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Wisdom Literature in Judeo-Arabic:

Kitāb maḥāsin al-'ādāb

[The Book of Excellent Conduct]*

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1. Introduction

Among the great variety of literary genres cultivated by medieval authors in different languages and multiple traditions, wisdom literature occupies a predominant position. The purpose of this genre is to provide models for ideal behavior and conduct—normally in accordance with religious obligations—in different life situations, especially in interactions with two essential factors: the rest of the members of society and the divine. The genre's wide dissemination is due to the fact that aspects of wisdom literature are to be found not only in works intended to that particular purpose but also in works that belong to genres that ostensibly deal with other topics.

The long-standing wisdom tradition in Arabic that had developed in the East—moralistic collections of tales, anthologies of popular apothegms, and to some extent the *adab* genre and the *maqāmāt*—enjoyed great popularity and prestige in the entire Arab-speaking world. This tradition likewise stimulated the development of literary genres with wisdom content in the Iberian Peninsula not only in Arabic but also in Latin, Hebrew, and the Romance languages.¹ In addition to the translations of collections of Eas-

1. The *adab* genre deals with «el conjunto de conocimientos y prácticas que un musulmán debía poseer para formarse de manera adecuada en los ámbitos moral, cultural y profesional» [the set of skills and practices that a Muslim should possess in order to develop correctly in a moral, cultural, and professional capacity] (Fierro 2009: 87) and seeks to promote the acquisition of those skills and practices by means of literary

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tern stories such as *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, *Syntipas*, or *Barlaam and Josaphat*, or the collections of sayings and maxims that so widely circulated in the thirteenth century, other eclectic works that were the product of the cultural diversity and exchange that characterized the Iberian Peninsula, such as Petrus Alfonsi's *Disciplina Clericalis* and Judah al-Ḥarizi's *Sefer Tahkemoni*, had an enormous impact on these other traditions.²

These works highlight the cultural encounter between the Arab-Islamic world, vernacular Romance, and the Hebrew language. The main impetus for the dissemination of this literary genre was the phenomenon of translation that emerged not only in the Christian courts but also among the Jewish communities in the Iberian Peninsula and Provence throughout the thirteenth century. It is precisely this phenomenon that, in addition to transmitting new philosophical and scientific ideas that were formerly unknown in Christian Europe, spurred the creation of original works in both the vernacular and Hebrew.

Moreover, wisdom literature deals with universal themes that are relevant for all human beings, regardless of socio-economic status, religious affiliation or cultural tradition, which makes them ideal material for cultural translation. Through this process, translators make the simple, or sometimes complex, modifications and adaptations needed to make the works acceptable to a new audience.

This is the diverse, complex cultural framework surrounding *Mishlei he-'arav* (The Sayings of the Arabs), a medieval Hebrew translation from the Arabic that was produced at the beginning of the thirteenth century. This work would be, in turn, the inspiration for the Judeo-Arabic work *Kitāb maḥāsin al-'ādāb* (The Book of Excellent Conduct), the subject of the present article. First of all, the Hebrew work *Mishlei he-'arav* will be briefly introduced in order to better understand the impact of the Judeo-Arabic translation. Then, the *Kitāb maḥāsin al-'ādāb* will be analyzed both from a literary and a codicological angle. And lastly, an edition with an English translation of the prologue and index of the work will be provided.

2. *Mishlei he-'arav*

The *Mishlei he-'arav* is a Hebrew work written at the beginning of the thirteenth century whose content deals with sapiential and wisdom themes.³ The objective of

entertainment. For a study of the *adab* as a literary genre in the medieval Arab world, see Arazi (1999). A *maqāma* is, on the other hand, a picaresque short story in rhymed prose that is independent of the rest of the stories in a collection and in which the narrator tells of the adventures of some central character. An extensive study of the *maqāma* as a literary genre, its practitioners, contexts, and later development in other languages can be found in Hämeen-Anttila (2002).

2. The aim of this article is not to provide a bibliographical review of studies devoted to sapiential literature in Arabic, Latin, Hebrew, or the Romance languages: an internet search is sufficient for a reader interested in revising the topic. However, special mention is warranted for the research group ALIENTO (Linguistic Analysis, Intercultural Aspects of Sapiential Statements and Their Transmission from East to West and West to East), coordinated by Marie-Sol Ortola (University of Lorraine, France) and Marie-Christine Bornes Varol (Inalco, France) and their annual publication *Aliento: Échanges sapientiels en Méditerranée*, where many studies can be found on the transmission of ethical-sapiential content among the different languages and medieval traditions that developed in the Iberian Peninsula.

3. This kind of literature belongs to the Hebrew genre called *sifrut ha-musar*. On the relationship and parallelism between the Hebrew concept of *musar* and the Arabic concept of *adab*, see Septimus (1982: 17), where the author asserts that «*Musar* [...] is a 'loan-translation' of the Arabic *adab*—the literary culture that was the mark of the well-trained gentleman».

the work is to offer advice about moral conduct and proper way to behave. The work is divided into fifty chapters, written in prose with interspersed poems, and deals with different ethical qualities, both virtues and vices, in each chapter, such as wisdom, prudence, humility, generosity, patience, gratefulness, envy, pride, vanity, wrath, and greed.

The author of the work does not mention his name or identify himself in any way in the work, but several poems that appear in the fiftieth chapter include the acrostic *Yiṣḥaq* (יִצְחָק) in its Hebrew form and *Iṣḥaq* (إِسْحَاق) in its Arabic form, twice each, what could point out his name. Furthermore, the work's place of production is uncertain, although new studies on its literary characteristics and the paleographic and codicological features of the codices that include it point to northern Iberia or Provence as the likely geo-cultural area where the work was written.⁴

What the author does indeed acknowledge in the prologue of the work is that he is translating from Arabic. He says that when he was young, he would read Arabic books and among them found one that spoke about ethical matters, which surprised him. He says that his heart urged him to read that book carefully so that he would realize that its content was Jewish in origin and came from the Bible. After he did so, he could not understand how the Arabs were so proud of their literature, a literature that he did not consider to be theirs. For that reason, he decided to undertake the translation of the work into Hebrew and to decorate it with Biblical verses with the objective of showing that the content was originally Jewish and not Arabic.⁵

3. *Kitāb maḥāsīn al-'ādāb*

3.1 *Presentation of the Work*

In the fifteenth century, the Hebrew work *Mishlei he-'arav* was translated into Judeo-Arabic and given a new title, *Kitāb maḥāsīn al-'ādāb*. The work was translated by Yosef ibn Ḥasan, as stated in the prologue, and copied by Yosef bar Yefet ha-Hazan in 1467, according to the colophon, although the two may be the same person. The colophon does not state the precise place where the codex was written either, but both the type of script—an Oriental semi-cursive—and the dialectical characteristics of the Arabic seem to point to the East, probably Egypt, as the likely place of production.

This work has received no academic attention until now, with the exception of a few words from Steinschneider (1902: 248–49 and 253) suggesting that the author of this version may have been Yosef b. Yefet ha-Levi, an author living in Yemen in the fifteenth century. More recently, Torollo (2014b) has published an article that includes a descriptive and comparative study of the prologues of *Mishlei he-'arav* and *Kitāb maḥāsīn al-'ādāb*, focusing on questions such as the literary genre to which they belong and the concept of authority the author creates and plays with; and Zinger and Torollo trace and analyze a story, consisting of ten pieces of advice that a mother gives her daughter when she is preparing to get married, that appears among others in both works.⁶

4. For a critical edition, a translation into Spanish, and the most recent analysis of this work, see Torollo (2014a).

5. For this motif in Iberian Hebrew literature, see Brann (1991: 38) and Alfonso (2008: 49).

6. The article is still being completed and the expected date of publication is 2016. In it, we analyze the transformation and adaptations that are undergone by the anecdote about a mother who gives her daughter

The existence of a translation into Judeo-Arabic some two and a half centuries after the appearance of the Hebrew work adds great interest to the work, since it is possible to explore its re-adaptation to a new linguistic and cultural context. However, the Judeo-Arabic version is not a literal translation of the Hebrew original but an adaptation: the chapters are shorter and sum up the content of the Hebrew chapters.⁷ Generally speaking, this version drops the verses interspersed between the prose and the biblical quotations that are plentiful in the Hebrew version.

In order to be able to measure the significance and impact of this work, it would be helpful to know the context of translations from Hebrew into Judeo-Arabic that were being carried out in North Africa and the East. Unfortunately, even though this is not a unique case, this topic has been studied very little, and scholarly information about it is still scant.

3.2 Structure of the Work

Kitāb maḥāsīn al-'ādāb can be divided into three sections, as can *Mishlei he-'arav*: the prologue or introduction, the index of chapters, and the fifty chapters.

The Prologue⁸

The prologue of the Judeo-Arabic version, much shorter than the prologue of the Hebrew one, opens with the conventional sentence in praise of God, the *basmalah* בְּסֵם אֱלֹהִים אֲרַחֲמֶנּוּ אֲרַחֲמֶנּוּ וְבָה נִסְתַּעֲיֵן (In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful and on Whom we rely).⁹ The *basmalah* is followed by praise of the divine attributes, such as majesty, mercy, magnanimity, beauty, glory, and perfection that are shown as proof of the unlimited, infinite, and supreme power of God.

Following this praise to God, which appears in almost every medieval work, the author explains and justifies the genesis of his composition. He claims, in a curious reversal of the narrative of the Hebrew version's composition, that he used to read Hebrew books and that he found among them one that attracted his attention that was divided into fifty chapter and whose title was *Sefer musar*.¹⁰ Since he liked the book

ten pieces of advice when the latter is about to get married. This anecdote is traced from ninth-century Iraq to seventeenth-century Prague and exists in Arabic, Hebrew, Judeo-Arabic, Italian, Catalan, and Yiddish versions.

7. We should keep in mind that the medieval concept of translation differs from our modern concept. In fact, during the medieval period and with respect to translations from Arabic into Latin, Hebrew, or the Romance languages, «ordinarily translation is in large measure interpretation, and the function of the translator is to transmit in the new medium the sense of the original». See Halkin and Sáenz-Badillos (2007: 95).

8. The study of the prologue of any literary work is an important factor, because in it the author reveals the circumstances and the motives that lead to the work's composition. Numerous recent studies look at the prologue as a literary genre, notably in the field of sapiential literature those by Rothschild (1989), Haro Cortés (1997), Berlioz and Polo de Beaulieu (2000), and Refael-Vivante (2007).

9. Prologue, line 2 (all references are to the edition below). On the use of the *basmalah* in Jewish documents, see Cohen (2007: 22–23), who asserts, «we even occasionally encounter the exact Islamic blessing in Hebrew characters at the head of Judeo-Arabic letters» (p. 23), as can be seen at the beginning of this version in Judeo-Arabic. Moreover, he states that it is clear that medieval Jews regularly used the expression with full knowledge of its Islamic use (p. 22). Almladh (2010) is of the same opinion in his article on the use of Islamic formulas by Jews and Christians.

10. This manuscript does not name the Hebrew work as *Mishlei he-'arav*. The work was also known by

very much and understood that it contained useful material, ויהתוי עלי כמסין מענה אדביה, אדא וגדה' פי אנסאן / לם ילד בה שיטאן (It consists of fifty topics on behavior that are found in a person who has not suffered [the corruption of] the Devil),¹¹ he decided to explain the work in the Arabic language, in rhymed prose, and gave it a new title, *maḥāsin al-'ādāb*.¹² The author says that his goal was for everybody to understand it and to enjoy the variety of topics that it contained. Therefore, it is clear that the author understands the work as a genuine work of *adab*, whose goal was to teach and entertain at the same time.¹³

The role the author projects for himself in this prologue is an active one: he is the first and necessary cause for the existence of the work. The author gives his complete name, in third person, saying קאל אצער עבאד אללה ואחוגהם אלי רהמתה תע יוסף אבן חסן (The weakest of the servants of God the Almighty and the most needful of His mercy, Yosef ibn Ḥasan),¹⁴ and even his profession, טבאך אלאבריסם (a cooker of silk).¹⁵ After that, he switches to a first-person discourse and goes on to explain the reasons for undertaking the translation. Unlike the Hebrew version, where the name of the author is concealed, this Judeo-Arabic version presents an important image of the author as the indispensable force behind the work, notwithstanding its being a translation or adaptation of a previous work.

Another striking difference with the Hebrew text is that in this Judeo-Arabic version there is no *captatio benevolentiae*: the author neither apologizes for the errors he might have made nor asks for forgiveness in anticipation of criticism. In addition, in this version the heart neither rouses the author nor compels him to write. Here, it is the author's own initiative that brings about the existence of the work: he decides to translate the work because he has read it and liked it, and it is not a third party (so to speak)—his intellect or heart, as in the Hebrew version—that commands him to write.

The reason for these differences may be that the author is writing in a context where the conventions of the literary genre have changed, and he is no longer obliged to apologize in advance or address the audience of the work directly. It seems that he is writing in a different context and time in which the stereotyped prologues of translations from Arabic into Hebrew and the *topoi* and conventions of that genre are no longer in use. Unfortunately, few medieval translations from Hebrew into Judeo-Arabic have come down to us, which complicates the task of comparing the prologues in order to shed light on the understanding of the conventions of this literary genre in the Judeo-Arabic tradition.

the name *Sefer musar*. A peculiar case is the Provençal Biblical commentator Menahem ha-Me'iri, who generally cites the work as *Mishlei he-'arav* but sometimes refers to it as *Sefer musar*.

11. Prologue, lines 13-14.

12. Curiously, any reader of this Judeo-Arabic work would recognize that it is a translation from Hebrew to Arabic, although he or she would not (necessarily) be aware of the fact that the Hebrew work on which the Judeo-Arabic translation is based is, in turn, a translation of one or more Arabic works.

13. In fact, the relationship between the Arabic *adab* and the Hebrew *musar* is obvious from the title of the translation of the *Mishlei he-'arav* to Judeo-Arabic, a title that includes the term *adab*: *maḥāsin al-'ādāb*. On the *adab* as a literary genre and its relationship with the Hebrew *musar*, see notes 1 and 3.

14. Prologue, line 10.

15. Prologue, lines 10-11. This is the worker who boils the silk-worm cocoons in order to obtain the fibers to be used for making silk thread.

As for the audience of this work, it would have consisted of people of all ages and both genders: in the author's words, *לינתפע בה מן יסמעה מן ארזאאל ואלנסואן / ויגל מן יפהמה מן, אלשמך ואלשבאן* (So that men and women who listen to it may benefit from it and old and young people who understand it may become sublime).¹⁶

The Index of Chapters

Following the prologue is an index of chapters. The index makes up a literary unit in itself: it is a small treatise of fifty wisdom statements that, even though their goal is to show the order of the chapters and provide titles for them, functions as a brief sapiential compilation in its own right. Every statement has an internal rhyme between the middle of the sentence and the end.

Among the various topics dealt with in the index, and of course developed in the respective chapters, we find the themes that are common to wisdom literature in all languages: what virtues to cultivate and vices to avoid, such as being forewarned about the world and its deceptions, trusting fully in God, devoting oneself to the study of wisdom, speaking at the proper time, not succumbing to anger, casting off pride and arrogance, behaving with modesty, doing good to others, raising one's children as is right and proper, not making hasty decisions, following the advice of wise men, obeying the law, deliberating on which woman to marry, drinking wine in moderation, and repenting of sins before dying.

The Chapters

The work's fifty chapters are of variable length, but they are all much shorter than their Hebrew counterparts: the Biblical quotations and the verses following the Andalusī style of composing poetry have been suppressed. Unlike the Hebrew version, this one does not make use of a combination of prose, rhymed prose, poetry, and Biblical quotations. Interestingly, the author refers to each chapter as a *qaṣīda*, and they are composed in rhymed prose, with the same rhyme throughout the whole chapter.¹⁷

From a structural point of view, each chapter can be divided into three parts: the title, which in most cases agrees with the title given in the index, although there are a few exceptions; the content of the chapter itself; and, as a final statement, three or four rhymed elements in which the author praises himself, a further indication of his desire to be acknowledged as the creator of the composition.

3.3 Linguistic Characteristics

The work is written in Judeo-Arabic. Judeo-Arabic is a linguistic manifestation of Jews living in an Arabic-speaking environment that consists of writing the Arabic

16. Prologue, lines 19–20.

17. For a brief summary of the *qasida* and the forms it took in the Arabic language, see Krenkow and Leconte (1978). For a detailed study on the *qasida* as a literary genre and its different adaptations in the languages of Asia and Africa, see Sperl and Schackle (1996). In addition, Gruendler (2000: 227) emphasizes the adaptation of the genre to the social, political, or cultural context or to the personal interests of the authors, who play with or manipulate the parts of the *qasida* as it fits their needs: «Poets adapted old themes and motifs to new situations, chose between, or merged, descriptive and dramatic styles». In relation to the form the *qasida* takes in the Judeo-Arabic *Kitāb maḥāsīn al-'ādāb*, Gruendler's assertion might explain the peculiar structure of the chapters of this work.

language using Hebrew letters, with some Hebrew or Aramaic words and set phrases being introduced. At the time the work was written, during the second half of the fifteenth century, the Jews already had a long tradition of contact with the Arabic language and of using Judeo-Arabic for their writings.¹⁸

Broadly speaking, the main linguistic features of this manuscript are:

- the use of expressions and words derived from Middle Arabic or from the Eastern dialect typically spoken in the region where the translation was produced, possibly Egypt. By contrast, the prologue exhibits an attempt by the author to write a more educated Arabic.

- the absence of the *hamza* or its substitution in some cases by the *yod*.

- the absence of diacritical punctuation on the letter *he'* in most cases to indicate the *tā' marbūṭa*.

- no distinction between *alif tawīla*, *alif maqṣūra*, and *alif fāṣila*, all of which are indicated by an *alef*, except the *alif maqṣūra*, which in most cases is indicated by a *yod*.

- no differentiation by means of diacritics between the ambivalent pronunciation in Judeo-Arabic writing of the Hebrew *kaf* as the Arabic *kāf* or *khā'*, of the Hebrew *dalet* as the Arabic *dāl* or *dhāl*, and of the Hebrew *taw* as the Arabic *tā'* or *thā'*.

- the existence of Arabic vocalization in some words, especially *damma*, *fatha*, and *tanwīn fatha*, although often this vocalization does not correspond to the grammar rules of educated Arabic. Some examples of this phenomenon can be found on fol. א90, where we have *עלי אצחאבה* or *באכלאקה*; on fol. ב90, *גמיע איאמה*; on fol. ב92, *בזאהוא צאלחא רבאטנא*; on fol. א90, *בשיא*; on fol. ב91, *פי מכאנא*; or on fol. ב92, *ביומא*.

3.4 Codex unicus: Codicological and Paleographical Features

The manuscript that contains the only known copy of the work *Kitāb maḥāsīn al-'ādāb* is number 488 of the Huntington Collection (ms. Hunt. 488), in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. This collection of about 200 Hebrew manuscripts was assembled by Robert Huntington (1637–1701) while he was bishop of Aleppo. Some of these manuscripts were donated to the Bodleian Library, and some of them were bought by the library between the years 1678 and 1793 (Richler 1994: 79).

The codex consists of 161 paper folios, measures 18.5 x 13.5 cm, and has a text box 12 x 10 cm, with twelve lines of text. It includes Arabic translations of some *seliḥot* (penitential prayers) by an anonymous author (fols. 1r–55v); an Arabic prayer by another anonymous author (fols. 56r–68v); *baqqashot* (supplications) by Sa'adiah Ga'on (fols. 68v–83r) translated into Arabic by Zemaḥ ben Yehoshu'a, according to Beit-Arie (1994: 198); and the work we are dealing with in here, *Kitāb maḥāsīn al-'ādāb* by Yosef ibn Ḥasan (fols. 84r–160v).

The language of all works included in this codex is Judeo-Arabic, in Hebrew Oriental semi-cursive script. The place of production is unknown. In the colophon, the author/copyist specifies his name, Yosef b. Yefet ha-Ḥazan b. Shalom b. Sa'adiah, and the year of production, 1467. The codex has two colophons: the first one in Hebrew on fol. 55v, *שנת אתשע"ח לשת"ר ס"ט* (And wrote the young servant Yosef bar Yefet ha-Ḥazan ... in the year 1778 of the Seleucid era), and the second one

18. More-detailed information on Judeo-Arabic can be found in Blau (1981; 2002) and Halkin (2007).

in Judeo-Arabic on fol. 160v, arranged in four columns and running from bottom to top תמת אלכמסין קצידה בחמדא מן אללה וחסן תופיקה דלך פי תאלת עשר חודש אדר שנת א"א (The fifty qasidas are finished, with the grace and the generous success of God. This in the thirteenth [day] of the month of *adar* of the year 1778 of the Seleucid era, written by the young servant Yosef bar Yefet ha-Ḥazan).¹⁹

As for the main codicological features of the work, *Kitāb maḥāsin al-'ādāb* is arranged in one column, there are corrections and annotations in the margins, there are catchwords at the end of each quire (in addition to on the verso of each folio up to fol. 82r, exactly where our work begins), the beginning of each section is written with letters of a larger size, all the quires have ten leaves, and there are two flyleaves at the beginning and one at the end of the codex. The numbering of the leaves was done in pencil at a later period, in Arabic numerals, in the upper left margin of the recto leaves: there are a total of 160 numbered leaves (in point of fact, there are 161 leaves, but number 59 is repeated). The codex is very well preserved, and all the works it contains seem to have been copied by the same copyist.

This codex has been described by Neubauer (1886: 1:431–32); Beit-Arie (1994: 198–99); the website of the National Library of Israel;²⁰ and in the database Sfardata.²¹ Furthermore, the codex is in microfilm copy at the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts of the National Library of Israel, n. F16680.

4. The Edition and the Translation: Preliminary Notes

With regard to the edition and translation of the prologue and index of the Judeo-Arabic text, I have confined myself to transcribing the text as it appears in the unicum manuscript where it is preserved. Therefore:

- the use of the *shadda* and *tanwīn fatha* has been maintained, but for reasons of grammatical unsuitability, the decision was made to omit the vocalization of the *damma* and *fatha*.

- any addition that contributes to the intelligibility of the text has been included in square brackets [].

- the following transliterations have been respected: ض as *ḏ* or *ḏ̣* (in the final position), ظ as *ṭ̣*, and ج as *ḡ*.

- the *ḥ* is transliterated as *ḥ* only where it appears, since it is not always marked.

- the slash sign / is used as an indication of the rhymed elements.

- the name “Allah” (אללה) from the Judeo-Arabic has been translated as “God” in English.

In addition, the footnotes contain contextual or bibliographical information to facilitate the reader's comprehension. Some notes present cases of linguistic difficulty together with a proposed interpretation, as well as certain deviations in the translation.

19. This is the year 1778 of the Seleucid era. The beginning of this era is calculated from the year 311 BCE, with the beginning of the Seleucid dynasty (i.e. successors of Alexander the Great). The year 1778 corresponds, therefore, to the year 1467 of the Gregorian calendar.

20. The link is: <http://aleph.nli.org.il:80/F/?func=direct&doc_number=000063089&local_base=NNL01> [last access: 01/09/2015].

21. This database was open and available until at least May 2014. Currently, a username and password are required to log in. <<http://sfardata.nli.org.il/sfardatanew/home.aspx>> [last access: 01/09/2015].

[א84] כתאב מחאסן אלדאב

בסם אללה אלרחמן אלרחים ובה נסתעין.

אלחמד ללה אלדי לה אלעזה' ואלגלאל ואלכבר ואלגמאל / ואלעטמה' ואלכמאל / ואלחלם ואלאחת, רב אלרבאב / ומסבב אלסבאב, / נסאלה אן ימנחא בטאעתה וילהמנא בעבאדתה / וירשדנא אלי וחדאניתה ולא יכלינא מן ענאיתה, / ויחיי קלובנא במחבתה לאדראך [א84] בעץ קדרתה. / גל גלאלה אלדי אוגד אלוגוד לדאתה, / וחכם באלמות עלי סאיר מכלוקאתה, / אלדי סכנת חלאות מחבתה פי קלוב צפותה. / הו אלגפור אלחלים / אלראוף אלרחים / אלדי יתלטף בי פי אקאמה' אעדארי / קבל אסתגפארי.

קאל אצעף עבאד אללה ואחוגהם אלי רחמתה תע יוסף אבן חסן טבאך אלאבריסם חאמדא' ומצליא', אמא בעד: פאני קראת פי בעץ כתב אלעבראניה / וחצרת פי מעאניהא בחסן ניה, / פוגדת פיהא כתאב יחיי אלקלוב ואלאלבאב, / פכנת לה מן אלכטאב והו [א85] יחוי כמסין באב, / ואסמה ספר מוסר באלעבראניה, / ויחתוי עלי כמסין מענה' אדביה, / אדא וגדה' פי אנסאן / לם ילד בה שיטאן. / פכטר לי אן אשרח מעאני אבואבהא בלפץ ערבי, / פעטם בדלך אדבי, / וקצדת אן יפהמהא אלקאצי ואלדאני / ויתמתע בכתרה' אלמעאני. / פשרחתו מעאני אלכמסין באב פי כמסין קצידה' כאן וכאן בכמסין קאפיה' כמסין לון, פגא כתאבא נאפעא בנורה אלסאטע, וסמיתה מחאסן אלדאדאב, והו גד מחץ לא ישובה נקצאן / ומן אללהו ואלהזל מצאן. / [א85] וצנפתה עלי אסם גמאעה' אלכלאן / לינתפע בה מן יסמעה מן ארגאל ואלנסואן / ויגל מן יפהמה מן אלשמך ואלשבאן.

והדה צפה' תרתיב אלקצאיד ודכר מעאניהא / ליפהמהא מן יקראה ויעאניהא:
אלקצידה' אלוליי: פי אלתחדר מן אלדניא וגרורהא, / ואלתחפץ מן אלוקע פי פכהא ואמורהא.
אלקצידה' אל ב: יחדר מן ירתכב פי אכר זמאנה / מא ארתכבה פי איאם גהלה ושיטאנה.
אלקצידה' אל ג: יחדר מן אלסהו [א86] ען מוקף אלחסאב וטריק אלמות / ויערף אן תם שר בעד אלמות אמר מן אלמות.
אלקצידה' אל ד: פי אן לא יתחזן אלנאסאן עלי אלמות וכתרה' אלשקא פי אלדניא ואידא ען אלחד' / ויעלם אן ליס פי תחזנה ובכאה גיר אלבעד ואלצד.

- אלקצידה' אל ה: פי אן לא ינסא אלאנסאן מוגדה אלי אלוגוד / ויחצר פי צלותה בניה' אלכיר ואלגוד.
- אלקצידה' אל ו: פי אן לא יכרף אלאנסאן או ינבהת מן מצאדפאת אלזמאן / בל יתכל ויתדבר [ב86] באלכאלק אלרחמן.
- אלקצידה' [אל] ז: פי אקתנא אלעלם ואלחכמה, / ואלדרס פיהא גאיה' אלנעמה.
- אלקצידה' אל ח: פי אן לא יתבגח אלאנסאן בגנא' ינקא ויפנא, / בל בעקל ואדבא' יקתנא.
- אלקצידה' אל ט: פי אן לא יתכלם אלאנסאן פי גיר וקת אלכלאם, / לאלא יבדל תלגלג קולה באלכלאם.
- אלקצידה' אל י: פי אן לא ילבס אלאנסאן גיר אלתואצע ואלתקא, / לאל יאול בה גהלה אלי אלמתאעב ואלשקא.
- אלקצידה' אל יא: [א87] פי אן לא ימתנע אלאנסאן אן יגפר למן גנא עליה וגא יסתגפר ען דנבה, / בל יגפר לה ליקא פצולה ויחבה.
- אלקצידה' אל יב: פי אן לא יתסכט אלאנסאן פי גצבה סכטא' יודיה ויתעבה ויכון סבבא' לשקאה, / ללא ימזק באנוזעאגה מא למ יתמכן אן ירפיה ענד רצאה.
- אלקצידה' אל יג: פי אן לא יהאפת אלאנסאן עלי אלמריסה ויכון מן אלמנכפצין, / פאן אללה יכרה אלמתמריסין אלמתגברין.
- אלקצידה' [ב87] אל יד: פי אן לא יקתצר אלאנסאן מן מצאחבה' אלאקארב ואלאצחאב אלגיאד, / ליזדאד בצחבתהם ויכונו לה מן אלנגאד.
- אלקצידה' אל טו: פי אן לא ירתפע אלאנסאן וישמך עלי אלאמתזאג' מע אלפקרא ודוי אלמסכנה / לינאל במסאעדתהם בעד אלתואב חסן אלתנא.
- אלקצידה' אל יו: פי אן לא ירד אלאנסאן וגה מן אחתאג' אליה וגא יסאל מנה חאגתה, / בל יסאעדה ויעינה ויפרח כיף טאקה עלי מסאעדתה.
- אלקצידה' אל יז: [א88] פי אן לא ילח אלאנסאן ויסתעגל אדא סאל פי קצא חאגתה, / ללא יאול בה אלחאחה אלי תאכיר אראדתה.
- אלקצידה' אל יח: פי אן לא ישרד אלאנסאן וימתנע מן פעל אלכיר לארבאבה, / בל יהב ויעטי ויצדק ממא רזק לתנגח טרקה ויזיד תואבה.

אלקצידה' אל יט: פי אן לא יגלק אלאנסאן פי וגה אלטארק אלבאב, / קד ימכן אן יצבח פי גד מתלה גריב מקטע אלאסבאב.

אלקצידה' אלמופיה כ: פי אן לא יחמק אלאנסאן וישמך ומא ישכר למן יריד אן יסאל [ב88] מנה מדאדה, / בל ידל[ה] וידכר כיף קד אחוגה וקתה ואליה קד קאדה.

אלקצידה' אל כא: פי אן לא יציע אלאנסאן אשגאלה בתרך אלמשורה וקול אלחכמא, / באל יסתשיר ויסאל מנהם אלעלמא.

אלקצידה' אל כב: פי אן לא יכשף אלאנסאן סר מן אמן אליה ואדעה סרה, / ללא יפתצח ויכגל וינתקץ ענד מן ימנעה וינאל שרה.

אלקצידה' אל כג: פי אן לא ישתם אלאנסאן או יזדרי באחדי ואלדיה ויחדא, / בל יוקרמה ויכאפהמא [א89] לתכון אגרתה מופרה.

אלקצידה' אל כד: פי אן לא יזיל אלאנסאן קציב אלאדב מן בניה וסאיר אולאדה, / בל ירחמהם ויזרע פי קלובהם מחבתה ומכאפתה לינאל מראדה.

אלקצידה' אל כה: פי אן לא יגצב אלאנסאן ויקסי קלבה עלי אקארבה ואנסאבה בל יחבהם ויטלב להם אלכיר ליעאדו / מן עאדאה אן חצרו ואן גאבו.

אלקצידה' אל כו: פי אן יגתהד אלאנסאן אן לא יציק צרר אכואנה, / ללא יכרהוה ויקצדו הלאכה ותצרם ניראנה.

אלקצידה' [ב89] אל כז: פי אן לא יהב אלאנסאן וינדבך ויגוא פי אלמהאלך ליגמע אלאמואל, / ללא ינאל בחפצה תצאדף אלאהואל.

אלקצידה' אל כח: פי אן לא ישרה אלאנסאן ויתשהא וירצך²² פי אלמאאכל ושרב אלכמור, / ללא יעד מן אלמנהתכין פי הדה אלאמור.

אלקצידה' אל כט: פי אן לא יהם אלאנסאן באלפואחש ואלכאטר אלרדי מא עמרה ושידה ובנאה, / ללא יורת לבניה מן עאדא גנאה לאקתנאה.

אלקצידה' אל ל: פי אן לא יבדל אלאנסאן צחבה' צאחב [א90] צנדיד תקא אמין, / בצחבה' אך שריר מעאנד ס' אליקין.

אלקצידה' אל לא: פי אן לא יתכל אלאנסאן עלי מא יתכלם בצאהרא צאלחא ובאטנא מפסוד, / בל יתרכה ויהגרה מהמא אנה ען אלחק שרוד.

²² هكذا في الأصل، ونظن أن الصواب هو ويرسج لأنه يتوافق ومعنى النص.

אלקצידה' אל לב: פי אן לא יפרח אלאנסאן בוקוע אלאעאדי וערתאתהם, / בל יגאזיהם באכלאקה ויתגאזו ען סיתתהם.

אלקצידה' אל לג: פי אן לא יתמנא אלאנסאן ויחסד אלאגניא בצגר נפס, / בל יכון עזיז אלנפס ליגד ראהה' קלבה וירתקי כאלשמס.

[90ב] אלקצידה' אל לד: פי אן לא יחרש אלאנסאן עלי אצחאבה שיא מן אלהבאיא ואלשרור, / פאן אללה אלקוי קאדראן וירמי אלמתשארר פי אלמחצור.

אלקצידה' אל לה: פי אן לא יתכלם אלאנסאן באלכדב או בשיא מן אלהבא, / פאן תלגלג אללסאן ודמי פי שי אמר מן אלווא.

אלקצידה' [אל] לו: פי אן לא יצמן אלאנסאן צמאן ולא יאכד ארבא ואלמכסב אלמגאן, / ולא ינאם ויגפל ויתענא שגל אלכסלאן.

אלקצידה' אל לז: פי אן לא ילאמס אלאנסאן תקאל אלמבגצין אלקלקין, / [91א] אלדין יבגציהם כאלקהם ויתקל עליהם קלוב אלמכלוקין.

אלקצידה' אל לח: פי אן אלאנסאן אדא רכל²³ יזור לא יתקל ויטול פי זיאתה, / ללא יתקל ותנקץ ענדה מרתבתה.

אלקצידה' אל לט: פי אן לא יצאחך אלאנסאן אצחאבה באלהזל ואלטנו ואלמשאתמאת, / פאן דלך יבעד ענד אללה והו מן אעטם אלכפוראת.

אלקצידה' אל מ: פי אן לא יגטי אלאנסאן או יסתר עלי כרים או בכיל גל, / ולא יעוד לסאנה "בל" ו"לו לא" ו"לעל".

אלקצידה' אל מא: [91ב] פי אן לא יכאלף אלאנסאן אמר אלסלטנה' ואלסיאסה, / ליכון עבד אמין מתמסך באלריאסה.

אלקצידה' [אל] מב: פי אן לא ימדח אלאנסאן שיד קבל תביין סירתה וחסן מקאלה, / ולא יזדרי בצגיר אלא אן יתפהם אפעאלה.

אלקצידה' אל מג: פי אן לא ינרסם אלאנסאן ויטול פי אלקעוד פי מכאנא יקדפוה ויציק פי אלהאלה²⁴, / באל ינתקל וימצי ענה לירתאח ויקל תעבה ויכלץ מן אלמתאעב ואלאהואל.

אלקצידה' אל מד: פי אן לא יטול אלאנסאן פי כרוגה מן מנזלה עלי אלעיאל פי אלפראק, / בל יתדכר [92א] פי אפעאלה ופי אלנפוס אלתי הי אליה בכתרה' אלאשוואק.

²³ هكذا في الأصل، ونظن أن الصواب هو رحل لأنه يتوافق ومعنى النص.

²⁴ هكذا في الأصل، ونظن أن الصواب هو ألاحواأل لأنه يوافق القافية.

אלקצידה' [אל] מה: פי אן לא יאכד אלאנסאן אמראה' ללחסן ואלגמאל או לגנא, / פאן
הדין אלאמרין יתלאשיאן ויבא אלעאר ואלענא.
אלקצידה' אל מו: פי אן לא נאמן²⁵ אלאנסאן [אמראה'] פי ודאעה' אלאסראר, / באל
יחחרו מנהא ויזגרהא פי מעטם אקואלהא ואלא תסטאדה ותבליה בנאר.
אלקצידה' אל מז: פי אן לא יהין אלאנסאן או יזדרי באחדי אלנסואן אלגיאד
אלמסאעדאט, / פכתיר מוגוד פי אלאנאת גיאד אכיר מן אלרגאל [92ב] בלא אמאנאת.
אלקצידה' אל מח: פי אן לא יתכלם אלאנסאן מע תואה או מגנון, / ללא יתנבץ עליה מן
אמראציהם ויסקא כאס אלמנון.
אלקצידה' אל מט: פי אן לא ישרב אלאנסאן אלא מע חריף מלאזם פי עשרתה, / ללא
יתעב מע גיר קרין מאלוף ורבמא יתכדר בנשותה.
אלקצידה' אלמופה [אל] נ: פי אן לא יפני אלאנסאן גמיע איאמה פי אלסהו ואלטגיאן
ואלתוגל פי אלכטא ואתבאע אלשיטאן ואלהוא, / בל יתוב קבל אלממאת ולו ביומא
ואחד פאן הדא אלדוא.

²⁵ هكذا في الأصل، ونظن أن الصواب هو 'ياמן' لأنه يتوافق ومعنى النص.

The Book of Excellent Conduct

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful and on Whom we rely.

Glory be to God, who has power, majesty, greatness, beauty, magnanimity, perfection, benevolence and nobility, the Lord of lords and the Causer of causes; we ask Him to give us [the possibility] of obeying Him,²⁶ that He might inspire us with His piety, and He might guide us to his oneness, let Him not deprive us of His care and let Him animate our hearts with His love so that we might perceive [a small] part of His power; His Highness is sublime, who created existence for Himself, sentenced all His creatures to death and [made] the sweetness of His love to inhabit the hearts of His most chosen people. He is gracious, understanding, merciful, the One who is benevolent with me when I tell Him my excuses before asking [Him] for forgiveness.

The weakest of the servants of God the Almighty and the most needful of His mercy, Yosef Ibn Ḥasan, cooker of silk, said, giving thanks and praying:²⁷ I have read some Hebrew books, I have analyzed their contents²⁸ with goodwill, and I have found among them a book that revives the heart. As for its discourse, it contains fifty chapters and its title is *sefer musar* in Hebrew; it consists of fifty topics on behavior that are found in a person who has not suffered [the corruption] of the Devil. And I bethought myself to translate the contents of its chapters into the Arabic language, thereby ennobling my own culture. My objective is for everyone²⁹ to [be able to] understand it and to enjoy the diversity of topics [that it deals with]. And I explained the contents of the fifty chapters in fifty qasidas, with fifty different rhymes, and the result was a useful book that was a shining light which I entitled «Excellent Conduct». It is very pure and complete³⁰ and protected from laughter and humor. And I wrote it for the group of brethren, so that men and women who listen to it may benefit from it and old and young people who understand it may become sublime.

And I present here a description of the order of the qasidas and a mention of their contents, for the understanding of those who [are going] to read and study them:

First qasida. On being forewarned about the world and its deceptions and guarding against falling into its traps and its affairs.

Second qasida. [That a man] might take care [not] to do at the end of his life that which he used to do in his days of foolishness and mischief.

26. Obedience to God is understood in a very positive way: God is so sublime that the possibility for a man to obey him is sign of his grace.

27. The expression *אמא בנע*, which normally follows the heading and the salutation, has not been translated, since it is a very common formula for the beginning of a piece of writing or a speech.

28. The term as it appears in the work is *ma'ānī* (sing. *ma'nā*). This term is literally «meaning», but it can also be translated as «reason, topic, idea, basic image, raw matter, or content». On the variety of connotations of the term *ma'ānī* and on the system of literary creation that it denotes, see Sadan (2002: 135–138). According to Sadan (2002: 135), «le *ma'nā*, qui représente théoriquement l'idée ... est transformé par la plume d'un autre poète en un *lafẓ*, c'est-à-dire en un trope enrichie et dont les éléments ornementaux sont réorganisés». This is exactly what our author might have done when he adapted the chapters of *Mishlei he-'arav* in his work; see also note 7.

29. Literally «the close and the distant with no exception».

30. Literally «no lack ruins it».

Third qasida. [That a man] might take care not to forget the existence of Judgment and the road to death, and that he might know that more bitter than death itself is the evil that lies beyond it.

Fourth qasida. That a man might not be saddened by death and the great misery of the world more than is necessary, and that he may know that in his sadness and weeping there is nothing other than damnation and denial.

Fifth qasida. That a man might not forget the Creator of his existence, and that he might practice prayer with a good and generous purpose.

Sixth qasida. That a man might not rave nor wonder at the avatars of destiny, but trust and let himself be guided by God the Gracious One.

Seventh qasida. That [a man] may be content with the attainment of science and wisdom, since their study yields the greatest benefits.

Eighth qasida. That a man might not boast of wealth, which is diminished and used up, but that [he might do so] of seeking intelligence and learning.³¹

Ninth qasida. That a man might not speak when it is not a time for speaking, so that what he says does not become stuttering.

Tenth qasida. That a man might dress himself with nothing but modesty and piety, so that his foolishness does not bring him hardship and disgrace.

Eleventh qasida. That a man might not refuse to forgive he who hurt him and [then] came to ask forgiveness for his offense, but let him love and forgive so that he may remain the better.

Twelfth qasida. That a man who is annoyed might not let his anger become so as to damage him, tire him, or cause him misery, that he might not tear apart in his agitation something that cannot be repaired when he is contented.

Thirteenth qasida. That a man might not grab at power and be one of them who are forced to swallow their pride, for God abhors the powerful and the arrogant.

Fourteenth qasida. That a man might not diminish the company of his family and good friends, but rather that he increase their company and thus they will [always] be there to help him.

Fifteenth qasida. That a man might not be presumptuous nor proud so as to not associate with the poor and wretched, since by helping them he will receive praise, in addition to reward.

Sixteenth qasida. That a man might not turn away from him who comes asking out of need, but that he might help him, give aid to him, and be glad that he has the means of helping him.

Seventeenth qasida. That a man might not insist or be impatient with him who has heard his appeal, lest his insistence provoke a delay in the will [to give].

31. The term that appears in the work is *adab*.

Eighteenth qasida. That a man might not deny or refuse to do good to those who are deserving, but that he might offer, give, and provide to them that which has been given to him [by God] so that his way might prosper and God might increase his reward.

Nineteenth qasida. That a man might not close the door in the face of one who knocks, since it is possible that tomorrow he will become, like him, a stranger with broken bonds.

Twentieth qasida. That a man might not be imprudent nor become proud and not give thanks to him who offers help, but let him remember how he needed him in his time [of need] and that which guided him and lead him to him.

Twenty-first qasida. That a man might not muddle his affairs by having neglected the advice and the sayings of wise men, but that he might ask them and request their counsel.

Twenty-second qasida. That a man might not reveal the secret of one who has confided in him and has entrusted it to him, so that he will not be dishonored, embarrassed, and destroyed by whosoever might dispute [with] him and make known his evil act.

Twenty-third qasida. That a man might not insult, scorn or become angry with either of his parents, but let him honor them and respect them so that his reward will be abundant.

Twenty-fourth qasida. That a man might not spare his children the rod of education,³² that he might take mercy on them and sow love and fear in their hearts in order to achieve his goal.

Twenty-fifth qasida. That a man might not become angry nor harden his heart against his family and his lineage, but that he might love them and seek their good so that they will be hostile towards those who become his enemies whether they are present or absent.

Twenty-sixth qasida. That a man might take pains not to oppress his brethren to their detriment, so that they will not loathe him and their ire will not be aroused³³ and they will not seek his death.

Twenty-seventh qasida. That a man might not make haste to step or enter on evil paths in order to amass wealth, so that his alacrity will not lead him to a fearsome encounter.

Twenty-eighth qasida. That a man might not be a glutton or eagerly yearn for or become obsessed with food and vine, so that he will not be considered [one] of those who devotes himself to these things.

Twenty-ninth qasida. That a man might not destroy through immoral things and wicked desires all that he has raised, built, and erected, so that his children will not inherit all the imperfections of his riches.

32. The term that appears in the work is *adab*.

33. Literally «their fire will not be aroused».

Thirtieth qasida. That a man might not exchange the company of a brave, devoted, and faithful friend for the company of a wicked, roguish, and ill-intentioned brother.

Thirty-first qasida. That a man might not trust him who seemingly speaks goodness but who is corrupt within, but that he might leave him and abandon him since he truly is wicked.

Thirty-second qasida. That a man might not rejoice at the ruin or setbacks of his enemies, but that, because of his morals, he might reward them and forgive them their actions.

Thirty-third qasida. That a man might not be ambitious nor envious of the rich like a weak soul,³⁴ rather than he might have a strong soul to find peace in his heart and rise like the sun.

Thirty-fourth qasida. That a man might not conspire against his friends with malice and hidden things, for God is strong and powerful and casts him who provokes wickedness into Hell.

Thirty-fifth qasida. That a man might not tell lies nor speak of trifles, for the stuttering of the tongue and the blood-letting of speech are an infirmity.

Thirty-sixth qasida. That a man might not be a guarantor for [any] responsibility, that he might not take usury nor gratuitous profit and that he might not sleep, be careless, or become tired from the work of an idle.

Thirty-seventh qasida. That a man might not draw near to those who are loathsome and insufferable, whom their Creator despised and turned the hearts of [all] creatures against them.

Thirty-eighth qasida. That a man, if he goes visiting, might not be impertinent nor extend his visit, so that he will not become importunate or diminish his rank in the home [of his host].

Thirty-ninth qasida. That a man might not laugh at his friends with jokes, mockery, or insults, for this distances him from God and is among the basest sins.

Fortieth qasida. That a man might not cover or clothe himself with the garments of a miser or an impious person; and that his tongue might not use "but," "if not" and "maybe."

Forty-first qasida. That a man might not disobey the order of the ruler and the chief, [and that] he may be a faithful and steadfast servant of authority.

Forty-second qasida. That a man might not praise an elder before verifying [what] his life [has been] and the accuracy of his words; and that he might not despise a youth without being acquainted with his deeds.

Forty-third qasida. That a man might not be still and prolong his stay in a place that exhausts him and become anxious over the situation, but that he might leave [that

34. Literally «with smallness of soul».

place] and move [to another] in order to rest, alleviate his weariness, and shake off his burdens and fears._

Forty-fourth qasida. That a man might not delay being away from home and his children when he leaves, but that he might remember his affairs and the souls of those who [feel] great longing for him.

Forty-fifth qasida. That a man might not take a wife for her beauty or loveliness or wealth, for both these qualities will disappear, and shame and misery will remain.

Forty-sixth qasida. That a man might not entrust his secrets [to a woman], but that he be cautious of her and withdraw from most of what she says lest she hunt him and trap him with her own fire.

Forty-seventh qasida. That a man might not undervalue nor disdain a good and supportive woman, for there is much in good women that is better [than what there is] in faithless men.

Forty-eighth qasida. That a man might not speak with those who have gone astray or are mad, so that he will not become infected with their sickness and drink from the cup of death.

Forty-ninth qasida. That a man might not drink except in the company of an acceptable friend, so that he will not become drowsy with someone who is not his habitual friend and act shamefully due to his drunkenness.

Fiftieth qasida. That a man might not end his days [devoted] to carelessness, impiety, error, following [in the footsteps] of the Devil and whims, but let him repent before dying, even if it be only one day, this is the remedy.

Appendix: Translation of the Prologue and the Index into Spanish

El libro de la excelente conducta

En el nombre de Dios, el clemente, el misericordioso y en quien nos apoyamos.

Alabado sea Dios, el que tiene el poder, la majestad, la grandeza, la belleza, la magnanimidad, la perfección, la benevolencia y la nobleza, el señor de los señores y el causante de las causas; le pedimos que nos otorgue [la posibilidad] de obedecerle,³⁵ que nos inspire con su piedad, que nos guíe hacia su unicidad, que no nos prive de su cuidado y que vivifique nuestros corazones con su amor para percibir [una mínima] parte de su poder; excelsa es su excelsitud, la que creó la existencia para sí mismo, sentenció con la muerte a todas sus criaturas e [hizo] habitar la dulzura de su amor en los corazones de su gente más selecta. Él es el clemente, el comprensivo, el compasivo, el misericordioso, el que se muestra benevolente conmigo al contar[le] mis excusas antes de pedir[le] perdón.

Dijo el más débil de los siervos de Dios el Altísimo y el más necesitado de su misericordia, Yosef Ibn Ḥasan, cocinero de la seda, agradeciendo y rezando:³⁶ he leído algunos libros hebreos, he analizado su contenido³⁷ con buena intención y he encontrado entre ellos un libro que revive los corazones. En cuanto a su discurso, contiene cincuenta capítulos y su título es *sefer musar* en hebreo; está compuesto por cincuenta temas de conducta que se reúnen en una persona que no haya sufrido [la corrupción de] Satanás. Y se me ocurrió traducir el contenido de sus capítulos a lengua árabe, engrandeciendo con eso mi cultura. Mi objetivo es que lo [pueda] entender todo el mundo³⁸ y disfrutar con la diversidad de temas [tratados en él]. Y expliqué el contenido de los cincuenta capítulos en cincuenta casidas, con cincuenta rimas diferentes, y surgió un libro útil con luz resplandeciente al que puse por título «La excelente conducta». Es [un libro] muy puro, completo³⁹ y de la risa y del humor está protegido. Y lo compuse para el grupo de hermanos, para que les sirva de provecho a los hombres y mujeres que lo oigan y se hagan sublimes tanto los mayores como los jóvenes que lo comprendan.

Y he aquí la descripción del orden de las casidas y la mención de su contenido, para que las entienda quien las [vaya a] leer y a ocuparse de ellas:

35. La obediencia a Dios es entendida en un sentido muy positivo: Dios es tan sublime que la posibilidad de que el hombre pueda obedecerle es una muestra de su gracia.

36. La expresión *אמא ביעד* que normalmente sigue al encabezamiento y la salutación no se ha traducido por ser una fórmula muy común con que se entra en materia en escritos y discursos.

37. El término que aparece en la obra es *ma'ānī* (sing. *ma'nā*). Este término es literalmente «significado», pero puede traducirse también por «motivo, tema, idea, imagen de base, materia bruta y contenido». Sobre la variedad de acepciones del término *ma'ānī* y sobre el sistema de creación literaria que denota, véase Sadan (2002: 135138). Según Sadan (2002: 135), «le *ma'nā*, qui représente théoriquement l'idée ... est transformé par la plume d'un autre poète en un *lafz*, c'est-à-dire en un trope enrichie et dont les éléments ornementaux sont réorganisés». Esto es precisamente lo que nuestro autor podría haber realizado al adaptar los capítulos del *Mishlei he-'arav* en su obra; véase también nota 7.

38. Literalmente dice «el lejano y el cercano sin excepción alguna».

39. Literalmente dice «ninguna falta lo estropea».

Casida primera. Sobre el estar prevenido contra el mundo y sus engaños y el ser precavido de la caída en su trampa y sus asuntos.

Casida segunda. [Que se] cuide [el hombre] de [no] realizar al final de su vida lo [mismo] que hacía en sus días de necedad y diablura.

Casida tercera. [Que se] cuide [el hombre] de no olvidar la existencia del Juicio y el camino de la muerte, y que sepa que hay un mal después de la muerte más amargo que ella misma.

Casida cuarta. Que el hombre no se entristezca más de lo necesario por la muerte y la mucha miseria del mundo, y que sepa que no hay en su tristeza y llanto más que perdición y rechazo.

Casida quinta. Que no olvide el hombre al creador de su existencia y frecuente la oración con un propósito bueno y generoso.

Casida sexta. Que no delire el hombre ni se sorprenda por los avatares del destino, sino que confíe y se deje dirigir por Dios el clemente.

Casida séptima. Que se contente [el hombre] con la adquisición de la ciencia y la sabiduría, pues su estudio [produce el] el más elevado beneficio.

Casida octava. Que no fanfarronee el hombre por la riqueza que disminuye y se agota, sino que [lo haga] por procurarse inteligencia y buena educación.⁴⁰

Casida novena. Que no hable el hombre cuando no sea el momento de hablar, para que no se convierta en tartamudeo lo que diga.

Casida décima. Que no vista el hombre más que la modestia y la piedad, para que su necedad no le lleve hacia las penalidades y las desgracias.

Casida undécima. Que no niegue el hombre perdonar a quien le perjudicó y [luego] vino pidiendo perdón por su falta, sino que le quiera y le perdone para mantener su superioridad.

Casida duodécima. Que no tenga el hombre cuando se irrite un enfado tal que le dañe, le canse y sea causa de su miseria, no sea que desgarre con su turbación lo que no pueda remendar cuando esté contento.

Casida decimotercera. Que no se precipite el hombre hacia el poder y sea de los que se humillan, pues Dios aborrece a los poderosos y a los ensoberbecidos.

Casida decimocuarta. Que no acorte el hombre la compañía de sus familiares y buenos amigos, sino que aumente su compañía y [así] estarán [siempre] para ayudarle.

Casida decimoquinta. Que no sea el hombre ni presumido ni orgulloso como para no mezclarse con los pobres y miserables, pues ayudándoles obtendrá, además de la recompensa, un buen elogio.

Casida decimosexta. Que no le aparte el hombre la cara a quien necesitó de él y vino pidiéndole por su necesidad, sino que le ayude, le auxilie y se alegre de que tenga medios para ayudarle.

40. El término que aparece en la obra es *adab*.

Casida decimoséptima. Que no insista el hombre ni se impaciente con quien haya atendido su petición, no sea que esa insistencia provoque el retraso en la voluntad [de dar].

Casida decimoctava. Que no niegue el hombre ni rehúse hacer el bien a los que lo merecen, sino que [les] ofrezca, dé y proporcione de lo que le ha sido dado [por Dios] para que prosperen sus caminos y [Dios] aumente su recompensa.

Casida decimonovena. Que no cierre el hombre la puerta en la cara del que llama, pues puede que se vuelva mañana, como él, un extraño de truncados vínculos.

Casida vigésima. Que no sea insensato el hombre ni se ensoberbezca sin dar las gracias al que le ofrece ayuda, sino que recuerde cómo le necesitó en su momento y lo que le guió y le condujo hacia él.

Casida vigésima primera. Que no extravíe el hombre sus asuntos por haber omitido los consejos y los dichos de los sabios, sino que les pregunte y les pida asesoramiento.

Casida vigésima segunda. Que no desvele el hombre el secreto del que haya confiado en él y se lo haya depositado, para que no sea deshonrado, avergonzado y destruido por quien le dispute y le presente su mala acción.

Casida vigésima tercera. Que no insulte el hombre, menosprecie ni se enfade con ninguno de sus padres, sino que les honre y les respete para que su recompensa sea abundante.

Casida vigésima cuarta. Que no aleje el hombre la vara de la educación⁴¹ de todos sus hijos, que se apiade de ellos y siembre en sus corazones su amor y su temor para conseguir su objetivo.

Casida vigésima quinta. Que no se enfade el hombre ni endurezca su corazón con sus familiares y su linaje, sino que les quiera y procure su bien para que sean hostiles contra quien se enemiste con él tanto si están presentes como si están ausentes.

Casida vigésima sexta. Que se esfuerce el hombre en no oprimir con perjuicio a sus hermanos, para que no le aborrezcan, se encienda su ira⁴² y procuren su muerte.

Casida vigésima séptima. Que no se apresure el hombre a patear o meterse por malos caminos para acumular riquezas, no sea que consiga con su agilidad encontrarse con el terror.

Casida vigésima octava. Que no sea glotón el hombre, no desee ardientemente, ni se obsesione con la comida y la bebida del vino, para que no sea considerado [uno] de los que se consagran a estos asuntos.

Casida vigésima novena. Que no destruya el hombre a través de cosas inmorales y malos deseos todo aquello que ha edificado, erigido y construido, para que no adquieran sus hijos como herencia las imperfecciones de su riqueza.

Casida trigésima. Que no cambie el hombre la compañía de un amigo valiente, devoto y fiel por la compañía de un hermano malo, cizañero y con malas intenciones.

41. El término que aparece en la obra es *adab*.

42. Literalmente «enciendan sus fuegos».

Casida trigésima primera. Que no confíe el hombre en el que habla aparentemente bondad pero interiormente está corrompido, sino que le deje y le abandone debido a que él, en verdad, es malvado.

Casida trigésima segunda. Que no se alegre el hombre por la caída o el tropiezo de los enemigos, sino que, por su moral, les recompense y perdone sus acciones.

Casida trigésima tercera. Que no ambicione el hombre ni envidie a los ricos como un alma débil,⁴³ sino que tenga un alma fuerte para encontrar la tranquilidad de su corazón y elevarse como el sol.

Casida trigésima cuarta. Que no conspire el hombre contra sus amigos con maldades y cosas escondidas, pues Dios es fuerte y poderoso y arroja al que provoca el mal al infierno.

Casida trigésima quinta. Que no diga el hombre mentiras ni naderías, pues el tartamudeo de la lengua y el sangrado al hablar son una enfermedad.

Casida trigésima sexta. Que no salga fiador el hombre con [ninguna] responsabilidad, que no tome usura ni lucro gratuito y que no duerma, se descuide, ni fatigue con el trabajo del vago.

Casida trigésima séptima. Que no se acerque el hombre a los aborrecibles y turbadores más pesados, a los cuales aborreció su creador y volvió contra ellos el corazón de las criaturas.

Casida trigésima octava. Que el hombre, si se desplaza para hacer una visita, no sea impertinente ni se alargue visitando, no sea que se vuelva inoportuno y merme su rango en casa [del anfitrión].

Casida trigésima novena. Que no se ría el hombre de sus amigos con bromas, burlas ni injurias, pues eso [le] aleja de Dios y es de los mayores pecados.

Casida cuadragésima. Que no se cubra el hombre o se tape con vestiduras de avaro o de impío; y no use su lengua “pero,” “si no” y “tal vez”.

Casida cuadragésima primera. Que no desobedezca el hombre la orden del gobernante y el jefe, [y que] sea un siervo fiel y tenaz con la autoridad.

Casida cuadragésima segunda. Que no alabe el hombre al viejo antes de comprobar su vida y lo correcto de sus palabras; y no desprecie al joven hasta que conozca sus hechos.

Casida cuadragésima tercera. Que no se quede inmóvil el hombre y prolongue su estancia en un sitio que le agote y se angustie por la situación, sino que lo abandone y se traslade para relajarse, aliviar su cansancio y liberarse de cargas y terrores.

Casida cuadragésima cuarta. Que no se demore [mucho] el hombre ausentándose de su casa y de sus hijos cuando salga, sino que recuerde sus asuntos y las almas que [sienten] una gran añoranza hacia él.

43. Literalmente «con pequeñez de alma».

Casida cuadragésima quinta. Que no tome el hombre mujer por la belleza o la hermosura y la riqueza, pues ambas cualidades desaparecerán y quedarán la vergüenza y la miseria.

Casida cuadragésima sexta. Que no confíe el hombre en depositar [en una mujer] sus secretos, sino que esté precavido de ella y se aleje de la mayoría de sus dichos no sea que le cace y le atrape con su propio fuego.

Casida cuadragésima séptima. Que no menosprecie ni desdeñe el hombre a una mujer buena y colaboradora, pues mucho hay en las mujeres buenas que es mejor [que lo que hay] en los hombres sin lealtad.

Casida cuadragésima octava. Que no hable el hombre con extraviados ni locos, para que no se contagie de sus enfermedades y beba del vaso de muerte.

Casida cuadragésima novena. Que no beba el hombre a no ser que esté en compañía de un amigo adecuado, no sea que se canse con alguien que no es su amigo habitual y pueda volverse bochornoso por su embriaguez.

Casida quincuagésima. Que no termine el hombre todos sus días [dedicado] al descuido, la impiedad, los errores, seguir [los pasos del] diablo y los caprichos, sino que se arrepienta antes de morir aunque sea por un día, he aquí el remedio.

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RESUMEN

La literatura sapiencial medieval y su traducción y adaptación entre las diferentes lenguas es un campo de estudio al que investigadores contemporáneos han dedicado ciertos esfuerzos. Al contrario de lo que ocurre con las tradiciones árabe, hebrea, latina o castellana, que han recibido una gran atención, la producción sapiencial en judeo-árabe ha pasado desapercibida. Las siguientes páginas presentan la obra *Kitāb maḥāsīn al-ʿādāb* (El libro de la excelente conducta), una obra sapiencial judeo-árabe escrita en la segunda mitad del siglo XV y que consiste en una adaptación, o traducción abreviada, de una obra hebrea, *Mishlei he-ʿarav* (Los dichos de los árabes), escrita probablemente en la Península Ibérica o Provenza a comienzos del siglo XIII. Además, se ofrece una edición y una traducción al inglés del prólogo y el índice de la obra.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Lengua judeo-árabe, literatura ética, musar, traducción hebreo-árabe.

ABSTRACT

Medieval wisdom literature and its translation and adaptation from one language into another is a field of study to which contemporary scholars have dedicated several works. Unlike the Arabic, Hebrew, Latin, and Castilian traditions that have received a great deal of attention, the wisdom-literature production in Judeo-Arabic has been neglected in recent scholarship. The following pages present the *Kitāb maḥāsīn al-ʿādāb* (The Book of Excellent Conduct), a Judeo-Arabic sapiencial work written in the second half of the fifteenth century, which is an adaptation or a shorter translation of a Hebrew work, *Mishlei he-ʿarav* (The Sayings of the Arabs), written in the Iberian Peninsula or Provence at the beginning of the thirteenth century. Furthermore, an edition and a translation into English of the prologue and the index of the work are provided.

KEYWORDS: Judeo-Arabic Language, Ethical Literature, Musar, Hebrew-Arabic Translations.

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