentu. Social and linguistic role.

Introduction

Papiamentu¹ is a language spoken, among other places, on the island of Curaçao by about 150,000 people (CENTRAL BUREAU OF STATISTICS, 2012). Papiamentu is the first language of most habitants in Curaçao and is the official language along with Dutch. It is used in different communicative situations, for all social classes, in mass media (newspapers, television and radio) and for education purposes (most schools are bilingual – Dutch and Papiamentu).

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¹ In this paper, we use the Curaçaoan form Papiamentu, instead of Aruban Papiamentu.

Regarding the genesis of Papiamentu, there is no consensus among scholars, who present at least four different hypotheses. One hypothesis (GOODMAN, 1996; SMITH, 1999; among others) argues that Papiamentu was a Portuguese-based Creole that originated from a Jewish-Portuguese ‘dialect’ of the Sephardic community and their slaves, especially those from the Dutch colony in Recife, Brazil. Records show the first Sephardic family arrived in Curaçao in 1651, and the number increased in the following years.

Considering this issue, the present study aims to analyse the participation of Jews in Curaçaoan society, especially in Papiamentu’s linguistic configuration (its emergence and spread). Up to now, the role of Sephardic Jews has been somewhat neglected in the studies of Papiamentu (MARTINUS, 1996; JACOBS, 2012). With regard to Sephardim, the same authors admit that the Jewish community had an important role in the configuration of Curaçaoan society, but little is discussed about the community’s language *de facto* and even about the specificities of the so-called Sephardic Papiamentu. Thus, despite adopting data from previous studies as a starting point, this study presents a new interpretation of data since no other previous study took into account the participation of Jews in Curaçao from a linguistic perspective.

The Jews in Curaçaoan Society

The migration of Jews to Curaçao began in 1651, driven by two main reasons. The Inquisition, which began in the middle of the 16th century, meant extensive persecution to Jews, especially in Portugal and Spain. In addition, in 1654, the Portuguese crown recovered Recife (Brazil) after twenty-four years of Dutch domination and expelled the Dutch and the Jews.. The Dutch had been more tolerant than the Portuguese and Spaniards, so after these events, many Jews who lived in the Iberian Peninsula and later in the Netherlands and in Pernambuco decided to migrate to Curaçao along with their slaves.

Concerning the provenance of the Jews who came to Curaçao, many authors (like GOODMAN, 1996) advocate that many of them are from Brazil, more accurately from Recife, Pernambuco. Other scholars show that it is more plausible to consider a multiple provenance (HENRIQUEZ, 1988; JACOBS, 2012). Therefore, the Jews could have come from Portugal, Spain, Amsterdam, Italia, the Mediterranean area, Upper Guinea, or the Cape Verdean archipelago.

In spite of this variety of origins, Ladhams (1999), Smith (1999) and Jacobs (2012) show that many Jews lived in Brazil and Amsterdam before going to Curaçao. Some prominent Jewish leaders and settlers illustrate this connection. Through name registers, Emmanuel and Emmanuel (1970) show that many Jews who went to Curaçao had previously lived in Brazil-and acted as community leaders (*parnassim*).

According to Ladhams (1999), João de Yllan (or Ilhão), chief of the first group of Jewish settlers that landed in Curaçao in 1651, surely had been in Brazil between the end

of the 1630s and the beginning of the 1640s. De Yllan had promised to take 50 colonists to the island, but in practice managed to recruit only 12; among them was Abraham Diogo, who also had spent some time in Brazil (EMMANUEL; EMMANUEL, 1970). Casseres (1990) also mentions the name of Joao d'Yllan and his passage through Brazil before going to Curaçao. According to this same author, many ex-colonists of Dutch Brazil formed the second group of Jews that arrived in Curaçao in 1659, under the command of Isaac da Costa. Emmanuel and Emmanuel (1970) claim that Isaac, Uriel da Costa's nephew, also had been one of the first Jewish colonists in Brazil. He was a great merchant in Recife and his father and uncles were prominent people within the Amsterdam Jewish community. With Isaac da Costa, the Curaçaoan Jewish community was in fact settling down in solid bases. Smith (1999), in turn, mentions David Nassy, who not only had been in Recife and Curaçao (where he arrived in 1652 along with other Brazilian Jews), but also in Suriname.

Besides their families, many Jews (mainly those who left Pernambuco) also brought their slaves to Curaçao. This is a point of controversy, inasmuch as some scholars advocate that this scenario is unlikely, whereas others defend the possibility. Arends (1999), Ladhams (1999) and Jacobs (2012), for example, reasoned that Jews didn't bring slaves with them because of (i) the shortage of transportation (there were available only sixteen vessels, which were occupied not only by passengers but also by 'movable property' such as wood), (ii) the small number of slaves owned by Jews, and (iii) the strict prohibitions for leaving Recife with slaves. Another reason is the long and indirect journey routes. Maurer (1998) also points out that, according to some registers, since 1659 the Jewish newcomers to Curaçao could purchase slaves. Thereby, it is possible to assume that the Jews did not bring their slaves; otherwise, they would not need to appeal for this privilege.

On the other hand, Smith (1999) asserts that many Jews could have taken slaves with them. They were conscious about the value of an 'experienced' slave and might use non-official means of transportation. Besides, it is possible that there were more Jewish plantation owners than the recorded number, which would imply a need for slaves to work in the field and, consequently, the possession of a larger number of slaves by the Jews. Smith (1999) says that, being aware of the value of slaves to the Recife plantation economy, many Dutch and Jews already had been withdrawing their slaves even before the Portuguese recapture. This author adds that the existence of a law, which prohibited the departure of slaves, does not mean it was strictly accomplished. Therefore, even the slaves from Recife were not taken in large scale numbers along with their Jewish owners and some of them (presumably those in the owners' house or the ones more adapted to work in the field) could have been shipped to the Caribbean island. Because they were in constant movement within the island, these slaves, speakers of some variety of Portuguese, certainly contributed to the diffusion and incorporation of Portuguese elements into Papiamentu. The contribution attributed to the slave segment is not restricted only to the ones who had left Brazil but includes all slaves who, in some way, lived together with the Sephardim.

When Jews arrived in Curaçao, they engaged in activities such as international trade, finances, shipping and transportation (CASSERES, 1990). According to this author, it is likely Jews did not own many lands and were involved in activities that did not require many slaves. Because of this, they did not have a great number of slaves nor were they involved directly with the slavery trade because the Dutch West India Company (WIC) exercised the monopoly in this activity and seldom allowed other segments to take part in it. Other authors question the involvement of Jews in the slavery industry. Martinus (1996) and Jacobs (2012) draw attention to the role of Jews in the slave trade in Curaçao, an aspect often overlooked since it does not appear in official records because all slave trade conducted by Jews was illegal.

Both authors present records that may point to a relationship among Senegambia/Upper Guinea, Amsterdam and Curacao through the slave trade conducted by the Jews. On this, Martinus (1996) calls attention to the fact that the Jews in Curaçao not only were colonists but also slave traders (combining the two activities many times). Many Jews had more than one name – and sometimes had Dutch-looking names (as is the case of Jan de Lion in place of João de Yllan – or even put their non-Jewish partners in charge of the businesses. These attitudes could be the reason why scholars in general have not considered Jewish participation in the slave trade (MARTINUS, 1996).

Another proof that Jews negotiated slaves is Van Dantzig's account (1968, p. 81 apud MARTINUS 1996, p. 145) of the relations between Portuguese Jews in Curaçao and the ones from Amsterdam through Cacheu Company: "The Portuguese licensed Company of Cacheu, founded in 1692 mainly for slave trade, had intimate links with the Portuguese Jews of Amsterdam and had its own office in Curaçao." Therefore, in addition to their activities in transportation, shipping and banking, Sephardic Jews may have been landowners and have been involved in slave trade, playing an important role in Curaçaoan society.

To get a more detailed account of the participation of Sephardim in Papiamentu it is necessary to discuss briefly the genesis of Creole languages in general. The gradual creolization approach seems to be suitable to explain the formation of Papiamentu, including the role of Sephardic Jews. Considering that it took some time for the Caribbean language to develop, the Sephardic community, which began to arrive in Curaçao in 1651, could have had a relevant role in the development of this new language, not only providing words, expressions and structures, but also, and especially, bringing to Papiamentu a new input from the Portuguese language.

Besides the gradualist approach, the position of Perini-Santos (2015) also applies to the participation of the Jewish community in the linguistic configuration of Papiamentu. To this author, the multiple influences active in a particular moment can be perceived in a span of many synchronies and maintained for various generations. An example of this continuous influence mentioned by Perini-Santos (2015) concerns Latin and Romance languages. Latin not only gave rise to other languages, but it lived together with them for a long time. This coexistence is responsible for influences that go beyond

the genetic relation, being necessary, according to this author, to analyse the Latin contribution to these daughter languages in a broader perspective, attending to the linguistic contact. Considering the ideas discussed by Perini-Santos (2015) in relation to Papiamentu, the variety of languages present in Curaçao (Spanish, Dutch, African languages spoken by slaves, Portuguese and Papiamentu spoken by Sephardim) had a substantial participation in configuration of the Caribbean language. This multiple agency was kept even though the language has not remained in use in Curaçao society over the years. Concerning the Sephardic community, it can be observed that the Jews were present in Curaçao for a long time, occupying a position of social prestige and being numerically representative within the society as a whole.

Linguistic Contributions of Sephardic Jews to Papiamentu

As far as the language spoken by the Jews is concerned, Jacobs (2012) claims there are no descriptions of the Sephardic's ethnolect, which makes it impossible to say conclusively that the aspects of Papiamentu attributed to the Jews' influence really occurred in their language variety. Munteanu (1996) also asserts that the vernacular languages of Sephardic Jews are not known with accuracy, only that they generally spoke Spanish, Portuguese or both. Nevertheless, many authors provide some insights into the language used by the Sephardic Jews, not only in Curaçao, but also in parts of Europe and Brazil (regions related to the Caribbean island). Andersen (1974) argues that Curaçaoan Jews spoken Judeo-Spanish,² Spanish and Portuguese. Besides, they knew other languages (e.g., English, French, Dutch, Hebrew) required for translation activities.

Emmanuel (1957), Martinus (1996) and Joubert and Perl (2008) also defend the multilingualism of the Jewish community. Martinus (1996) considers that Jews used Portuguese, Hebrew, Ladino, Spanish and Dutch. Granda (1974) points to the use of Spanish, Portuguese and Ladino among Sephardim in Curaçao. Jacobs (2012), in turn, does not believe Ladino to have been used in Curaçao; although this language was the most characteristic one in the Sephardic Jews communities in Europe, there is no record that proves its existence in Curaçao.

In short, multilingualism may have predominated in the Curaçaoan Sephardic Jews. Among the various languages used, according to some authors, Portuguese could have had a prominent role. According to Grant (2008b), the majority of Sephardic Jews who lived in the Netherlands and Curaçao in the 16th century had Portuguese as their mother tongue, using it in various situations (family communication, written media, wills, deeds, acts, among others) instead of Spanish (although many of them also had some knowledge of the Hispanic language and even Dutch). Munteanu (1996) indicates

² This study is not going to discuss the difference between *Ladino* (form of writing used in translations) and *Judeo-Spanish* (the set of spoken Spanish varieties arisen in the late 16th and 17th centuries), using the two terms as synonyms.

that most of the Curaçaoan Jews spoke Portuguese, which was the official language of the Jewish congregation until 1865. Emmanuel (1957) also considers that, in Curaçao until 1865, Portuguese prevailed within the Sephardic community; this was the mother tongue of almost all Jews there, used in both the synagogue and government institutions, there being an interest in transmitting this language to the children.

Smith (1999) points out the importance of Portuguese in the Curaçao synagogue (*Mikve Israel*, the most ancient synagogue in Western Hemisphere in continuous use), where this language was used until 1856. Lessa (1975) also mentions the use of Portuguese in Dutch synagogues. Up to the present, there are Portuguese prayers and expressions in *Mikve Israel*.

Emmanuel (1959, p. xxvii–xxix) and Joubert and Perl (2008, p. 143) present some prayers in Portuguese, stating the titles of the prayers (in Spanish), which point out their purpose and context of use and which were translated and are shown here in bold. The prayers were kept as recorded by the authors, without changes in their form. In addition, the prayers were numbered and comments were included in the notes, which comprise general explanations of some terms referring to the Hebrew culture and religion:

1 Oração pela saúde da Rainha Holandesa, de sua família real, do governador de Curaçao e seus magistrados:³ A Sua Majestade Juliana, Rainha dos Países Baixos e a seu Real Consorte. A serenissima Princesa Wilhelmina Madame sua Mãe. Aos descendentes da Casa Real de Orange Nassao; aos ilustres membros que concorrem no Governo destas terras e ao nobre venerável Excelentissimo Senhor Governador desta ilha e a todos Magistrados en ella.

1 Prayer for the health of the Queen of Holland, Her Royal Family and the governor of Curaçao and his magistrates: *Her Majesty Juliana, Queen of the Netherlands and her royal spouse. The Serene Highness Princess Wilhelmina Madam Her Mother. To the descendants of the Royal House Orange Nassao; to the distinguished members that take part in the Government of such lands and to the venerable Eminent Sir Governor of this island and to all Magistrates in it.*

2 Oferta pelo repouso da alma de um defunto:

Tantos soldos Shemen Lamaor por el descanso de fulano de tal.

2 Offering for the rest of a dead man's soul:

A pay by Shemen Lamaor for the rest of such and such.

3 Pela saúde dos que estão de luto:

Para que Deus lhes conceda vidas largas.

3 For the health of those who mourn:

So that God give them long lives.

³ On a visit to the Jewish Historical-Cultural Museum, next to the synagogue, it was possible to note that this prayer in Portuguese (possibly with small changes) exists in a mural outside the entrance. This prayer is also mentioned, with few changes, by Joubert and Perl (2008). Moreover, according to Silva (2001), a similar prayer is still visible today in the Portuguese synagogue in Amsterdam.

4 Pela saúde de um enfermo:

Para que Deus lhe conceda Refua Shelema⁴ e para que continue em saúde perfeita.

4 For the health of a sick person:

So that God give him Refua Schelema and that he remains in good health.

5 Por aquele que se salvou de um mal = Hagomél:⁵

Que sua saída seja para bem.

5 For the one who was saved from an evil = Hagomél:

So that his deliverance is for the good.

6 Pelo aniversário de alguém:

Que Deus lhe deixe contar muitos anos de bon.

6 For someone's birthday:

May God give him many good years.

7 Pelos recém-casados:

Pela saúde dos Senhores noivos, para que Deus lhes haga felizes.

7 For newly-married:

For the health of the couple, so that God make them happy.

8 Ao nascimento de um filho:

Pela saúde de Bangal, a Berith,⁶ sua esposa e recém-nascido, pais e mães, parentes que vejam grandes gustos.

8 To the birth of a son:

For the health of Bengal, a Berith, his wife and newborn, so that fathers and mothers, relatives wish them well.

9 Pelo Bar Mitzvá (Bar Misva):⁷

Pela graça de haver chegado a este estado, pais e mães, parentes que vejam grandes gustos.

9 For the Bar Mitzvá (Bar Misva):

For the grace of having coming to this stage, fathers and mothers, relatives wish them well.

⁴ According to Joubert and Perl (2008), *Refuah Shlema* is the Hebrew term that refers to the wish for a full recovery.

⁵ According to Emmanuel and Emmanuel (1970), the Hebrew word *Hagomel* ('the grantor') refers to a prayer of deliverance said before the Holy Ark or the Torah (also called the Pentateuch, referring to the first five books of the Bible).

⁶ According to Henriquez (1988), *bangalá Berit* (Ba'al Berit) is the name given to the father of a child performing the *Berit* (circumcision).

⁷ According to Emmanuel and Emmanuel (1970), the Aramaic/Hebrew word *Bar Mitzvah / Bar Mitsvah / Bar Mitzvah* ('the son of the commandment') refers to the ceremony in which Jewish boys begin to participate in the services of the synagogue, usually on the first *Sabbath* (the period from sundown on Friday to the sundown on Saturday) after their thirteenth birthday.

10 Boa viagem:

Para que Deus lo leve ao porto de seu desejo e lo livre de todos maus encontros.

10 Good journey:

So that God guide him to the harbour of his wishes and deliver him from all bad encounters.

11 Por quem queira receber boas notícias:

Que Deus lo mantenha com bem e mande boas noticias de el.

11 For whom wishes to receive good news:

So that God keep him good and send good news of him.

12 Feliz chegada:

Que sua jegada seja para bem.

12 Happy homecoming:

That his homecoming brings happiness.

13 Pela saúde dos Parnassim⁸ e dos membros da Comunidade:

Pela saude dos Senhores Parnassim, Yehidim deste Kahal Kadosh,⁹ para que Deus lhes aumente e prospere.

13 For the health of Parnassim and the Community members':

For the health of Sirs Parnassim, Yehidim of this Kahal Kadosh, so that God provide them with prosperity.

14 Pela saúde do presidente da Comunidade:

Pela saude do Rosh Hakahal.¹⁰

14 For the health of the Community's president:

For the health of Rosh Hakahal.

15 Pela saúde do grande rabino:

Pela saude do Morénu Harab.¹¹

15 For the health of the great rabbi:

For the health of Morénu Harab.

16 Na instalação dos novos Parnassim:

Pela saude dos Senhores Parnassim salientes e entrantes.

16 Upon new Parnassim:

For the health of the prominent arriving Sirs Parnassim.

⁸ Emmanuel and Emmanuel (1970) define the Hebrew word *Parnas / Parnaz* (plural: *Parnassim*) ('provider') as the community supervisor, administrator or president of a society, brotherhood or Jewish school/college.

⁹ This Hebrew term refers to the sacred congregation (EMMANUEL; EMMANUEL, 1970).

¹⁰ The Hebrew word *Ros / Rosh* ('head') refers to the head or the president of a brotherhood or to the rector of a Jewish college (EMMANUEL; EMMANUEL, 1970).

¹¹ Emmanuel and Emmanuel (1970) consider that this Hebrew term refers to the chief rabbi.

17 Pela saúde dos noivos da Lei (*Hatanim*¹²):

Pela saúde dos Senhores Hatanim que sempre se entreguem ao cargo de Misvoth.¹³

17 For the health of Law's bridegrooms (*Hatanim*):

For the health of Sirs Hatanim, who may always perform the Misvoth.

18 Em Rosh Hashaná¹⁴ e Yom Kipur:¹⁵

Para que Deus nos escreva em livros de vida.

18 During Rosh Hashaná and Yom Kipur:

So that God writes us into the books of lives.

19 Nas três grandes festas (*Shalosh Regalim*):¹⁶

Para que Deus lhe conceda (o nos conceda) festas alegres.

19 On the three great feasts (*Shalosh Regalim*):

So that God give you (or us) happy feasts.

20 O rabino *hazan*¹⁷ ou *samas*¹⁸ que oferece por sua saúde:

Pela mi própria saúde e que Deus me conceda muitos anos no serviço desta Santa Casa.

20 The rabbi *hazan* ou *samas*, who prays for your health:

For my own health, and so that God provide me with many years in the service of this Holy House.

21 A favor da chuva:

Para que Deus nos conceda chuva de bênção.

21 In favor of rain:

So that God showers us with blessings.

22 Quando não se quer especificar o objeto de sua oferta:

Por sua intenção.

22 When one does not want to specify the object of one's prayer:

For thy blessing.

¹² A Hebrew word meaning 'bride and groom' (EMMANUEL; EMMANUEL, 1970).

¹³ According to Emmanuel and Emmanuel (1970), the Hebrew word *Misva* / *Misvah* / *Mitsvah* / *Mitzvah* (plural: *Mizvoth*) ('commandment, good deed') refers to the participation in an honorable act in the services of the synagogue, such as the burial of a Jew.

¹⁴ Emmanuel and Emmanuel (1970) consider that the Hebrew term *Rosana* / *Ros-Ashaná* / *Rosassana* / *Rosassanah* / *Roshashana* / *Rosh Hashanah* ('head of the year') refers to the Jewish New Year.

¹⁵ The Hebrew word *Kippur* / *Kippur* / *Yom Kippur* is the Day of Atonement or Forgiveness, which occurs on the tenth day of the seventh Jewish month (EMMANUEL; EMMANUEL, 1970).

¹⁶ Hebrew term that includes three important Jewish festivals: *Pesah* (Easter), *Shavuot* (Pentecost) and *Succot* / *Sucoth* / *Sukkot* (Tabernacles).

¹⁷ The Hebrew word *Hazan* / *Hazzan* (plural: *Hazzanim*) refers to the official who sings liturgical songs or reads the prayers in synagogues (EMMANUEL; EMMANUEL, 1970).

¹⁸ Emmanuel and Emmanuel (1970) define the Hebrew word *Samas* / *Shamas* / *Shamash* / *Shammash* ('servant') as referring to the sexton of the synagogue.

23 Oração especial proferida na noite de Kippur pela saúde das vítimas judias da Inquisição:

A todos nossos irmãos presos pela Inquisição.

23 *Special prayer given in the night of Kippur for the health of Jewish victims of the Inquisition:*

To all our Brothers arrested by the Inquisition.

24 Na chegada de um novo mês (*Rosh Hodesh*¹⁹):

Mahar Rosh Hodesh, manan es Rosh Hodesh, Mahar umaharato, manan e pois manan, segunda feira, terça feira, quarta feira, quinta feira, sexta feira, Shabbath Kodesh es Rosh Hodesh.

24 *Upon the coming of a new month (Rosh Hodesh):*

Mahar Rosh Hodesh, manan es Rosh Hodesh, Mahar umaharato, manan and therefore manan, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Shabbath Kodesh es Rosh Hodesh.

In the prayers presented by Emmanuel (1959) and Joubert and Perl (2008), it is possible to notice the use of Spanish forms merged with sentences in Portuguese, for example, *en ella* (in her), *por el* (by), *haga* (to make), *gustos* (likes), *lo* (you, the object pronoun), *de el* (his), *o* (or), and *mi propia* (my own). This demonstrates that the Portuguese spoken by the Curaçaoan Sephardic Jews was permeated by words from Spanish and Hebrew (EMMANUEL, 1959). This blend of Portuguese and other languages, especially Spanish, could lead to the question of why the prayers of the Sephardic community are attributed to Portuguese rather than Spanish. Despite the similarities between the two languages and besides the choices of lexical and functional items (which are different in the two languages), other indications suggest a Portuguese origin to the detriment of Spanish: (i) verb forms: *concorrem* (not *concurrer*), *seja* (not *sea*), *deixe* (not *deje*), *vejam* (not *vean*), *leve* (not *lleve*), *livre* (not *libre*), *escreva* (not *escriba*), *mantenha* (not *mantenga*), *engrandeça* (not *engrandezca*); (ii) syntactic constructions: *aos* (not *a los*), *dos* (not *de los*), *no* (not *en el*), *destas* (not *de estas*), *pela* (not *por la*); (iii) nominal endings (affixes): *majestade* (not *majestad*), *descendentes* (not *descendientes*), *venerável* (not *venerable*), *benção* (not *bendición*), *intenção* (not *intención*), *inquisição* (not *inquisición*), *serviço* (not *servicio*).

From the names of the princess and the queen cited in the first prayer, it is possible to know, approximately, the date of the inscription. This prayer refers to Wilhelmina Helena Pauline Maria, who ruled from 1890 to 1948, when she abdicated the throne, being called queen mother and receiving the title of princess. Her daughter, Juliana, was queen from 1948 to 1980, when she also gave up power (BOS, [20--]). Therefore, this prayer dates from the 20th century. The fact that it is written in Portuguese shows that this language still was important to Sephardim community until a short time ago (if

¹⁹ Emmanuel and Emmanuel (1970) consider that the Hebrew expression *Ros Hodes* / *Rosh Hodesh* refers to the first day of the Jewish month.

it was not, another language would have been chosen). It refutes Jacobs claim (2012) that in the early 18th century, Sephardic Jews in Curaçao did not use Portuguese.

There is further evidence that Portuguese was a strong language in the Jewish community: the epitaph of gravestones of the ancient Jewish cemetery *Beth Haim* (Casa de Vida), situated in the centre of Curaçao, in the region of the current oil refinery Isla. Considering 2,568 gravestones (data from HARTOG, [197-?]), Lessa (1975) points out that Portuguese is used in 1,667 epitaphs (65%), Hebrew appears in 40 (1.5%), Dutch occurs in 28 (1.1%) and 260 are illegible (10.1%) (This author does not mention the language used in the other 573 gravestones). Casseres (1990) presents the following numbers regarding the languages used in 2,338 epitaphs: Portuguese (1,668, 71.3%), Spanish (433, 18.5%), Hebrew (112, 4.8%), English (89, 3.8%), Dutch (32, 1.4%), French (3, 0.13%), Yiddish (or Jewish German) (1, 0.04%). These same figures appear in Emmanuel (1957) – the only difference is that, according to this author, the Spanish epitaphs amount to 361 – and Joubert and Perl (2008), with the additional information that, of the 112 headstones in Hebrew, 40 were in Hebrew only and 72 were bilingual (Hebrew along with Spanish, Portuguese, English or Dutch). An analysis of the languages used on the gravestones of tombs shows that most families of deceased Jews chose Portuguese to appear in the epitaphs. This is a strong indication that this language had great importance within the Jewish community, being the mother tongue of most of the Sephardim, transmitted to the young with dedication and determination.²⁰

Martinus (1996) and Grant (2008a) provide other evidence that Portuguese was the language of the Sephardic community in Curaçao in the first years. Martinus (1996) points out that Portuguese is the most used language in the slave trade and its domain was a necessary condition for success in this activity. Therefore, once Jews were actively involved in the slave trade, they would have to learn Portuguese to have higher profits. Grant (2008a), in turn, claims that a possible source of Portuguese elements of Papiamentu would be Jewish-Portuguese or the Portuguese spoken by Sephardic community and its slaves, both differing from Portuguese. The use of Portuguese would be so widespread within the Jewish community that it would have reached the point of influencing the configuration of Papiamentu.

Although Jacobs disregards the use and the importance of Portuguese among the Curaçaoan Sephardim community, historical registers show that this language was relevant for many years (JACOBS, 2012). Besides the fact that there are no accounts of complete abandonment of Portuguese by the Jews, Emmanuel's data (1959) regarding prayers in Portuguese dismiss Jacobs affirmation (2012) about the disuse of Portuguese in synagogues. The relation established between the high number of epitaphs written in Portuguese and the predominance of this language within the Jewish community still could be questioned. There may be other explanations for the

²⁰ On a visit to the Curaçaoan synagogue, it is possible to find replicas of some gravestones of the ancient Jewish cemetery, which show the predominant use of Portuguese, many times permeated by words of Spanish etymon.

use of Portuguese on gravestones, among them the role of Portuguese in Catholicism and artisan jobs based on replicated models, where the gravestones were reproduced in single formats, without representing the urban and usual in daily records language. By analysing the situation of the Curaçaoan Jewish community, it is possible to refute these two explanations. First, the use of Portuguese by Jews was not restricted to the religious context, extending to daily communication and official documents. Besides, the memorials did not follow a pre-established model, which should be copied on all gravestones: the texts were different, specific to each of the dead (many times mentioning even private data).

There is a contradiction in the position of Jacobs (2012) regarding the importance of Portuguese within the Jewish community: The author states both that Portuguese had a predominant role for the Jews and that in the 18th century this language was not used by them, questioning whether one day it was really used. In addition to the fact that there are no reports of the obsolescence of Portuguese in the Jewish community during the 18th century, Emmanuel's (1959) data regarding prayers in Portuguese disqualifies Jacobs's (2012) statement about the disuse of Portuguese within the synagogues. Furthermore, Portuguese was used until 20th century, as proven by the existence of gravestones in Portuguese in the 18th and 19th centuries, being the last inscription in this language dated from November 1865 (EMMANUEL, 1957), and by the prayer headed for Queen Juliana, who ruled from 1948 to 1980.

Regardless of which was the majority language spoken by Sephardic Jews, scholars (HENRIQUEZ, 1988, 1991; CASSERES, 1990; JACOBS, 2012) have indicated that shortly after their arrival, Jews adopted Papiamentu as a first language. This adoption of Papiamentu as mother tongue by the Jews, who were also Portuguese speakers, may be evidence for the influence of this group on Papiamentu. According to Martinus (1996), at the end of 17th century, there already were native speakers of Papiamentu among both Dutch and Jews (see JACOBS; VAN DER WAL 2015, p. 53 for evidence of a Dutch-Papiamentu bilingualism in the Protestant community in Curaçao at the end of the 18th century). In her research with Sephardic families, Henriquez (1988) found that the Jews began early to speak Papiamentu as their mother tongue (combined with knowledge of other languages, such as Portuguese). Casseres (1990), Fouse (2002) and Jacobs (2012) also defend this change. Jacobs (2012) claims that at the end of the 18th century, Papiamentu was already the mother tongue of large part of the Curaçaoan population, including the Sephardic Jews. Illustrative of this statement is the fact that the first known document written in Papiamentu, a fragment of a letter dated from 1775, was written by a Sephardic Jew, Abraham de David da Costa Andrade Júnior (HENRIQUEZ, 1988; MARTINUS, 1996).

The following is a reading of a letter of 1775 – performed in order to observe the characteristics of Sephardic Papiamentu and its likely greater proximity to Portuguese – adopting the following pattern: (i) the first line contains the diplomatic reading, that is, the transcription of the text as it appears in the original, not adding or omitting any information (such as punctuation marks) or changing the spelling of words. This

line appears in regular font. In addition, the same organization of lines of the original document is also kept; (ii) in the second line, a semi-diplomatic reading is provided; this is a transcription that incorporates a few changes (such as junction or separation of words because they are a contribution from a reading, the changes are in italics and in brackets), seeking to preserve the characteristics of the original to the maximum. This line appears in bold and uppercase; (iii) in the third line, the correspondent in modern Papiamentu is provided, adding required punctuation and capital letters. This line is in bold; (iv) the fourth line corresponds to the Portuguese translation; and (v) finally, the fifth line contains the English translation and appears in italics and between single quotation mark.

1 [...] ²¹ piter may the ora ky boso abiny, my atopa tiola...

PITER MAY THE ORA KY BOSO [A BINY], MY [A TOPA] [TIO LA]...

Pietermaai²² te ora ku boso a bini. Mi a topa tio La...

‘[Fiquei em] Pietermaai até a hora que vocês chegaram. Eu me encontrei com tio La...’

‘[I was in] Pietermaai until the time you came. I met uncle La...’

2 Ku sara meme nan taba biny punta

KU SARA MEME NAN TABA BINY PUNTA

ku Sara Meme. Nan tabata bini Punda²³

‘[E] com Sara Meme. Eles estavam indo para Punda.’

‘[and] with Sara Meme. They were going to Punda.’

3 my dusie bo pay amanda bo ruman Aronchy ku

MY DUSIE BO PAY [A MANDA] BO RUMAN ARONCHY KU

Mi dushi, bo tata a manda bo ruman Aronchy ku

‘Meu amor, seu pai mandou seu irmão Aronchy e’

‘My dear, your father ask your brother Aronchy and’

4 tony & meaca koge na kamina dy piter may

TONY & MEACA KOGE NA KAMINA DI PITER MAY

Tony i Meaca kohe na kaminda di Pietermaai

‘Tony e Meaca pegarem no caminho de Pietermaai’

‘Tony and Meaca to take the road to Pietermaai’

²¹ Maurer (1998) presents the beginning of the letter, from a translation of the Dutch text into Spanish, as “Mi alma, desde las siete estuve caminando en” – “My soul, since seven [hours], I have been walking in”. The author mentions that the Dutch translation of the entire letter was found by Hermann Prins Salomon (an author who, in 1982, also discussed the excerpt from the letter in Papiamentu) in the archives of the city of The Hague, Netherlands.

²² *Pietermaai* is the name of a street in Willemstad, Curaçao.

²³ *Punda* is the center of Willemstad.

5 es nigríta antunyca & nan aybel tras dij forty
ES NIGRITA ANTUNYCA & NAN [A YBEL] TRAS DIJ FORTY
e negríta Antúnika i nan a hib' é tras di e fôrti
'a negrinha Antúnica e eles levaram-na para trás do forte'
'*Antúnica, the negress, and they took her behind the fort*'

6 & nan amanda sutel guatapana mas my
& NAN [A MANDA] [SUT'EL] GUATAPANA MAS MY
i nan a manda sut' é ku watapana, pero mi
'e eles mandaram açoítá-la com guatapuna, mas eu'
'*and they had her whipped with divi-divi, but I*'

7 no saby paky razon. Sy bo saby manda gabla
NO SABY [PA KY] RAZON. SY BO SABY MANDA GABLA
no sa pa ki razon. Si bo sa, manda bisa-
'não sei por que razão. Se você sabe, manda falar'
'*do not know for what reason. If you know it, tell*'

8 ku my dios pagabo.
KU MY DIOS PAGABO.
mi. Dios pagabo.
'comigo. Deus te pague.'
'*me. God will reward you.*'

9 bida manda gabla ku mi kico bechy abiny
BIDA MANDA GABLA KU MI KICO BECHY [A BINY]
Bida, manda bisami kiko Bechy a bini
'Vida, manda me falar o que Bechy veio'
'*My Life, send word to me of what Bechy came*'

10 busca na punta & borbe bay asina presto.
BUSCA NA PUNTA & BORBE BAY ASINA PRESTO.
buska na Punda i bolbe bai asina lihé.
'buscar em Punda e por que voltou tão rápido.'
'*to look for in Punda and why she came back so quickly.*'

11 my diamanty no laga dy scribimy tudu
MY DIAMANTY NO LAGA DY SCRIBIMY TUDU
Mi djamanta, no laga di skirbimi tur
'Meu diamante, não deixe de me escrever tudo'
'*My diamond, do not stop writing me everything*'

12 kico my ta puntrabo awe nochy my ta warda
KICO MY TA PUNTRABO AWE NOCHY MY TA WARDA
loke mi ta puntrabo awe nochi. Mi ta warda
‘o que estou perguntando esta noite. Estou esperando’
‘that I am asking you tonight. I am waiting’

13 rospandy, my serafim precura pa quanto
ROSPANDY, MY SERAFIM PRECURA PA QUANTO
respondé. Mi serafin, pèrkurá pa kuantu
‘uma resposta. Meu serafim, procure para quanto’
‘an answer. My angel, seek as soon as’

14 antes dios sacabo dy es aflicao & no para dy
ANTES DIOS SACABO DY ES AFLICAO & NO PARA DY
ántes Dios sakabo di e affikshon i no para di
‘antes Deus te tire dessa aflição e não pare de’
‘possible for God to take you out of this affliction and do not stop’

15 tuma remedio
TUMA REMEDIO
tuma remedi.
‘tomar seu remédio.’
‘taking your medicine.’

16 my mamá bida sy bo mester algun coza manda
MI MAMÁ BIDA SY BO MESTER ALGUN COZA MANDA
Mi mama, bida, si bo mester algun kos, manda
‘Minha mamãezinha, minha vida, se você precisar de alguma coisa, me diga’
‘My mother, my life, if you need anything, ask’

17 pidy bo marido ky tanto ta stimabo. my aurora
PIDY BO MARIDO KY TANTO TA STIMABO. MY AURORA
pidi bo marí, ku tantu ta stimabo. Mi ourora,
‘pedir ao seu marido, que tanto te ama. Minha aurora,’
‘you husband, who loves you so much. My dawn,’

18 nobira falso pa my dios guardabo
[NO BIRA] FALSO PA MY DIOS GUARDABO
no rabia ku mi. Dios wardabo.
‘não fique com raiva de mim. Deus te guarde.’
‘do not get angry with me. God keeps you.’

19 dy bo marido ky tanto ta stimabo

DY BO MARIDO KY TANTO TA STIMABO

Di bo marí, ku tantu ta stimabo

‘De seu marido, que tanto te ama’

‘From you husband, who loves you so much’

20 & ta dora nabo

& TA DORABO

i ta dorabo.

‘e te adora.’

‘and adores you.’

21 Assinatura

ASSINATURA

ASSINATURA²⁴

ASSINATURA

SIGNATURE

22 pay may rake

PAY MAY RAKE

Tata, mama i Rake

‘Pai, mãe e Raquel’

‘Father, mother and Raquel’

23 ta mandabo

TA MANDABO

ta mandabo

‘te mandam’

‘send you’

24 muchu kumindamento

MUCHU KUMINDAMENTO

muchu kumindamentu.

‘muitos cumprimentos.’

‘many greetings.’

Analysing the letter of 1775, it is possible to observe that the variety used is similar to modern Papiamentu as already pointed out by Wood (1972) and Fouse (2002). Despite the correspondence between the language used in the letter of 1775 and modern Papiamentu, there are some divergences, such as those found on a phonetic-phonological level, which indicate dialectical differences between the Sephardi Papiamentu and

²⁴ According to Wood (1972), it is a stylized X, which symbolizes a kiss. On the other hand, Maduro (1971 apud HENRIQUEZ, 1988), argues that the signature appears as a monogram, possibly CA. Ferrol (1982), in turn, also advocates for a monogram, but in reverse order: AC.

modern Papiamentu, such as: (i) lambdacism – **BORBE** *['bor.be] > **bolbe** ['boʔ.be] ‘to come back’; (ii) metathesis – **SCRIBI** *['skri.bi] > **skirbi** ['skir.bi] ‘to write’.

As for etymologies, there are more words from the Portuguese in the letter of 1775, as is the case with **AFLICAO** (< PT *aflição*; ≠ ESP *aflicción*), **PAI** (< PT *pai*; ≠ ESP *padre*), **MAS** (< PT *mas*; ≠ ESP *pero*), **TUDO** (as in **TUDU KIKO**) (< PT *tudo*; ≠ ESP *todo*). Such forms fell into disuse in modern Papiamentu. They were replaced by **aflikshon**, **tata**, **pero** and **tur**, respectively. The word **pai** exists in Papiamentu, but it is not much used by speakers, who prefer the word **tata**. However, the word **mas** has a different meaning in modern usage, referring to the intensifying adverb ‘more’. The case of the first three words (**AFLICAO**, **PAI** and **MAS**) shows that there was a replacement of Old Portuguese words for Spanish words. This Papiamentu Hispanicization also may be exemplified by the expression **tur loke** (similar to ESP *todo lo que*, ≠ PT *tudo o que*), currently used in place of **TUDU KICO**.

Therefore, although Portuguese words in the letter of 1775 do not occur in a very expressive number, there are some words of undoubted Portuguese etymology – which have fallen into disuse (or are little used) in the modern variety – in a greater amount than previously pointed out by scholars such as Wood (1972) and Ferrol (1982). This shows that Papiamentu used by Sephardic Jews actually was more influenced by Portuguese, being permeated by words and structures from this language.

We observe that the influence of Portuguese on Sephardic Papiamentu is visible on a lexical level. Notwithstanding this, it is not possible to deny that there was a contribution of one to the other. Viaro (2011) states that some grammatical classes are more likely to be borrowed than others: nominal categories are the most borrowed, then the numerals, derivational morphemes, adverbs, conjunctions and indefinite pronouns; finally, prepositions would resist the most to borrowing, along with articles, personal pronouns and flexional morphemes. Thus, it comes as no surprise that the greatest influence happens on the lexical level. Further studies will be able to evidence influences on other levels.

In addition to the excerpt from the letter of 1775, Maurer (1998) presents a document dated January 16th, 1776 that reproduces a supposed dialogue between two slaves recorded by the Sephardic Jew Semuel Costa Andrade. The report of this dialogue follows, adopting the following pattern: (i) in the first line, the text appears in the Papiamentu of that time in regular font; (ii) in the second line, there is a semi-diplomatic reading which incorporates a few changes to the original text presented in italics and in brackets. This line is in bold and uppercase; (iii) the third line contains the correspondent form in modern Papiamentu, which is in bold – the content of the first and third lines was taken from Maurer (1998) and there may be some additions in the form of the modern Papiamentu; the semi-diplomatic reading was elaborated by the authors; (iv) in the fourth line, the Portuguese translation appears in regular font and between single quotes, followed by the English translation in regular font and between single quotes as well. Throughout the document, there are excerpts in Portuguese (making explicit who will speak in the dialogue). In such cases, there are

three lines: one with the text as provided by Maurer (1998) in italics, the second with the Portuguese translation in regular font and between single quotes, and the third with the English version.

1 ... *iva duas negras caminhando diante de my discutindo e dizendo huma com outra:*

‘Duas negras iam caminhando diante de mim discutindo e dizendo uma com a outra:’

‘Two black women were walking in front of me arguing and telling one another:’

2 “boste atende kiko tin?”

“BOSTE [A TENDE] KIKO TIN?”

“Bo a tende kiko tin?”

‘Você ouviu o que houve?’

‘Did you hear what happened?’

3 *Respondeo a outra:*

‘A outra respondeu:’

‘The other answered:’

4 “my no tende nada, pues kiko tin?”

“MY NO [A TENDE] NADA, PUES KIKO TIN?”

“Mi no a tende nada, anto kiko tin?”

‘Eu não ouvi nada, então o que houve?’

‘I didn’t hear anything, so what happened?’

5 *Respondeo dizendo:*

‘Respondeu dizendo:’

‘[She] answered:’

6 “my atende di catibo de Sr. Pardo ki su senhor

“MY [A TENDE] DI CATIBO DE SR. PARDO KI SU SENHOR

“Mi a tende di katibu di Sr. Pardo ku su shon

‘Eu ouvi do cativo do senhor Pardo que seu senhor’

‘I heard from the slave of Mr. Pardo that his master’

7 agaia dos carta, hum di Sra. Sara Pardo i otro di Sr.

[A GAIA] DOS CARTA, HUM DI SRA. SARA PARDO I OTRO DI SR.

a haña dos karta, un di señora Sara Pardo i otro di señor

‘recebeu duas cartas, uma da senhora Sara Pardo e outra do senhor’

‘received two letters, one from Mrs. Sara Pardo and another from Mr.’

8 Abraham Costa, y el atende su senhor Gay²⁵ ta leer pra
ABRAHAM COSTA, Y EL [A TENDE] SU SENHOR GAY TA LEER PRA
Abraham Costa, i el a tende su shon Hay ta lesa pa
'Abraham Costa, e ele ouviu seu senhor lendo a carta para'
'Abraham Costa, and he heard his master reading the letter to

9 su pay, i es carta ta gabla com el apasa
SU PAY, I ES CARTA TA GABLA COM EL [A PASA]
su tata, i e karta ta bisa kon el a pasa
'seu pai, e a carta fala como ele [= Abraham]²⁶ tem passado'
'his father, and the letter says how he [= Abraham] has been passing'

10 de Jegum y ariba hum dosie."
DE JEGUM Y ARIBA HUM DOSIE."
dia di zjuzjum i ta papia riba un dushi."
'os dias de jejum e fala de uma amante.'
'the fasting days and speaks of a lover.'

11 y le preguntou a outra negra:
'e a outra negra lhe perguntou:'
'and the other black woman asked:'

12 "kiko mas?"
"KIKO MAS?"
"Kiko mas?"
'O que mais?'
'What else?'

13 Respondeo:
'Ela respondeu:'
'She answered:'

14 "my no sabe"
"MY NO SABE"
"Mi no sa."
'Eu não sei.'
'I don't know.'

15 y le preguntou a outra:
'e a outra lhe perguntou:'
'and the other asked:'

²⁵ According to Maurer (1998), *hay* is a loving way of referring to Mordechai.

²⁶ It is possible to know who is the referent of the pronoun 'he' because one of the female slaves asks about the letter written by Sara.

16 “y es dy Sra. Sara kiko ta gabla?”
“Y ES DY SRA. SARA KIKO TA GABLA?”
“I esun di Sra. Sara, kiko e ta bisa?”
 ‘E a carta da senhora Sara diz o quê?’
 ‘*And the letter from Mrs. Sara, what does it say?*’

17 *Respondeo:*
 ‘Respondeu.’
 ‘*[She] answered:*’

18 “my no sabe”,
“MY NO SABE”,
“Mi no sa.”
 ‘Eu não sei.’
 ‘I don’t know.’

Concerning the linguistic structure and the lexical choices, as observed in the letter of 1775, the Papiamentu used is close to the modern variety. The presence of words from Sephardic dialects (such as **BOSTE**, **LEER** and **JEGUM**) suggests that the slaves of the Jews (in case the dialogue really existed) spoke the Papiamentu of the Jewish community; otherwise, forms from the general variety would be used. In addition to the presence of elements characteristic of Sephardic Papiamentu, the 1776 document still contains excerpts in Portuguese, which is further evidence that this is one of the languages of the Jewish community. If Portuguese had no importance and widespread use within the community, there would be no reason for the excerpts (the introduction of the slaves’ speeches) being in this language.

In her studies, Henriquez (1988, 1991) presents the characteristic vocabulary of Papiamentu Sephardic Jews, which could be more similar to the Portuguese. For her, although Papiamentu in Curaçao already existed when Jews arrived, the variety of Papiamentu and their own languages greatly influenced the overall variety of the Creole language. Henriquez (1998) shows that, in the first years, Jews used a word (a little) differently from other Papiamentu speakers, as shown in Chart 1 (adapted from the author).

Chart 1 – Words in Sephardic Papiamentu and in General Papiamentu.

Sephardic Papiamentu	General Papiamentu	Gloss
<i>afora</i>	afó	‘out, outward’
<i>di repente</i>	di ripiente	‘suddenly’
<i>fora di</i>	fuera di	‘otherwise’
<i>bisñetu</i>	bisañetu	‘great-grandson’
<i>fopá</i>	vupa	‘violation, offense’

Sephardic Papiamentu	General Papiamentu	Gloss
<i>sekia</i>	sekura	‘drought’
<i>speshul</i>	spesial	‘special’
<i>bizjítá</i>	bishitá	‘to visit’
<i>desparesé</i>	disparsé	‘to vanish’
<i>goza</i>	gosa	‘to enjoy, to have a good time’
<i>festeho</i>	selebrashon	‘celebration’
<i>lanso</i>	laken, laker	‘bed sheet’

Source: Adapted from Henriquez (1998).

These differences should not be seen as indicative that Sephardic Papiamentu is circumscribed to the Jewish community and does not influence the general variety – of which the modern Papiamentu is its continuation. Henriquez (1998) asserts that, regardless of the vocabulary that composes her book and is characteristic of Jews, it is not exclusive to this community. Moreover, some Jews might not employ some words and expressions commonly used by certain social segments of Sephardim community. It was not necessarily because they ignored the terms, but because the words are not considered as belonging to the Sephardic register (HENRIQUEZ, 1991). This non-exclusivity of the Sephardic Papiamentu terms to the Jewish community can be seen among the data presented by Henriquez (1988), in which two different words appear (the first associated with Sephardic Jews) – either with slight variations or with different etymons – both currently accepted in general Papiamentu. Along with these cases where there is lexical difference, there are also examples in which the two words (the first associated with the Sephardic variety and the second related to the general register) differ in the phonetic level, being possible to consider both forms as variants.

Some of the words and expressions used by Jews began to be used over time by non-Jewish speakers, being incorporated into the current use of Papiamentu; these include such words as **tinzi** ‘to dye’ (< Portuguese *tingir*), **chalalá** (< Portuguese *charlar*) ‘to gossip’ and **gaba** (< Portuguese *gabar*) ‘to flaunt’. Others were forgotten even within the Sephardic community, remaining only in the speech of elderly people (e.g. **fika** ‘to stay’ (< Portuguese *ficar*), replaced by **keda**; **koitadu** (< Portuguese *coitado*) ‘poor, miserable’, replaced by **miserabel**, **infelis**; **almusá** (< Portuguese *almoçar*) ‘to have lunch’, replaced by **kome** – more general). In some cases, in modern Papiamentu, the same signified (meaning) has two signifiers (one of them related to Sephardim). This is the case, for example, of (1):

- (1) **zjujuá / yuna** ‘to fast’
zjeitu / modo, manera ‘way, manner, mode’
gora, gvera / bora ‘to drill, to puncture’
kamina / kaminda ‘1. way, path 2. where’
para (di) / stòp (di) ‘to stop’
sedu / set ‘thirst’
sementerio, santana / kerkhòf ‘cemetery’
shandilié, shandelir / shanguilié, shangilé ‘chandelier’
tibio / lou ‘tepid’

Concerning the etymology of the words characteristic of the Sephardic Jews, in general the terms are from Iberian Romance languages. Words and expressions of Portuguese etymology were found that could not have a Spanish origin (isolated or together with Portuguese), as shown in the examples (2) and (3). The presence of words of undoubted Portuguese etymology – many replaced by other forms in the general variety – confirms the assumption that the Sephardic Papiamentu was closer to Portuguese, being more influenced by this language than the common Papiamentu (although the number of words derived from Portuguese is not very large) (JOUBERT; PERL, 2008).

- (2) **enshoval, inshoval** (< PT *enxoval*, ≠ ESP *ajuar*) ‘1. trousseau, 2. layette’;
gabazón (< PT *gabação*, ≠ ESP *alabanza, elogio*) ‘praise, compliment’;
gòsta (< PT *gostar*, ≠ ESP *gustar*) ‘1. to like, 2. to taste’;
intereseiro (< PT *interesseiro*, ≠ ESP *interesado*) ‘selfish’;
koïtadu (< PT *coitado*, ≠ ESP *infeliz, desgraciado*) ‘miserable’;
ninguein (< PT *ninguém*, ≠ ESP *nadie*) ‘(something) of little or no value, inferior’;
skeze (< PT *esquecer*, ≠ PT/ESP *olvidar*) ‘to forget’;
- (3) **baya kombein** ‘wish for a good trip’ – PT *vai com bem*;
kada kual ku su igual ‘birds of a feather flock together’ – PT *cada qual com seu igual*;
keda pa simia ‘to last forever’ – PT *ficar para semente*;
kibra zjuzum ‘to finish the fasting’ – PT *quebrar o jejum*;
kometé un gaf ‘to put one’s foot in one’s mouth’ – PT *cometer uma gafe*.

There are still examples from Portuguese that present the voiced postalveolar sibilant fricative (/ʒ/), as we can see in example (4). The presence of this consonant in the Sephardic variety more frequently than in the general variety suggests that Jacobs (2012) may be correct in saying that /ʒ/ entered into Papiamentu from the Jews, even because, for some examples, the general variety has a different form in which such phoneme is not present. In the records of classic Papiamentu, no words similar to those appearing in example (4) also were found.

- (4) *dezja* (< PT *desleixar*, ≠ ESP *descuidar*) ‘to neglect’;
frizji (< PT *frigir*, ≠ ESP *freír*) ‘to fry’;
manzja (< PT *man[ʒ]ar*, ≠ ESP *man[x]ar*) ‘to eat’;
rabuzjentu (< PT *rabugento*, ≠ ESP *malhumorado*) ‘grumpy’;
sobezji, sobrezji (< PT *sobejo*, ≠ ESP *resto, sobra*) ‘leftover’;
zjanta (< PT *janta/jantar*, ≠ ESP *cena/cenar*) ‘1. dinner, 2. have a dinner’;
zjeitoso (< PT *jeitoso*, ≠ ESP *hábil, habilidoso*) ‘skillful’;
zjema (< PT [ʒ]ema, ≠ ESP [x]ema) ‘yolk’;
zjtona (< PT *azeitona*, ≠ ESP *aceituna*) ‘olive’;
zjuzjum (< PT *jejum*, ≠ ESP *ayuno*) ‘fasting’.

In sum, the contribution of Henriquez (1988, 1991) consists in showing that some words rejected by speakers as belonging to Papiamentu are characteristic of the vocabulary of the Sephardim, which also is the general vocabulary of Papiamentu.

Although it is not possible to attribute all Portuguese elements of Papiamentu to the Sephardim and their slaves, the Jewish community played a considerable role in the formation of the Curaçaoan society and, consequently, may have influenced the linguistic configuration of Papiamentu. This influence first was exerted through the Portuguese spoken by the community because this was an important language for the Jewish community, being widely used not only in the religious context but also in daily communication. Over the years, Jews also have influenced Papiamentu through their own dialect, the Sephardic Papiamentu.

An irrefutable evidence for the use of both Portuguese and Papiamentu by the Jewish community is provided by the 1776 document, in which the two languages are employed: the alleged dialogue between the slaves is in Papiamentu, and there are parts in Portuguese, which is used as a language guiding the conversation, suggesting its use as a vehicular language within this community.

Final remarks

This study shows that the fact that Jews had an important role in the slave trade and enjoyed a certain prestige suggests that they had a role in Curaçaoan society contributing to the configuration of Papiamentu. The discussion of documents from the late 18th century showed a greater number of items of Portuguese etymon, which supports the assumption that Sephardic Papiamentu would be more similar to Portuguese than the general variety of language.

The analysis of the letter of 1775, the first known written record of Papiamentu, showed a greater number of Portuguese *etyma*, supporting the statement that the Sephardic Papiamentu would be closer to Portuguese than the general variety of that language. The 1776 document, as observed by its lexical choices, revealed that the slaves of the Jews probably also used Sephardic Papiamentu words and provided evidence for the use of Portuguese within that community.

In addition, the analysis of words, structures and expressions characteristic of the Sephardic community (HENRIQUEZ, 1988, 1991) showed that Papiamentu spoken by this community influenced the general variety (both classic and modern). Thus, there are cases in which a term considered specific to the Jewish community became generalized, and began to be used by non-Jewish speakers. These linguistic results reveal that Sephardic Jews influenced the genesis and development of Papiamentu, not only through Portuguese, but also through the Sephardic Papiamentu. Therefore, the role of Sephardim was twofold: First, the Portuguese spoken by the Sephardic community influenced classic Papiamentu; later, the Papiamentu dialect specific to this community and its slaves also acted in the configuration of the general variety.

Additionally, we also recognize a connection between Papiamentu and Santiago's variety of Cape Verdean Creole (MARTINUS, 1996; JACOBS, 2012) (which may suggest a common origin). On the other hand, although the hypothesis that links the dialect of Papiamentu to Sephardic language cannot explain its emergence by itself, it is not possible to deny the role of the Jews in providing linguistic features to Papiamentu. In sum, we follow an approach like the one supported by Faraclas et al. (2014): A convergence of elements (and not only a linear and mono-dimensional scenario) must be considered in studying the Atlantic Creole formation, namely the agency of different language speakers (FREITAS, 2017).

FREITAS, S.; ARAUJO, G.; LIMA, M. Os judeus sefarditas em Curaçao e seu papel na formação do papiamentu. *Alfa*, São Paulo, v. 63, n.1, p.11-37, 2019.

- *RESUMO: Este estudo objetiva analisar a participação dos judeus na sociedade curaçauense, especialmente na configuração linguística do papiamentu, considerando que o papel dos judeus sefarditas tem sido negligenciado nos estudos sobre essa língua. No contexto linguístico, preces e epitáfios em português confirmam que esta era a língua usada por vários judeus sefarditas. Por outro lado, a análise de documentos do século XVIII revela que o papiamentu sefardita, que é mais similar ao português, influenciou a variedade geral. Henriquez (1988, 1991) também mostra o vocabulário característico do papiamentu falado pelos judeus sefarditas. Adicionalmente, Martinus (1996) e Jacobs (2012) apresentam registros que podem apontar uma relação entre a Senegâmbia/Alta Guiné, Amsterdam e Curaçao através do comércio de escravos conduzido pelos judeus. Desse modo, este estudo pretende mostrar que os judeus tiveram um papel importante na sociedade curaçauense, inclusive contribuindo para a configuração do papiamentu. Aqui seguimos uma abordagem similar àquela defendida por Faraclas et al. (2014): uma convergência de elementos deve ser considerada ao estudar a formação dos crioulos atlânticos, sobretudo a atuação de falantes de diferentes línguas.*
- *PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Judeus sefarditas. Papiamentu. Papel social e linguístico.*

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