

***El Mostadí: Historicity and Creativity in a Unique
Eighteenth-Century Sephardic Ballad***

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The Moroccan Judeo-Spanish ballad of *El Mostadí* has continued to be an enigma for those of us who study the Sephardic *Romancero*. As with so many Pidalian firsts, Menéndez Pidal was the first scholar to publish a synthetic fragment of *El Mostadí*, in his 1906 “Catálogo del romancero judío-español” and, in that context, Don Ramón classified the poem as a historical ballad, but—tantalizingly—gave no hint at all as to what he believed its historical antecedents may have been. Only when I began to work on the still unedited Vol. VIII of our *Folk Literature of the Sephardic Jews*, which is devoted to historical ballads, was I able to discover the poem’s historical underpinnings and to suggest its possible importance for the history of the ballad genre and its ulterior development.¹

Before going on, it would, I believe, be of interest to consult a synthetic text of *El Mostadí*, so we will be aware of the narrative here under consideration and its constituent parts. To this day, despite the conflated fragments published by Don Ramón, the ballad has remained virtually unknown. Here is a synthetic version, based on fourteen texts and fragments—almost all of them unedited—all that I have been able to uncover so far:

Media noche ya es pasada, los gallos quieren cantar,
2 cuando el Mostadí partiera de Tánger para Tetuán.
Tres naciones con él trae, todas son a su mandar:
4 de ^oarabín y rifíin, bárbaros no hay que contar;
con trescientos mil negritos, que más no pudo llevar;
6 vestidos a la Turquía, relumbran como el lunar;
ya cargaba las cien mulas de pólvora y alquitrán;
8 abastados van del vino, abastados van del pan;
abastados de agua dulce, por no beber de la mar.
10 Siete veces rodean el pueblo; no hallaron dónde entrar;
y a la vuelta de las siete, vieron un portillo real.
12 Allí estaba un viejecito, la guarda de la ciudad:
—Vuélvete tú, el Mostadí, vuélvete tú a tu ciudad,
14 que una ciudad como ésta no la podrás alcanzar.
Siete ríos la rodean y el de las ocho es la mar;
16 las puertas tiene de pino, clavos a la cristiandad;
las cercas tiene de acero, de azófar la otra mitad.—

¹ I would like to thank Hilary Pomeroy and Alan Deyermund for inviting me to participate in the Eleventh British Conference on Judeo-Spanish Studies, where I presented the present paper in preliminary form. Diego Catalán and Ana Valenciano have both played a crucial role in my study of *El Mostadí*. Had the unedited versions at the Menéndez Pidal Archive not been available, *El Mostadí* would have remained an impenetrable enigma. I would also like to thank Mariano de la Campa for his generous and unfailing help during the years that I worked at the Archive. Heartfelt thanks go also to James T. Monroe for his advice regarding Arabic problems and for translating the crucial passage from al-Zayyānī’s chronicle. My friend, Mustapha Kamal, has offered important advice concerning Moroccan Colloquial Arabic. The present study anticipates some findings embodied in Chapter 29 of our forthcoming *Folk Literature of the Sephardic Jews*, Vol. VIII (currently in preparation).

- 18 Tomó tinta y papel, un billete fue a mandar
a mano del Hažž Etmín, alcaide de la ciudad:
- 20 —Si la ciudad tú me dieres, yo te daré libertad;
si la ciudad no me entregas, a bombas la he de tomar.—
- 22 La recuesta que le vuelve, que no se la quiere dar:
—Vuélvete tú, el Mostadí, vuélvete a la tu ciudad.
- 24 Vai, pelea con tu hermano y sacarás tu hombredad,
que Tetuán la honrada nadie la puede ganar.—
- 26 Como eso oyera el Mostadí, mandó afincar las ħebás.
Ya mandó llenar las bombas de alcrebite y alquitrán.
- 28 Como eso oyera el alcaide, los tiros manda amparar;
ya manda por los tabžía, que se suban a los braž.
- 30 El lunes la mañanita, empezan a bombear:
la primera que tiraron, no hiziera ningún mal;
- 32 la segunda que tiraron, ésa hizo mucho mal.
Allí cayeron los hombres como rayos a la mar;
- 34 reventaran las preñadas cual gallinas en corral;
allí murieron chiquitos cual [palomas] del palomar;
- 36 mató mancebos y al^cazbas y novios en la ħuppá.
El martes la mañanita, Mostadí entró en la ciudad.²

The identity of El Mostadí himself is now, I believe, quite certain: He is Mūlāy al-Mustađī' ben Mūlāy Ismā'īl (d. 1759-1760). He was sultan of Morocco for less than two years, between 1738 and 1740, during what has come to be known as the “Alawid Anarchy” of 1727-1757. So obscure—and so thoroughly unfortunate—was al-Mustađī'’s brief reign, that he is not even mentioned in the first edition of Bosworth’s *Islamic Dynasties* (1967), though he does merit passing mention in the second (1996). Al-Mustađī'’ father, Mūlāy Ismā'īl (1672-1727), during his long and very successful reign, sought to combat his rival brothers and to control a rebellious populace—particularly the Berber chieftains of the mountainous interior—by creating an immense army of Sudanese slave-soldiers, the *‘abīd al-būħāri* (or *bwaħer*), on whose loyalty he could depend, above and beyond the pressures of local politics and tribal alliances.³

On the death of Mūlāy Ismā'īl, the *‘abīd*’s bond of personal loyalty to the sultan quickly dissolved and, left to their own devices, they became a dangerously destabilizing element in Moroccan politics. Confronting the Berber *qā’ids*, who had their own political agendas, the *‘abīd* attempted—with considerable success—to become the kingmakers and powerbrokers of mid-eighteenth-century Morocco. Proclaiming and deposing sultans as they saw fit, the *‘abīd* manipulated the interests of their Berber rivals and the conflicting ambitions of Mūlāy Ismā'īl’s many sons and helped throw the country into thirty years of almost constant turmoil

² Our synthetic text is based on thirteen unedited versions of *El Mostadí* (seven from the Menéndez Pidal Archive, four from our own collection, and one each from the Instituto Arias Montano (CSIC) and the Biblioteca Nacional (Madrid). We also take into account Martínez Ruiz’s brief version from Alcazarquivir (Martínez Ruiz 1963: no. 33) and Menéndez Pidal’s fragment, which conflates parts of two texts from Tangier (Menéndez Pidal 1906-07: no. 16). The full repertoire of variants known to us comprises four texts from Tangier and five texts each from Tetuán and Alcazarquivir.

³ Concerning the *‘abīd*, see S. and N. Ronart (1966: 22-24); Terrasse (1949-50: II, 256-257); Abun Nasr (1975: 227). They were called *būħhāri*, because their oath of loyalty was sworn on a copy of the venerated collection of *ħadīth*, compiled by the ninth-century Central Asian scholar, Muħammad ibn- Ismā'īl al-Būħhāri (810-70 C.E.).

(1727-1757), from which it was to recover only with the accession of Mūlāy Ismāʿīl's grandson, the wise and capable Sīdī Muḥammad ibn-ʿAbd Allāh (1757-1790).⁴

During those disastrous years of disintegration and chaos, the most successful of the pretenders, Mūlāy ʿAbd Allāh, Sīdī Muḥammad ibn-ʿAbd Allāh's father, was proclaimed and deposed no less than six times.⁵ Mūlāy al-Mustaḍīr's sultanate (1738-1740), a brief and chaotic parenthesis between the reign of Mūlāy Muḥammad ibn-ʿArbīya (1736-1738) and the third accession of Mūlāy ʿAbd Allāh (1740-1745), was, by all accounts—and charitably expressed—an unmitigated disaster.⁶

Proclaimed in 1738, Mūlāy al-Mustaḍīr's brief term as sultan was marked by a frantic and implacable exaction or extortion of funds from all imaginable sources, implemented through confiscatory taxes, arbitrary imprisonments, floggings, torture, and executions, as well as punitive expeditions against supposedly disloyal elements, who were subjected to pillage and wholesale destruction.⁷

Our ballad's narrative responds to a specific historical event, which I have been able to identify in an eighteenth-century Moroccan chronicle: During Mūlāy al-Mustaḍīr's brief reign (sometime before *dhū-l-qaʿda* of 1152 A.H. [= January 30-February 28, 1740 C.E.], when he first learned that the ʿ**abīd** planned to depose him), al-Mustaḍīr ordered his ally, Aḥmad ben ʿAlī al-Rīfī, the pasha of Tangier, to conduct a punitive expedition against the city of Tetuán, which had never acknowledged its allegiance to him.⁸ Abū al-Qāsim ibn Aḥmad al-Zayyānī gives the following account in his *Turjumān*, written at Tlemsen (Algeria), in 1812-1813, the full title of which, in English, is *The Clear Interpreter of the Dynasties of the East and the West* (Al-Zayyānī 1969: 46-47: Arabic pagination):

[...] then he [= al-Mustaḍīr] dispatched his order to the bāšā Aḥmad al-Rīfī that they should betake themselves to Tetuán, plunder it, kill its notables, and demolish its walls, because they [= the notables] had not come to him [= al-Mustaḍīr]. So he [= the bāšā] betook himself to it [= Tetuán], waged war against it, entered it, killed eight [*or* eighty hundred?] of its notables, demolished its walls, and wrote to al-Mustaḍīr about that, and he [= al-Mustaḍīr] assigned to them [= the troops] a large sum of money, but al-Rīfī seized it and kept it for himself.⁹

⁴ Abun-Nasr observes: “On one thing the Moroccans seemed agreed in this period, namely that they had no more eligible rulers than the ʿAlawite *sharifs*, in whose gift of *baraka* (blessing) they put much trust to guide the rulers and bring blessings upon the country. But as Mawlayy Ismaʿīl left about 500 male children all endowed with *baraka*, and therefore fit to rule, this belief did not contribute to stability” (1975: 231).

⁵ Terrasse lists four different terms for Mūlāy ʿAbd Allāh between 1729 and 1757 (1949-50: II, 278-286); Al-Zayyānī has six reigns for the same period (1969: 64, 78, 87, 92, 102, 118).

⁶ Al-Zayyānī describes the deposition of Sīdī Mūlāy Muḥammad ibn/ben-ʿArbīya and the proclamation of al-Mustaḍīr: “A cette époque, les Abids s'emparèrent du sultan Sidi Mohammed ben Arbia, de son caïd Elmechâoui et de son conseiller spirituel Abderahman Echchâmi; ils les chargèrent de chaînes qu'ils firent river, puis ils expédièrent à Tafilalet des messagers par ramener Maulay Elmostadhi, qu'ils acclamèrent à Méquinez et à Fez et au nom duquel la prière fut faite dans les mosquées” (Al-Zayyānī 1969: 83).

⁷ Terrasse (1949-50: II, 284-285). See also Al-Zayyānī (1969: 83-87); Abun-Nasr (1975: 233). For al-Mustaḍīr's exactions against the Jews, see also Ortega (1929: 95). In brief, al-Mustaḍīr did not live up to the meaning of his name: ‘he who seeks illumination’ (on *ḍāʿa* ‘to gleam, shine, illuminate’).

⁸ Mūlāy Ismāʿīl appointed Aḥmad ben ʿAlī al-Rīfī as pasha of the Rif in 1691-92 (Al-Zayyānī 1969: 43).

⁹ With characteristic generosity, my friend, James T. Monroe, has provided indispensable help by translating the Arabic text. Al-Zayyānī's style is telegrammatic. Octave Houdas' translation seeks to clarify the narrative: “Le sultan [Elmostadhi] donna l'ordre au bacha Ahmed Errifi de se rendre à Tétouan, de piller cette ville, de faire périr ses notables et de démolir ses remparts; il voulait ainsi punir les habitants, qui ne lui avaient pas envoyé de députation. Le bacha se mit en marche, entra dans Tétouan à la suite d'un combat et fit mettre à

Al-Zayyānī's account describes, I believe, the historical nucleus of our ballad of *El Mostadī*: The ethnic makeup of the assembled army—Arabs, Riffians, and Berbers—coincides exactly with the peoples involved in the thirty-year °Alawite Anarchy, as also do the thirty thousand black soldiers who, of course, represent the °*abīd*¹⁰. The presence of “Sidi Hajj Etmín” is also crucially important. Al-Zayyānī does not mention him at this juncture, but later he tells us that, in 1752, the people of Tetuán assassinated their *qā'id*, al-Ḥajj Muḥammad al-Tamīmī (or in colloquial pronunciation: *et-tmimi*). The ballad reference suggests that al-Ḥajj Muḥammad may indeed already have been *qā'id* of Tetuán a dozen years before.¹¹

That some of our texts allude to this personage as “El Ḥaḏito” implies an immediacy, a familiarity, perhaps even a certain affection, on the part of a contemporary Jewish audience, an affection that eloquently supports the narrative's historicity. That El Ḥaḏito advises El Mostadī to go fight against his brother also quite accurately reflects contemporary conditions, which, precisely, involved a bitter ongoing rivalry between the many sons of Mūlāy Ismā'īl—over 500 male children, according to reliable sources, and all endowed with the requisite Sherifian *baraka* that qualified them to compete for the sultanship. Both in the chronicle account and in the ballad, the city of Tetuán is attacked, there is a battle, extensive destruction results, and the sultan's forces victoriously enter the city.

Certain obvious disparities can also easily be explained: Although, in historical fact, it was al-Rīfī not al-Mustaḏī' himself, who headed up the attack on Tetuán, this would have had little significance for the ballad's singers. Since the expedition was undertaken at the sultan's command, it would have been quite natural for al-Mustaḏī'—the most important individual involved—to replace Aḥmad °Alī al-Rīfī as the ballad's protagonist. Though Tangier is not specifically mentioned by Al-Zayyānī as al-Rīfī's point of departure, as pasha of the Rif, he would have had to muster his forces at that city. To sum up: The connection between Al-Zayyānī's account and our ballad narrative seems undeniable.

One reflex of the ballad's having been composed in Morocco—in its entirety and as an original poem—rather than being a traditional avatar of some Peninsular congener, is that *El Mostadī* makes use of a more ample Arabic and Hebrew vocabulary than is usually encountered in the typical Moroccan Judeo-Spanish ballad of Medieval Hispanic origin. It will be useful, I believe, to elucidate these North African terms: In several texts, El Mostadī's followers are identified in Arabic as °*arabīn* and *rifūn* (Moroc. Ar. °*arabiyen*; *rifīyen*), rather than in Spanish as *árabes* and *rifeños*.¹²

mort huit notables de cette ville, dont il rasa les remparts. Quand le sultan reçut la lettre annonçant cette nouvelle, il assigna une somme considérable aux troupes; mais le bacha garda pour lui seul tout l'argent qu'il reçut” (Al-Zayyānī 1969: 86).

¹⁰ In discussing the “forces de désordre”, Henri Terrasse lists the °*abīd*, the *guich* (identified as Arabs), and the Berbers, who would have included the Riffians under Aḥmad °Alī's command (1949-50: II, 280-81). In Mod. Moroc. Ar., *giš* means “forces supplétives fournies par le tribu; group de coupeurs de route” (Mercier 1951: s.v.). Speakers of Spanish in Morocco—both Spanish immigrants and local Sephardic Jews, at least in the 1960s, when we were there—referred to highway robbers as *cortadores de camino*, which is a semantic calque based on Moroc. Ar. *qata' treq*.

¹¹ Al-Zayyānī describes a confrontation between Mūlāy °Abd Allāh and the people of Tetuán: “En 1165 (1752), le sultan apprit que les habitants de Tétouan avaient assassiné leur caïd Elhadj Mohammad Ettemimi. «Vous aviez vous-mêmes choisi cet homme pour caïd, dit il aux gens de Tétouan qui vinrent le trouver, et vous l'avez assassiné. Choisissez qui vous conviendra»” (Al-Zayyānī 1969: 120).

¹² In Menéndez Pidal (1906-07: no. 13), which corresponds to Armistead (1978: C19.1), the Spanish terms are used. Is José Benoliel, who transmitted the text to Don Ramón, perhaps translating the Arabic terms for Menéndez Pidal's benefit? Such a procedure would not be beyond Benoliel's unfortunately characteristic compulsion to tidy up his orally transcribed texts. See Armistead (1978: I, 18).

As the siege of the city begins, El Mostadí orders his tents to be set up (Tetuán: Armistead 1978: no. C19.5):

Como eso oyera el Mostadí, mandó afincar las *hebás*.

Manrique de Lara writes *hebás* and defines the word as ‘tiendas de campaña.’ Though I do not find such a form in any available lexical sources for Moroccan Colloquial Arabic, *hebás* (with Spanish plural *-s*) certainly corresponds to Classical Arabic *hibā*, pl. *āḥbi’ah* ‘a small tent of wool’ (Badger 1980: s.v. *tent*; Dozy: 1981: I, 347a).

In response, Ḥajj Etmín commands his cannoneers to go up on to the battlements (Armistead 1978: nos. C19.2, 4, 5):

Ya manda por los tabjía, que se suban a los braj. [Tangier]

Ya se suben los tabjía, ya se suben a los brax. [Tangier]

Mandó por los cañoneros, que se asomen a los brax. [Tetuán]

Both Benoliel and Manrique define *tabjía* (or *tabjía*) as ‘artilleros’ and write it with *-a-*; Lerchundi also lists *tábyi* ‘artillero’ (1892: 109a). This is a borrowing from Turkish: *topçu* ‘artilleryman, gunner.’ Mercier documents *tobbji*, pl. *-iya* ‘artilleur’ (1951: s.v.), as does Cherbonneau’s Algerian dictionary: *ṭobdji* (1972: 51). In any event, the difference between pretonic unstressed *-a-* and *-o-* would not be nearly as evident as in Spanish, especially following a *ṭā*, whose emphatic quality would ‘darken’ the vowel’s point of articulation. In a handwritten note to one of the unedited texts, Benoliel defines *braj* as the plural of *borj* ‘castillo’ and Manuel Manrique de Lara notes: *brax* ‘fuertes.’ Both *braj* and *bruj* are used as the plurals of Moroccan Colloquial *borj* ‘tour, donjon; bastide, fort, forteresse,’ corresponding to Cl. Ar. *burj*, pl. *burūj*, *abrāj* ‘tower, castle.’

To add insult to injury, El Mostadí’s attack sometimes begins on Saturday morning and the Hebrew form is, of course, used to designate that day: “El Sabbath la mañana, / bombas empezó a tirar” (Tetuán: Armistead 1978: no. C19.5). Uniquely, in this same version, El Mostadí becomes disheartened with Tetuán’s formidable defenses, concluding: “Que Tetuán la honrada / nadie la puede ganar.” El Mostadí’s departure takes place on Sunday morning: “El Aljáh a la mañanita, / se alzó y se fue a su ciudad.” *Aljáh* represents, defectively, Moroc. J.-Sp. *alḥad*, ultimately from Cl. Ar. *yaum al-aḥad* (= Moroc. Ar. *yum el-ḥad*), but the Jews had undoubtedly already borrowed the word from Hispano-Arabic before they left the Peninsula in 1492 (Armistead 1992: 68).

El Mostadí’s heavy bombardment decimates the population, killing, among others, young men and women and recently married couples (Armistead 1978: no. C19.2):

Mató a mancebos y alhasbas y a novios en la huppá.

Moroc. Ar. *‘azba* ‘vierge, pucelle; demoiselle; jeune fille’ enjoys a certain limited currency in North African Judeo-Spanish traditional poetry, usually, to my knowledge, together with *mancebos* and in tragic contexts.¹³ *Huppá* corresponds to H. *ḥuppāh*, referring to the canopy under which the young couple is married, but it can also mean, by extension, the ‘ceremonia del casamiento y los siete días primeros al partir del de su realización’ (Benoliel 1926-52: 205; Cantera 1954: 79; Hassán 1977: 51, n. 27).

¹³ It occurs in *La pérdida de don Sebastián*: “traeremos muchas alhasbas / y mancebos desposados” (Armistead 1978: III, 19, nos. 10B; also 10A) and in various *endechas* edited by Manuel Alvar: “[...] las voces de mancebos y argasbas”; “se van mancebos y arasbas / y vacían su lugare”; “deshonraban a las arasbas, / mataban a los mancebos” (Alvar 1969: 127, 134, 147). Note Benoliel: *alàzba* ‘doncella’ (1926-52: 569).

In an epilogue to the ballad (not included in my synthetic text), to intercede for the imprisoned Jewish notables, their wives, accompanied by Rabbi Vidal, rush to an audience with al-Ḥajjāj (Tetuán: Bennaïm Ms., no. 123):

Ellos en estas palabras, Rebbí Vidal subió al mechuar.

Mechuar represents Moroc. Ar. *mešwer*, *mšwar*, in an obsolescent meaning, ‘place where the king holds audience’ (Harrell 1966: s.v.), on the Cl. Ar. root š-w-r ‘to consult; take counsel’ (among other meanings).¹⁴

On seeing Rabbi Vidal, Ḥajjāj, in a characteristically emotional response, tears the turban from his own head and, as a sign of reverence and respect, throws it down, at the feet of the venerable rabbi (Tetuán: Bennaïm Ms., nos. 104, 123):

Y Hachach, como le vido, su resa a los pies de él fuera a echar.

Resa represents Moroc. Ar. *rezza* ‘turban (sans calotte).’ The turban was, in effect, an important emblem of personal status and an object of great respect. We must remember, however, that this is a poem composed and sung by Jews. Al-Ḥajjāj could hardly have retained authority among his Muslim followers, if he had, in reality, made such a generous gesture.

When the captives are released, they depart to the joyful sound of several musical instruments (Bennaïm Ms., nos. 104, 123):

con sonajas y aguales; violín tras de ellos van.

Sonajas are ‘tambourines.’¹⁵ Aguales reflects Moroc. Ar. *aqwāl*, *agwāl* ‘goblet drum’ (Alfaruqi 1981: 16); *gwal* ‘grand tambour’ (Mercier 1951: s.v.), on the Cl. root q-w-l ‘to speak, say, tell.’¹⁶ Can *violín* actually have been considered plural, on the model of Arabic and Hebrew masculine plural suffixes? It seems that this is indeed the case. I note that, in both manuscript copies, the verb is in the plural. One recalls such delightful cross-cultural creations as *ladronim*, *cristianim*, *yiddišim*, heard a generation ago among Eastern Sephardim in the United States.

The use of such abundant Arabic, Hebrew, and distinctively Judeo-Spanish words is, I believe, essential to our ballad’s traditional function in context. Totally bilingual in *Ḥakitá* and Moroccan Colloquial Arabic, earlier generations of *tetuaní* Jews would have been altogether at home with these words. Such specifically local vocabulary would have imparted a crucially important message. Indeed, the use of such words in the ballad would have been,

¹⁴ Today *mešwer*, -ar, has somewhat different meanings in Moroc. Ar.: ‘administration building, containing the offices of the king and his cabinet or advisors’ (Harrell 1966: s.v.); ‘champ de mars, consiergerie du Palais du Sultan’ (Mercier 1951: s.v.).

¹⁵ The J.-Sp. word came over into the J.-Ar. dialect of Fez, where it survived as *sonâza*, pl. *swânz* ‘tambour de basque’ (Brunot & Malka 1940: 67). In Standard Spanish, *sonajas* are the small metal cymbals or jingles placed around the circumference of the tambourine.

¹⁶ Compare Cl. Ar. *qawwāl* ‘itinerant singer and musician’ (Wehr & Cowan 1961: s.v.); ‘chanteur; poète ambulant’; *qawwāla* ‘improvisatrice’ (Dozy 1981: II, 429). The *aqwāl* is similar in form to the *darabukka*, at least in its Eastern varieties (Lane 1923: 195, 373-374). The word *derbuka* is also used in Moroc. Ar. to refer to a type of tambourine (‘grosse *ta’rija*). The *ta’rija*, like the Eastern *darabukka*, is a ‘tambourin long en terre cuite’ (Mercier 1951: s.v.). *El Mostadí* also includes various Spanish Arabisms and their presence may perhaps have been suggested by the ballad’s North African milieu, but they are essentially identical to the forms used in Standard Spanish and nothing indicates that these are not Hispano-Arabisms that entered the language long before the Sephardic Diaspora. Such are *azófar*, *alcrebite*, *alquitrán* (vv. 17b, 27b of our synthetic text). See Corominas & Pascual (1981-91: I, 435, 138, 213).

for the Jews of Tetuán, highly significant and culturally emblematic, a way of vigorously affirming that this particular song—recalling a critical moment in their city’s past—was indisputably and uniquely theirs, a reflection of their distinctive Moroccan Judeo-Spanish culture and identity. It was, then, altogether right that *El Mostadí* should be sung in the richly multilingual idiom of the Moroccan Jewish communities.

The anonymous Jewish *romancista* who composed *El Mostadí*, probably very soon after the events of 1740, had an extensive knowledge of the language, the poetic techniques, and the narrative components of the traditional *Romancero* and he (or she) knew well how to put them to very effective use: In situating *El Mostadí*’s departure between midnight and cockcrowing time, the narrative was immediately invested with a special interest, a mysterious, dramatic quality, and with the prestige of echoing the specialized language of a multiseular tradition, so dear to the Sephardim (Wolf & Hofmann 1945: nos. 190 & 174):

Media noche era por filo, los gallos querían cantar,
conde Claros, con amores, no podía reposar. [...]

Media noche era por filo, los gallos querían cantar,
cuando el infante Gaiferos salió de captividad. [...]

Just so (Tetuán: Armistead 1978: no. C19.5):

Media noche ya es pasada, los gallos quieren cantar,
cuando el Mostadí partiera de Tánger para Tetuán. [...].¹⁷

On the other hand, another version uniquely prefers to evoke the even more familiar and equally resonant formula of the morning of St. John (Tangier: Armistead 1978: no. C19.4):

Mañanita de domingo, mañanita de San Juan,
cuando partiera el Mostadí de la Turquía a la mar.¹⁸

The tripartite enumeration of *El Mostadí*’s army suggests an epic catalogue in miniature and, again echoing the venerable language of traditional balladry, it is enhanced by the formulaic evocation of uncounted and uncountable multitudes:

Cuando el Mostadí partiera de Constantina a la mar,
2 tres naciones con el trae, todas tres a su mandar:
árabes, rifeños, bárbaros, no se podían contar,
4 con trescientos mil negritos, que más no pudo llevar;
vestidos a la Turquía, relumbran como el cristal. [...].¹⁹

¹⁷ Magical events often occur at noon and midnight. Cockcrowing dissipates the magical aura of the predawn hours, phantoms return to the grave, and supernaturals of all sorts are constrained to abandon the human world. So the ghostly brothers, in *The Wife of Usher’s Well*, must depart at the first sound of cockcrowing: “Up then and crew the red, red cock, / And up and crew the gray; / The eldest to the youngest said, / ’Tis time we were away” (Child 1965: no. 79A; Wimberly 1959: 129). Note the Thompson motifs: D791.1.7. *Disenchantment at cockcrow*; E587.3. *Ghost (fairy, witch, dwarf) laid at cockcrow*; G225.0.6. *Witch’s familiar disappears at cockcrow* (Thompson 1955-58; Thiselton Dyer 1966: 45-46). For cockcrowing in Medieval Spanish usage, see Menéndez Pidal (1944-46: II, 700). ‘Cockcrowing time’ marked the new day in the rural U.S. up through the twentieth century. For other implications of cockcrowing, see Armistead & Silverman (1971: 284-293, esp. 291, n. 27).

¹⁸ It hardly seems necessary to notate the St. John’s day topos, but see Armistead, Silverman & Katz 1994: III, 84-85 and n. 19, 98, 255-56, nn. 16, 19.

¹⁹ Basically, I follow Armistead 1978: no. C19.2, but I take v. 2*b* from an unedited version in our collection (instead of the redundant ‘que más no pudo llevar’) and, in v. 3*b*, I adopt Benoliel’s unedited suggestion, instead

An alternative formulation of v. 3, having greater support in the contemporary tradition and equally venerable antecedents in epics and the *romancero viejo*, would be:

De carabín y rifiín, bárbaros no hay que contar.

This latter reading also represents an ancient formula, by which certain participants, of supposedly inferior status, are excluded from enumeration, as in the *Cantar de Mio Cid*: “Non son en cuenta, / sabet, las peonadas” (v. 918) or in the Sephardic tradition: “Aparte de chequeticos, / que no hay cuenta ni fin” (*Roncesvalles*: Armistead, Silverman & Katz 1994: 30, v. 11).

We cannot know whether the description of resplendently uniformed black soldiers originated here, in *El Mostadí*, or in some other ballad, but it is now a much favored formula in the North African Sephardic tradition, usually applied to servants or retainers.

In *Rosaflorida y Montesinos*:

Le regaré sus caminos de axófar y perlas finas;
le daré los cien negritos vestidos a la Turquía;

and *Jactancia del conde Vélez*:

Otro día en la mañana, negros y negras vistió,
vestidos a la Turquía, parecen rayos de sol.²⁰

In detailing the provisions of El Mostadí’s army, the soldiers are said to have plenty of drinking water: “y abastados van del agua, / por no beber de la mar” or “abastados de agua dulce, / por no beber de la mar” (Armistead 1978: nos. C19.2, 4). The verse surely echoes the enigmatic, but beautiful little ballad of *La princesa rescatada* (Armistead 1978: no. H14; Larrea Palacín 1952: 263)—to my knowledge an exclusively North African creation (Tetuán: uned.):

—¿Si queréis beber del vino o queréis comer del pan?
¿Queréis beber agua dulce, por no beber de la mar?
—Satisfecha’stoy del vino, satisfecha estoy del pan;
satisfecha di agua dulce; yo no bebo de la mar.

In several versions, the army, on arriving at its destination, must go seven times around the city’s walls before finding an entrance and so the ballad generates narrative tension by calling up yet another famous traditional topos(Tangier: Armistead 1978: no. C19.4):²¹

Siete veces la rodean, no encuentran por donde entrar

of ‘no hay que contar’. For topic verses indicating uncountable multitudes, see the numerous examples brought together in Armistead, Silverman & Katz (1994: III, 43, n. 18, and 242-243).

²⁰ *Rosaflorida* is from Larrea Palacín (1952: no. 36); *La jactancia* is from unedited versions of the Menéndez Pidal Archive (Armistead 1978: no. B22). In the sixteenth century, as Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq assures us, Turkish warriors were indeed most impressive in their resplendent attire: “The Turkish horseman presents a very elegant spectacle, mounted on a horse of Cappadocian or Syrian or some other good breed, with trappings and horse-cloths of silver spangled with gold and precious stones. He is resplendent in raiment of gold or silver, or else of silk or satin, or at any rate of the finest scarlet, or violet, or dark green cloth” (Busbecq 1927: 145; also pp. 5, 61). It is significant that such Turkisms as *clavedón* ‘seda bordada con hilos de oro o dorados’ and *sirma* ‘bordadura o encaje hecho con hilo de plata o hilo plateado’ (= T. *kılaptan*; *sirma*) have remained as favorite terms for luxurious clothing in the Judeo-Spanish *romances* down to the present day (Armistead 1978: III, 342, 349).

²¹ For the topic of magic circumambulation, see Armistead, Silverman & Katz (1982: 105-109; 1986: 263, n. 59; 1994: 163 & n. 55, 272, n. 52, 275, n. 54); 2005-2006: 542 (with numerous cross-references).

y a la vuelta de las ocho, vieron un portillo leal.
Allí estaba un viejito, la guarda de la ciudad.

The encounter with the aged gatekeeper leads to the introduction of yet another widely known traditional motif. If I may be allowed to invent a neo-Homeric term, instead of *teichoscopia* (looking down from the wall), this motif could be conveniently called *teicholéxis* (speaking down from the wall). Numerous *romances* center around just such an exchange between enemies, one in a besieging army, the other on the battlements of a threatened city: *Afuera, afuera, Rodrigo*; *Alora la bien cercada*; *Aviso del zamorano*; *Búcar sobre Valencia*; *Gaiferos y Melisenda*; *Gaiferos sale de cautividad*; and *Muerte de don Beltrán* all exemplify this favorite motif.²²

Particularly significant in this regard is *El cerco de Baza*, a splendid *romance fronterizo*, the exact circumstances of whose composition Menéndez Pidal has incisively uncovered for us. Here, just as in *El Mostadí*, a Muslim defender of the city attempts to dissuade the commander of a besieging army—in this case, no less a personage than Fernando el Católico—from pursuing his intentions, by enumerating the various obstacles that stand in his way. Here is the only surviving text as it has been preserved for us in the *Cancionero musical de Palacio* (Romeu Figueras 1965: II, no. 135).²³

Sobre Baça estava el rey, lunes, después de yantar.
2 Mirava las ricas tiendas, qu'estavan en su real;
mirava las huertas grandes y mirava el arraval;
4 mirava el adarve fuerte, que tenía la çiudad;
mirava las torres espesas, que no las puede contar.
6 Un moro tras un'almena començóle de fablar:
—Vete, el rey Fernando, no quieras aquí envernar,
8 que los fríos desta tierra no los podrás comportar.
Pan tenemos por diez años, mil vacas para salar;
10 veinte mil moros ay dentro, todos de armas tomar;
ocho çientos de cavallo para el escaramuçar;
12 siete caudillos tenemos tan buenos como Rroldán,
y juramento tienen fecho antes morir que se dar.

The situation in *El Mostadí* is without doubt strikingly similar, though the difficulties faced by the attackers do not, at any point, coincide with those suggested to King Fernando (Tangier: Armistead 1978: no. C19.3):

—Vuélvete tú, el Gran Turco, vuélvete tú a tu ciudad,
que una ciudad como ésta no la podrás tú alcanzar.
Siete ríos la rodean y el de los ocho es la mar;
las puertas tiene de pino, clavos a la cristiandad;
las cercas tiene de acero, de azófar la otra mitad.

²² See Wolf & Hofmann (1945: nos. 37, 44-45, 55, 79, 173-174, 185-185a). *Las almenas de Toro* embodies essentially the same situation, but there is no conversation (Armistead, Silverman & Katz 1982: 166-171). Concerning *El cerco de Baza*, see the following note. Yet another example is the narrative song of *La morica de Antequera* (Armistead & Monroe 1983-84).

²³ As Menéndez Pidal shows, *El cerco de Baza*—"de excelente estilo épico lírico"—was composed in September or October 1489, by a court minstrel, who probably participated personally in the siege and who continued "la costumbre de mirar la guerra desde el punto de vista enemigo" (Menéndez Pidal 1953: II, 32).

The destruction caused by El Mostadí's bombardment is described in a series of striking, sometimes brutal similes, some of which again echo the language of traditional balladry (Armistead 1978: nos. C19.1, 3):

Ya caían los mancebos como rayos en el mar;
 ya caían los casados como trigo en el costal;
 ya caían las doncellas sin medir y sin contar;
 ya caían criaturas como racimos a par.
 Mató a mancebos y alhasbas y a novios en la huppá;
 ya caían las preñadas como nueces al costal;
 ya caían los chiquitos como rayos a la mar.
 Allí cayeron los hombres como rayos a la mar;
 reventaron las preñadas cual gallinas en corral;
 allí murieron chiquitos cual palomas del palomar;
 allí cayeron doncellas como peras del peral.

The comparison *como nueces en el (al) costal* is usually applied to the idea of noise rather than quantity; as in *El castigo del sacristán*: “y le sonaban los güesos / como nueces en costal.”²⁴ The expression is probably more characteristic of general folkspeech than of the specific formulistic diction of ballads. *Como peras del peral*, on the other hand, is shared with the venerable Carolingian ballad about the battle of Roncesvalles, *Ya comienzan los franceses / con los moros pelear*, where Renaldo de Montalbán, suddenly possessed by his battle fury, slashes his way through the Moorish lines (Horrent 1951: 220).²⁵

Ya le toman los corajes que le solian tomar,
 assi se entra por los moros como segador por pan,
 assi derriba cabeças como peras dun peral.

Like many another ballad, *El Mostadí* has experienced several major contaminations. In a unique Tangier variant that transforms the Moroccan military expedition into a maritime raid against the coast of Portugal, the Muslim invaders bribe the watchman to open the city gates (Armistead 1978: no. C19.1):

—Por tu vida, porterito, tú nos des por donde entrar.
 Daréte cien marcos de oro; mi gente los ciento y más.—
 Porterito sin ventura ya los da por donde entrar.

These verses have obviously been modeled on the Moroccan form of *Conde Claros y la infanta*:

18 Por áhi pasó un pajecito, por ahí vino a pasar.
 —Por tu vida, el pajecito, así Dios te guarde de mal,
 20 en casa del rey mi padre, no descubras poridad.
 Darte he cien marcos de oro; conde Alvar los ciento y más.—
 22 Pajecito sin fortuna al rey se lo fue a contar.²⁶

²⁴ See Gil García (1944: 100-102; 1956-61: I, 150-151) and García Redondo (1985: 60). Compare the *Jardín de nobles doncellas* of Fray Martín de Córdoba: “[...] si pones dos o tres huessos en vna calabaza y la mueves, más ruýdo y son hazen que nuezes puestas en costal” (Goldberg 1974: 156).

²⁵ Concerning Renaldo de Montalbán's battle fury, see Armistead (1987: 258; 2000: 72-73).

²⁶ Synthetic version based on unedited texts at the Menéndez Pidal Archive and in our own collection. Compare Larrea Palacín (1952: I, no. 33, vv. 35-44).

A striking development in two of the Alcazarquivir versions is *El Mostadí's* seemingly incongruous juxtaposition with *El conde Niño*, thus bringing together ballads of radically different character: a warlike narrative, ultimately based on historical fact, and a story of tragic love, replete with magic, mythical elements. What has happened here is that the impressive enumeration of the bombardment's victims has suggested another enumeration, of a very different kind, in *El conde Niño*: the magical effects of Niño's thaumaturgical singing. Thus we find that, here, *El Mostadí's* furious cannonade does not result primarily in slaughter, but rather produces the surreal effects usually connected with marvelous song: doors open on their own, travelers are impelled to retrace their steps, birds fly from their nests, and—more ominously, but crucial to explaining the association of two such disparate narratives—pregnant women miscarry.²⁷

Here are the initial verses according to an unedited Alcazarquivir version at the Menéndez Pidal Archive (Armistead 1978: no. J1.34):

Ya se sale el Gran Turco de su montaña real,
 2 con quinientos mil moritos, que no puede llevar más,
 vestidos a la Turquía, relumbran más que el lunar.
 4 Ya cargaba las cien mulas de pólvora y alquitrán;
 disparaba los cien tiros, caía media ciudad;
 6 puentes, que estaban ceradas, se abrían de par en par;
 hombres, que están por caminos, se vuelven a la ciudad;
 8 pájaros en los sus nidos, los hizieran avolar;
 mujer, que estaba encinta, las hizieran arrevoltar. [...]

Martínez Ruiz's Alcazarquivir version of *El conde Niño* shows us these same verses in their original context (Martínez Ruiz 1963: no. 66):

Mañanita era mañana, mañanita de San Juan,
 2 mientras los cabayos beben, el conde dize un cantar:
 Puertas, qu'estaban serradas, abíanse de par en par;
 4 žente, qu'está por camino, volvíase a la sibdad;
 mujeres embarasadas y hazíalas arreboltar;
 6 pášaros de los sus nidos hizieranli volar.
 —Oyerís como lo canta la serena de la mare.²⁸ [...]

A bridge between these two narratives is the belief that excessively loud noise, just like the intense emotions supposedly brought forth by magic music, can cause pregnant women to miscarry. I do not find such an idea in standard sources of folkbelief, but it surfaces in widely separated areas and times, thus indicating, perhaps, a common belief in the abortive power of noise. Here are two Medieval Welsh instances, from the *Mabinogion*, referring to stentorian shouts. In *Lludd and Lleuelys*, three oppressions or plagues come upon the Island of Britain (Ford 1977: 113-114):

The second oppression was a cry that resounded every Mayday eve above every hearth in Britain; it went through the hearts of men and terrified them so much that men lost their color and their strength, women miscarried, sons and daughters lost their senses and all animals, forests, earth and waters were left barren.

²⁷ On the wondrous effects of magical singing in Pan-European ballads, see Armistead & Silverman (1971: 359-365) and Rogers (1980: 109-134).

²⁸ In v. 3b, *abíanse* (for *abriánse*) is the correct form in *Hakitía*. Compare *abió* (Bénichou 1968: 258, v. 11).

In *Culhwch and Olwen*, the young hero, Culhwch, seeking to enter King Arthur's court, threatens to utter three prodigious cries, with catastrophic results, if he is not admitted forthwith:

I will give three screams before this gate so that they shall be heard equally at the headland of Penwith in Cornwall and in the lowland of Din Sol in the North and in Esgeir Oerfel in Ireland, and all the pregnant women in this court shall miscarry, and as for those that are not pregnant their entrails shall turn over disastrously within them, so that they shall never be pregnant from today on.²⁹

From the other extreme of Europe and at a much later date, come the following examples from twentieth-century Bosnian oral epics, where, just as in *El Mostadí*, the miscarriage is brought on by the stentorian detonation of a gigantic cannon. David Bynum summarizes the text of *Sila Osmanbeg and Luka Pavišić* (Bynum 1979: 58):

Osmanbeg levies an army by firing the cannon on the battlements of Osik, this being the conventional signal for the soldiery of Bosnia to present itself for war. The tremendous sound of the cannon breaks window glass and will cause any gravid woman to miscarry.

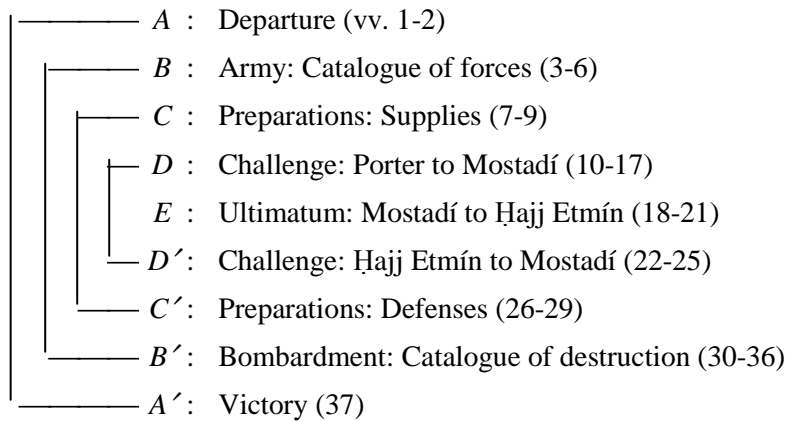
Identical results are brought on by two gigantic cannons touched off at the Sultan of Bagdad's arrival in Istanbul, in *King Rákóczy Besieges Temišvar* (Bynum 1993: 238):

And when he sailed into the harbour at Stamboul, guns roared from the city and the two great cannon, Vurtutmez and Hatalbakmaz, replied from the flagship. Ramparts were always burst asunder where their rounds fell, for what they smite cannot be healed. Wherever there were panes of glass along the waterfront, they fell shattered into the sea. Any creature that chanced to be in the vicinity pregnant with young miscarried. In this manner, they announced his coming, and the young along the waterfront perished because of it.

Many additional critical problems involving the ballad of *El Mostadí* remain to be considered. Some will be taken up in my forthcoming study, in Vol. VIII of our *Folk Literature of the Sephardic Jews*. What I would like to do at this point is to look briefly at how *El Mostadí* is put together as a poem and what its importance may be for the history and development of the *Romancero* in oral tradition.

In assembling my synthetic version of *El Mostadí*, I purposely avoided all preconceived notions of narrative structure. What emerged—as dictated by the best texts that have come down to us and by the underlying historical episode—turns out to be a coherent and quite well structured poem. If we accept such a theoretical construct as having a certain, if highly tentative validity, we can intuit a ballad having the following components:

²⁹ Jackson (1976: 201-202); FORD (1977: 124); GANZ (1976: 138). Stith Thompson, remitting to Tom Peete Cross' *Motif-Index of Early Irish Literature*, lists the motif: T581.6. *Noise of battle precipitates birth* (Thompson 1955-58; Cross 1939: 495).



Thus *B* and *B'* involve catalogues; *C* and *C'* tell of preparations; and *D* and *D'* are challenges. At the center of the narrative (component *E*) is El Mostadí's ultimatum to the *alcaide*, Sidi Ḥajj Muḥammad al-Tamīmī. The expedition, launched in *A*, achieves its objective in *A'*. *El Mostadí* has emerged from my efforts to reconstruct its gravely eroded narrative as embodying a paradigmatic ballad structure, the ring composition, characteristic of innumerable other ballads, not only in the Hispanic tradition, but in the Anglo-Scottish tradition as well.³⁰ Whatever limitations such a hypothetical reconstruction may have—and it certainly has them—it seems clear, I believe, that *El Mostadí* must once have been a splendid, well crafted poem and, if we take into account the best texts that have come down to us, it deserves a more honored place in the Judeo-Spanish and the Pan-Hispanic repertoire than has been accorded to it up to now.

If we look at *El Mostadí* from the perspective of its position in the history of Hispanic traditional balladry, it also takes on a considerable degree of importance. *El Mostadí* bespeaks the persistence, the longevity of the tradition and its creative impulse.

We are, of course, very aware of the tradition as an ongoing creative process, in which ancient ballads, many of them of medieval origin, are created and recreated, often in brilliantly innovative ways, by consecutive generations of singers, while, at the same time, usually keeping intact essential features and components of their original narrative structures.

The medieval or sixteenth-century narrative thus remains immediately recognizable in its twentieth-century avatar. And so, to our delight, we perceive the “same” ballad that was already being sung five hundred years ago. But *El Mostadí* is something else and its implications are intensely interesting for any study of the genre. As a poem that was created—out of whole cloth—soon after 1740, *El Mostadí* offers us the work of an eighteenth-century Sephardic balladeer, a balladeer who still had total control of the formulaic language, the topoi, the themes, and the poetic devices of the *romancero viejo* and who could successfully capture, for the representation of a contemporary event, the heroic resonances of the old traditional language and very effectively use them for his own poetic purposes.

³⁰ Comparable examples of ring composition are exemplified in various ballads studied in previous volumes. See, among others, *Búcar sobre Valencia* and *El sueño de doña Alda* (Armistead, Silverman & Katz 1986: 252; 1994: 151; 2005-2006: 545 [with cross-references]). Note also Armistead (1983: 19-21; 1990: 275-276). For analogous structures in Anglo-Scottish ballads, see Buchan (1972: 132-144) and McCarthy (1990: 60, 62, 79-80, 106, 110-111). See now also Mary Douglas' splendid monograph (2007).

In *El Mostadí*, we witness the tradition's continued survival as a vehicle for the creation of original, contemporary, *noticiero* poetry, an aspect of its creativity, which, for want of sufficient prime materials, has been neglected up to now.

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