Two Portuguese Crypto-Jewish Ballads:
A Passagem do Mar Vermelho and *A Pedra Mara*

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In Spain, crypto-Judaism began in 1391, when the pogroms that started in Seville spread to the rest of the country, and thousands of Jews were forced to accept Christianity from one moment to the next in order to save their lives. Although they had to go to church and to behave publicly as Christians, these New Christians or "Marranos" (pigs), as the Christian majority called them, became crypto-Jews, preserving and transmitting the faith of their ancestors to their children and grandchildren secretly, at home. This became much more difficult after 1481, when the Spanish Inquisition, which had been approved by Rome in 1478, began to actively function. In 1492, all Jews who refused to convert were expelled. About 30,000 found refuge in Portugal, doubling their numbers in that country.[1] Tired from their difficult journey, many settled along the border, not far from the places where they first entered Portuguese territory.

King Manuel I wished to marry Princess Isabel, daughter of the Catholic Monarchs. Eventually he gave in to the pressure of his future in-laws and the princess, who refused to become his wife as long as there were "heretics" in the country. Contrary to what some scholars believe, however, the Portuguese expulsion of 1497 was really a hoax. The king was too intelligent to lose such a productive sector of the population and, when about 20,000 Jews gathered together in Lisbon (Rossio) to board ships in order to leave, all but eight were baptized by force (Herculano I, 76-77). It is unknown what happened to the 40,000 Jews scattered throughout the provinces. The country, however, was officially declared to be completely Christian and Portuguese crypto-Judaism was born. Manuel hoped that the New Christians would eventually assimilate. Therefore, he resisted the pressure put upon him by a large sector of the population, who wanted them to be punished for Judaizing, and he forbade all inquiries regarding their religious practices. Although there were thousands of crypto-Jews in the country, the Portuguese Inquisition was not approved by Rome until 1536, fifteen years after Manuel's death, and it did not begin its activities until 1540.

Some New Christians managed to escape abroad, founding Jewish communities in

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[1] The statistics on the Jewish population in Portugal at the end of the fifteenth century are based on the tax that those who were married had to pay. We will never know for certain how many Jews came from Spain. However, the estimate done by Maria José Pimenta Ferro Tavares is the best, as it is based upon the head tax that Spanish refugees had to pay in order to enter the country. Furthermore, we have documents that show how much was collected at the points of entry. The estimates of the chroniclers of the time, which are truly ridiculous, range from 80,000 to 100,000 people, and Herculano, acting as a true Romantic, does not hesitate to increase the number to more than 260,000 (see Tavares 1982, 270-71, n. 278; Kayserling 98, n. 7).

Bordeaux, London, Amsterdam, and other cities (Azevedo 359-430). With the union of the Portuguese and Spanish crowns (1580-1640), the number of those who moved to Spain and its American colonies was so great that the word "Portuguese" became practically synonymous with "Jew."[2] As the years passed, the vast majority of New Christians who remained in Portugal became assimilated, but, around 1961, Artur Carlos de Barros Basto, an army captain who had converted to the faith of his ancestors and tried to reestablish Judaism in the country, estimated that there were still 4,000 to 5,000 crypto-Jews in some border areas of Trás-os-Montes, Beira Alta, and Beira Baixa (Friedenberg 90) –i.e., more or less in those same towns and villages where great numbers of Spanish refugees had settled in 1492. Isolation, fear of the Inquisition, and the pressures of the Catholic environment caused secrecy to become an integral part of their faith. They believed that a "Jew" must not reveal his faith and that, therefore, they are the only true Jews.[3]

Notwithstanding their secretiveness, however, their neighbors, having inherited memories from earlier generations, knew perfectly well who they were, that they did not work on Saturdays, and that they celebrated days such as Yom Kippur ("Dia Puro" [Pure Day] or "Dia do Perdão" [Day of Forgiveness]) and Passover.[4] Their liturgy does not seem to be directly related to mainstream Judaism (the Inquisition forbade books in Hebrew), consisting of prayers and ballads that have been orally transmitted from generation to generation, even though some families zealously preserve prayer manuscripts that appear to date from the eighteenth century.[5] The number of prayers is quite large, and many of them are to be used on specific occasions.[6] It is possible to demonstrate that some are variants of prayers that date back at least to the sixteenth, seventeenth, and early eighteenth centuries, since the Inquisitors recorded everything in great detail, including the prayers of their victims.[7] As for the ballads,[8] only six

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[2] Azevedo 204-06, 233-35, 438-40; Caro Baroja I: 360-69; Domínguez Ortiz 78, 80, 85-90, 95.

[3] The same phenomenon has occurred with the Catholics of Japan who, having been equally forced to practice their faith secretly, believe that they are the only true Catholics ("Japan's Crypto-Christians"). At the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, about sixty people from Belmonte decided to adhere to Judaism publicly and founded a synagogue, causing some friction with other crypto-Jews in the same town, who regarded them as apostates.

[4] Schwarz 17; Basto 1928a-b; Paulo 1985, 117. For a recent study on the crypto-Jews in Portugal, see Dias; Canelo 1996 is also useful.

[5] This suggests that the crypto-Jews did not dare to put their prayers into writing before the 1740s, when the Inquisition was forced to abandon its activities against them thanks to the Marquis of Pombal (see Azevedo 346-58; Saraiva 202-09).

[6] Schwarz 47-91; Machado 1952, 534-658; Vasconcelos 162-235; Paulo 1985, 59-109; Canelo 1987, 95-164; Garcia 181-204. Between 1928 and 1947, many crypto-Jewish prayers were also published in *Ha-Lapid* (1927-58), a Jewish magazine edited by Artur Carlos de Barros Basto.

[7] For prayers culled from Inquisitorial trials, see Azevedo 484-86; Schwarz 95-107 (from the same trial as Azevedo, but with more prayers transcribed); Freitas 1952, 1954; Coelho I: 199, 201-02, 204, 210-11, 216, 223-24; Mea; Tavares 1987, 96. In a splendid book, Gitlitz also gathered together many Portuguese and Spanish prayers culled from various sources (443-99).

[8] Ferré examined them, albeit not in great detail (1987).

have survived:

• (1) *O Sacrifício de Isaac*, which is exclusively crypto-Jewish in Portugal, but also exists in Spain and among the Sephardim,[9] in Judeo-Spanish, a form of archaic Castilian with words from Hebrew and other languages, and is spoken by the Jews exiled from Spain in 1492. There is also an early Castilian version, printed around 1535.[10] This suggests that the poem was originally in Spanish, since Castile constituted an area of dissemination because of its central position in the Peninsula. However, as it incorporates Midrashic elements (from the Jewish oral tradition) that Christians were unlikely to know, the prototype was probably composed by a Jew.[11]

• (2) *Jonas*[12] and (3) *Daniel na Cova dos Leões*[13] are exclusively crypto-Jewish and need to be studied stylistically and in relation to the corresponding Biblical and Midrashic versions.

• (4) *No Céu Está um Castelo*[14] is an excellent example of Judeo-Christian syncretism and the vicissitudes of the oral tradition: it is based on a Christmas ballad which, in turn, constitutes a contrafact of *Rosaflorida*, a Carolingian ballad (i.e., derived from the French epic).[15]

• The last two crypto-Jewish ballads are (5) *A Passagem do Mar Vermelho* and (6) *A Pedra Mara*. The latter survived thanks to its incorporation into the former, that is, as a contamination. These are the ballads that I intend to examine in the present paper. The representative version that follows is from Vilarinho dos Galegos (Mogadouro, Bragança):

> Aos catorze de la luna do primeiro mês do ano,
> 2   parte o povo do Egipto com Israel, seu irmano.
> Cantigas iam cantando, ao Senhor iam louvando.
> 4   Louvavam o Senhor com todo o seu coração.
> —Aonde nos trazes, Moisés? A este despovoado
> 6   onde não há pão nem vinho, nem pastor com ganado?
> Pede ao alto Senhor que nos leve a nossas casas.
> 8   Moisés, com vara alçada, bateu no mar salgado;
> abriram-se doze carreiros para passar o seu povo.
> 10   Passaram a são e salvo porque o Senhor o mandou;
> passaram o Mar Vermelho para a terra da promissão.
> 12   O povo, aflito de sede, ao céu clamava por água.

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[9] For bibliography, see Fontes 1997, I: 90; Ferré et al. 2000, nos. 247-48, edit two Portuguese versions, indicating their numerous reprintings.
[10] See Catalán 65-66; Rodríguez-Moñino 292-93
[11] Studies: Barugel; Catalán 56-75; Fontes 1994.
[12] Bibliography: Fontes 1997, II: 92-93.
[13] Bibliography: Fontes 1997, II: 93-96.
[14] Fontes 1997, II: 101.
[15] Fontes 2000a, 56-61; for an apparent re-Christianization of the crypto-Jewish adaptation, see Galhoz 1987-88, no. 479.

                   Adiante vai Moisés com a santa vara alçada;

14   por mandado do Senhor bateu numa pedra mara
               [..................................] e lançou água clara.

16   Bendito seja o Senhor, para sempre engrandecido;
               de uma pedra lançou água   para aquele povo tão aflito.

18   Moisés, profeta santo do Senhor amado, querido,
               imperador da nação, destruidor do Egipto,

20   pede por misericórdia àquele Deus infinito
               que nos dê o seu bem, nos leve ao seu reino,

22   [...............................] nos livre do cativeiro.
               Conhecei, irmanos da irmandade,
               o Senhor criou os quatro elementos:

24   pó, vento, água, sombra de paredes.
               Assim como nos livrou
               de tão grandes perigos,
               nos livre dos inimigos.

26   O Senhor nos defenda
               de trabalhos e perigos.
               Quando formos acometidos,
               nós sejamos vencedores

28   e os inimigos vencidos.
               Permita Deus assim seja
               e os anjos digam amén.
               Amén, Senhor. Ao céu vá. (Machado 1952: 39-40 [no. 56])[16]

    I know of nine versions of this ballad, including the one above. Sá (235)[17] and the Abbot of Baçal (Alves 1909-47, VII: 709-10)[18] published two from Vilarinho dos Galegos; Vasconcelos published one from Covilhã (212) and another from Penamacor (Castelo Branco) (233-34). The remainder, all from Belmonte (Castelo Branco), were edited by Schwarz (72-73),[19] Ferré, et.al. 1987 (no. 91), Maria Antonieta Garcia (80), and Cruz (no. 9).

    Known as "A Oração da Água," this ballad is used during Passover, which commemorates the exodus from Egypt and is celebrated, as the first verse indicates, fourteen days after the appearance of the moon that marks the beginning of the first month in the Hebrew calendar (Nissan). Since this is a lunar calendar, the date usually

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[16] Reprintings: Paulo 1969, 10-11; Paulo 1971, 78-80; Azevedo 129-31; Fontes 1997, II: 98-99; Machado 1998, 127-29; Ferré et al. 2000, no. 249. English translation: Novinsky and Paulo 80-81. I have regularized the orthography and the punctuation in this citation and in those that follow.

[17] Reprintings: Schwarz 1925, 85; Schwarz 1993, 105; Ferré et al. 2000, no. 250.

[18] I was able to use this version thanks to a photocopy sent by my good friend, Maria Aliete Galhoz.

[19] Reprintings: Paulo 1969, 18-19; Canelo 1987, 107 (omits two verses: "Louvemos ao Senhor / que é o Senhor do nosso cabo", and where it says "todas elas são," read: "todas quantas elas são"); Ferré et al. 2000, no. 251.

falls in April, but it can also be in March. During the week of the celebration, crypto-Jews abstain from meat, leavened foods, and they eat unleavened bread, stating that "quando os judeus sairam do Egipto, o pão não teve tempo para fermentar" (Garcia 79). According to Morais Machado, in Vilarinho dos Galegos the ballad is recited during the seven days of Easter (1952, 39), but Schwarz states that the feast lasts an extra day in Belmonte (32),[20] and that the appropriately named "Oração da Água" is recited during a ritual in which the crypto-Jews gather together next to any nearby stream, striking the water with olive branches as they recite the verse where Moses strikes the sea with his "vara alçada" (v. 8) (35). There are variations, however. Maria Antonieta Garcia explains that, also in Belmonte, the ballad is recited while people kneel, with their hands together, during the preparation of the unleavened bread, while "a mulher mais idosa, que orienta o serviço, traça a água [para amassar] três vezes com colher" (80). In Covilhã, the ballad was also recited when the unleavened bread was being prepared (Vasconcelos 212). In Belmonte, however, the ballad was used during the ritual of "cutting the water" (cortar as águas) next to a stream or a river, which consists of tracing the water with an olive branch while saying: "Nós partimos as águas como o nosso Santo Moisés as abriu para passar o nosso povo."[21] The ritual seems to have disappeared due to the lack of isolated locations where it could be performed secretly (Garcia 82), but Canelo maintains that the ritual continues to be performed next to the Zêzere river, and that it is only when someone is unable to go to the river that the ceremony "é feita em quintais de algumas casas que para o efeito possuem uma pequena presa de água que então é aberta para a água correr" (1987, 107-08).

Although based on the Bible, *A Passagem do Mar Vermelho* includes folkloric elements taken from the Midrash, and this, together with the fact that the ballad is also preserved by the Sephardim of the Eastern Mediterranean, suggests that it was originally composed in Spanish, before the diaspora of 1492. The first verse is Biblical: shortly before the exodus from Egypt, God tells Moses and Aaron that, henceforth, that month would be the first one in the calendar of the Israelites, and orders them not to work and to eat unleavened bread for seven days (*Ex*. 12:1-15). The verses in which the people sing and praise the Lord upon leaving Egypt (3-4) are not found either in the Bible or the Midrash. However, since they are also preserved among the Sephardim ("Kuando'l puevlo de Israel / de Ayifto salieron kantando, / kon ižos i kon mužeres, / šir širim ivan kantando"; Armistead and Silverman 1979, 131, vv. 1-2),[22] it is likely that they are folkloric and date back to the Middle Ages. In the

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[20] They count the day before, when the people get ready.

[21] There are no saints in Judaism; the transformation of Old Testament figures such as Moses, Queen Esther, and Tobias into saints is due to the influence of the Catholic environment (Paulo 1971, 80-81; Schwarz 28).

[22] I cite this version in full below. Cf. Armistead and Silverman 1971, nos. 9a-b; Attias, nos. 79-79a; Benmayor, no. 8a (the informant, Leo Azose, from Marmara [Turkey], is the same one who recited the version quoted above); Molho 255.

Portuguese ballad, the people begin to complain about Moses immediately for no apparent reason (vv. 5-7),[23] because the crypto-Jews forgot a verse that the Sephardic tradition still preserves, in which Moses realizes that the Egyptians are coming after them: "Vido venir a Paró / kon un pendón koronado" (Armistead and Silverman 1979, 131, v. 7).[24] This detail derives from the Bible. Seeing the Egyptians, the Israelites, who had already reached the Red Sea, say to Moses: "Were there no burial places in Egypt that you had to bring us out here to die in the desert? Why did you do this to us?" (*Ex.* 14:11). It is then that God tells Moses to raise his staff and divide the sea for the Israelites cross. The ballad specifies that twelve paths were opened (v. 9), a detail which, though lacking in the Bible, is found in the Midrash: "Twelve paths opened up, one for each of the tribes; the water became as transparent as glass, and each tribe could see the others" (Ginzberg III: 22; see also Hamos 206).

The Portuguese version ends with verse 11: after crossing the Red Sea, the people go "para a terra da promissão." Vv. 12-17 deal with a different subject, refering to the Biblical episode where, having traveled through the desert for three days without water, the Jews arrive at a place called Mara. There was water there, but it was so bitter that they could not drink it. God then told Moses to throw a certain piece of wood into the water, making it drinkable (*Ex.* 15:22-25). At Raphidim, when the people began to ask for water again, God told Moses to strike a rock in Horeb with his staff, and that water would flow from it (*Ex.* 17:1-6). Since vv. 16-17 merely express thanks for the miracle, without any narrative elements, this might represent a later addition. On the other hand, the allusion to the affliction of the people is repeated in the first and last verses, which suggests that the passage could derive from the original ballad.

Whatever the case may be, by referring to the rock as "pedra mara" (v. 14b), the

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[23] The expression "onde não haja pão nem vinho" (v. 6a) is formulaic. Compare the following incantation against thunder:

> Santa Bártola se vestiu e se calçou,
> o caminho de Nosso Senhor andou.
> Jesus Cristo preguntou:
> —Onde vais, Bárbola?
> 5   —Vou juntar a trevoada
> que anda pelo mundo espalhada,
> p'r'àquele Monte Mourinho,
> *onde não haja pão nem vinho*,
> nem bezerrinhos a mamar,
> 10   mais do que uma serpente com sete filhos,
> sem ter nada que lhe dar
> mais do que a água do trovão,
> água de maldição. . . . (Fontes 1987, no. 1529)

For other examples with the same expression, see Fontes 1979, no. 654; 1980, nos. 305, 306, 309; 1987, no. 1528; Galhoz 2001, 138.

[24] This verse also appears, with variants, in the versions cited in note 22.

crypto-Jewish ballad combines both episodes into one. Note that, whereas *A Passagem do Mar Vermelho* rhymes predominantly in *á-o*, four of the six verses in question (12-15) rhyme in *á-a*. This suggests that they derive from another ballad, and that it survived thanks to a contamination, as often happens in the oral tradition. In fact, the combination of the two episodes into one constitutes a good example of condensation, another aspect of oral transmission. What we have here, then, is another ballad, which I have entitled *A Pedra Mara.*

This contamination appears in another three versions (Sá 235; Alves 1909-47, VII: 709; Garcia 80). The comparison given below shows the version we have just examined (I renumber the verses) and the one published by Mário Sá:

O povo, aflito de sede,	E o povo, aflito à sede,
ao céu clamava por água.	ao céu clamava por água.
Adiante vai Moisés	Adiante vai Moisés
com a santa vara alçada;	com a sua vara alçada;
5 por mandado do Senhor	
bateu numa pedra mara	bateu numa penha magna
e lançou água clara.	e lançou água clara. (Sá 235)
Bendito seja o Senhor,	
para sempre engrandecido;	
10 de uma pedra lançou água	
para aquele povo tão aflito.	
(Machado 1952, 39-40 [no. 56])	

As we can see, Sá's version is much shorter, omitting verses 5 and 8-11. The "pedra mara" (also found in Alves) which refers to the Biblical Mara now becomes a "penha magna" (big cliff). In Garcia's version, which is equally abbreviated, this turns into a "pedra mármore" (rock of marble):

O povo, aflito à sede,
ao céu clamava água.
Adiante vai Moisés
com a sua vara lançada;
bateu numa *pedra mármore*
e lançou água clara. (Garcia 80)

Naturally, the episodes of Mara and Horeb had to be clearly separated in the original ballad. Their combination into one, I repeat, is due to the condensation process previously mentioned, and the expressions "penha magna" and "pedra mármore" represent examples of the corruptions that also come about as a result of oral transmission.

Since the Portuguese ballad continues with prayers, it is preferable to compare first

the portion that deals with the crossing of the Red Sea (vv. 1-11) with its Sephardic congener, *El paso del Mar Rojo*, leaving the examination of the prayers for later. Except for the first verse (Attias, no. 79), the version that follows was sung by Leo Azose, an immigrant from Marmara (Turkey) settled in Seattle on August 30, 1958:

<div style="text-align:center">

A catorce era del mes, el primo mes en el año,
2   kuando'l puevlo de Israel de Ayifto salieron kantando.
Kon ižos i kon mužeres, šir širim ivan kantando.
4   Unos yevavan la leña, otros yevavan el amasado;
los ombres a las kriaturas de los brasos i de las manos.
6   Las mužeres yevavan el oro, k'es la koza más liviana.
Boltó la kara Mošé, por ver kuánto ivan pasado.
8   Vido venir a Paró kon un pendón koronado.
—¿Ande mos trušites, Mošé, a murir en estos kampos,
10   a murir sin subultura o en la mar aogados?
—No vos espantés, ğudiós, ni seáš despasensiados.
12   Azé orasión a Él; yo aré por el otro lado.
Tantas fueron las orasiones ke suvieron a el Dio alto.
14   Una bos salió de los sielos; a Mošé lo ivan yamando.
—Ven akí tú, mi ižo Mošé, asme este mandado.
16   Toma esta vara, Mošé, toma esta vara en tu mano.
Parte la mar por doğe kaminos i kita a tu puevlo a salvo.
18   Los ğudiós ivan pasando; los mitsrim se ivan aogando.
No kedó más ke Paró, de la garganta enkolgado.
20   Ke miremos sus maravías, ke mos aze el Dio d'en alto.
El es uno i non segundo; El es Patrón de todo el mundo.
(Armistead and Silverman 1979, 131)

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This version has 21 verses, and the assonance in *á-o* is practically perfect.[25] Their Portuguese counterpart has only 11 verses whose rhyme is rather defective; 5 verses (4, 7, 9, 10, 11), that is, almost half of the ballad, no longer have any rhyme.[26] The Spanish words "irmano" (v. 2) and "ganado" (v. 6) have been preserved for good reason, since the first one makes it possible to preserve the rhyme (the Ptg. "irmão" would not) and the second one to regularize the meter, since the Portuguese equivalent, "gado," has one syllable less. These two words, of course, also help to confirm that, besides being originally Jewish, as the Midrashic elements that it preserves suggest, the ballad was probably first composed in Castilian.[27]

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[25] The only exceptions are vv. 6 and 21, and the latter probably represents an addition.

[26] However, although not in rhyme position, the verse "Passaram a são e salvo" (10a) corresponds to the Sephardic "i kita a tu puevlo a salvo" (17b), which rhymes. In other words, the verse in question has been displaced.

[27] Note, however, that border areas are frequently bilingual, and that many of the ballads still sung in

The following are the narrative elements that can be observed in the Portuguese and Sephardic versions of this ballad:

(a) It begins with the departure of the people from Egypt on the fourteenth day of the first month of the year, and some Sephardic versions specify that it is the month of Nissan.[28] Contrary to the second Sephardic verse, which reads "kuando'l puevlo de Israel / de Ayifto salieron kantando," the corresponding "parte o povo do Egipto / com Israel, seu irmano" does not make much sense, which further confirms the deterioration of the Portuguese ballad.

(b) The people sing in both ballads, but the Sephardic "šir širim" or "Song of Songs" (v. 3)[29] consists of songs of praise in the Portuguese version (v. 3).

(c) The Sephardic details concerning the items that the Israelites take with them –wood, dough for bread and gold (vv. 4-6)– are missing in the crypto-Jewish ballad, which also omits the detail where

(d) Moses (or the Israelites) looks back and sees Pharaoh in pursuit (vv. 7-8).[30]

(e) In the Sephardic ballad, the scared Israelites complain to Moses, asking him if he brought them there to die or to be drowned in the sea (vv. 9-10). Most of the versions substitute the word "kampos" with "despoblado" or "despovlado,"[31] thus corresponding to the "despovoado" (v. 5) of the Portuguese ballad.

(f) In the Sephardic ballad Moses answers the complaints by telling the people to pray, adding that he himself will do the same (vv. 11-13).

(g) Then a voice from heaven is heard (v.14). These last two details are missing in the Portuguese ballad, but

(h) God's command to Moses to take the staff and divide the water into twelve paths for the people to pass safely (vv. 15-17) is preserved (vv. 8-11), albeit in indirect discourse. The Portuguese *Passagem do Mar Vermelho* ends here, omitting the Sephardic passages in which

(i) the Egyptians[32] drown (v. 18) and

(j) only Pharaoh survives, hanging by the throat (v. 19), as well as

(k) the praise to God expressed in the last two verses (20-21).

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those areas often include Spanish words.

[28] Cf. Attias, no. 79a; Benmayor, no. 8b; Molho 255; Armistead and Silverman 1971, nos. 9a-b.

[29] From the Heb. 'šir ha-širim' (Armistead and Silverman 1979, 131, n. 22).

[30] As we have already seen in Armistead 1971, nos. 9a-b, Attias, nos. 79-79a, and Molho 255 the Israelites are the ones who look back.

[31] Attias, no. 79a; Benmayor, no. 8b-c; Molho 255; Armistead and Silverman 1971: 9a-b.

[32] 'Mitsrim,' from the Heb. 'misrim' (Armistead and Silverman 1979, 131, n. 22).

Besides reducing the ballad to only eleven verses, five of which have no rhyme, the Portuguese version only retains four (a, b, e, h) of the eleven narrative stages found in its Sephardic counterpart. Notwithstanding its use as part of a ritual, the crypto-Jewish ballad deteriorated considerably. This is probably because of the danger involved in transmitting it. The ballad survives in Trás-os-Montes and the two Beira provinces, areas where the oral tradition is extremely strong. In fact, Trás-os-Montes boasts the richest oral tradition in the country, probably because ballads were sung not just at home, but also during agricultural activities such as harvesting and threshing cereals. Whoever dared to sing such a ballad publicly, however, ran the risk of being denounced to the Inquisition.

Let us now examine the sources of the Sephardic ballad. As we already know, the reference to the fourteenth day of the first month in the Jewish calendar (v. 1) is of biblical origin (*Ex*. 12:1-15), since it was during the night of the day that the Jews got ready to leave Egypt (*Ex*. 12:31-35), right after celebrating the first Passover. The songs that the people sing (2b, 3b) are not mentioned either in the Bible or the Midrash but, since they also appear in the Portuguese ballad (vv. 3-4), their traditional character seems assured. "Amasado" (v. 4b), that is, the dough for the bread, comes from the Bible. Since the Egyptians wanted the Hebrews to leave in a hurry, "the people, therefore, took their dough before it was leavened, in their kneading bowls wrapped in their cloaks on their shoulders" (*Ex*. 12:34). The gold that the women carried is also mentioned in the Bible. Upon revealing to Moses that He was going to send a tenth plague to the Egyptians (the death of the first born), God commands the following: "Instruct your people that every man is to ask his neighbor, and every woman her neighbor, for silver and gold articles and for clothing" (*Ex*. 11:2). The Hebrews manage to get these things because "the Lord indeed made the Egyptians well disposed toward his people" (*Ex*. 11:3). As we have seen, in the version cited above, Moses is the one who realizes that Pharaoh's army is in their pursuit (vv. 7-8). In most versions, as in the Bible, it is the people who become aware of this:[33] "Pharaoh was already near when the Israelites looked up and saw that the Egyptians were on the march in pursuit of them. In great fright they cried out to the Lord" (*Ex*. 14:10). When we examined the Portuguese ballad (vv. 5-7), we saw that the complaints of the people against Moses (vv. 9-10) derived from the Bible (*Ex*. 14:11). Moses' reply (v. 11) is biblical as well: "Fear not!...the Lord will win for you today" (*Ex*. 14:13-14). However, the verse where Moses demands that the people pray and tells them that he will do the same (12) is Midrashic, for Moses says to them: "Ye shall bless, praise, extol, adore, and glorify Him that is the Lord of war!" (Ginzberg III: 15). Like the ballad (v. 13), the Midrash also states that God hears their prayer: "The Lord hearkened unto their prayer, for which He had but been waiting" (Ginzberg III: 15). In the Bible, there is no prayer after the complaints of the people. When Moses tells them not to fear anything, God commands him immediately to raise his

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[33] See note 30.

staff over the sea and to divide it (*Ex*. 14:16). In the ballad, as we saw, the parting of the sea into twelve paths (v. 17) derives from the Midrash (Ginzberg III: 22). The verse according to which all the Egyptians drowned as the Hebrews were passing (18) is inspired by the Bible, where all the Egyptians perish ("Not a single one of them escaped"; *Ex*. 14:28). However, Pharaoh escapes in the ballad, albeit hanging by the throat (v. 19). This version comes from the Midrash, where "all the Egyptians were drowned. Only one was spared –Pharaoh himself" (Ginzberg III: 29). The Midrash then continues on with the angel Gabriel: "Gabriel descended and laid an iron chain about Pharaoh's neck" (Ginzberg III: 29).[34] The last two verses (20-21), which constitute an abbreviated song of praise, are inspired by the Bible, albeit in a much longer song in which Moses and the Israelites thank God for the miracle that He had just performed for their sake (*Ex*. 15:1-21).

As one would expect, the ballad is based in large part on the Bible. However, it also includes nothing less than five details from Jewish oral tradition:

(a) the songs that the people sing upon leaving Egypt;
(b) Moses' command to the Hebrews to pray to God for protection against the Egyptians who pursue them;
(c) the fact that God is said to hear their prayer;
(d) the parting of the sea into twelve paths;
(e) and Pharaoh's escape, even though hanging by the throat.

The Portuguese ballad includes two of these non-biblical details (a, d). Unlike the others, the first one is not documented in the Midrash, but its existence in both the Sephardic and the Portuguese traditions suggests that it dates far back in time, preceding the diaspora of 1492. Finally, since Christians were unlikely to be familiar with the Midrash, there is no question that the ballad was originally composed by Jews.

Let us now return to the last part of the Portuguese ballad. After its contamination with *A Pedra Mara*, the rendition of *Passagem do Mar Vermelho* cited above continues with a prayer that, like the last two verses of *Pedra Mara*, rhymes predominantly in *í–o* (vv. 18-20, 25-28). The prayer begins by invoking Moses, asking him to intercede with God to deliver the crypto-Jews from their present captivity, just as He had delivered them from Egypt before. It ends by asking God to help and

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[34] The Midrash continues as follows: "Pharaoh never died, and never will die. He always stands at the portal of hell, and when the kings of nations enter, he makes the power of God known to them at once. . . ." (Ginzberg III: 30; see also Hamos 208). The fact that Pharaoh will never be able to die brings to mind the story of the Wandering Jew, a shoemaker from Jerusalem who was condemned to wander the earth for having told Jesus to move along when he stopped in front of his house on the way to Calvary. Jesus answered: "I shall go, but you will stay forever." See Bataillon 107. Gillet 28-30 and Anderson 107-08 study the versions of the story in Spain. Aarne and Thompson classify it as a folktale (no. 777) as does Uther in his updated version of their international catalog (no. 777). Robe lists a Mexican version from Austin, Texas (no. 777).

deliver them from enemies, troubles, and danger. The conclusion constitutes a variant of a formula that is used at the end of many crypto-Jewish prayers: "Amén, Senhor, ao céu vá, ao céu chegue!" (Schwarz 48ff.; Vasconcelos 213, 215, etc.). The comparison between the dangers of the past, including the deliverance from the captivity of Egypt, and the present ones is not surprising, since the "Old Christian" majority continues to discriminate against the crypto-Jews, in whose memory the Inquisition still remains very much alive.[35] During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the crypto-Jews also identified at times "with the Jews in Egypt, oppressed and surrounded by idolatry (i.e., Catholicism)" (Bodian 15).[36] The Iberian monarchs corresponded to Pharaoh, and "identification with the Israelites in slavery reassured crypto-Jews that God was on their side despite their apparent helplessness, that their suffering was part of a divine plan, that deliverance would come at the appointed hour and that the enemy would be humiliated, destroyed, and exposed as fraudulent" (Bodian 17).

As far as I can tell, the prayer to Moses appears only in one other version of the ballad, also from Vilarinho dos Galegos (Alves 1909-47, VIII: 709), but the crypto-Jews have other prayers with the same idea:

> ...Como a Faraó fizeste, faz a quem do teu povo perturba a paz.
> Livra-nos, como do Egipto livraste o teu povo com o teu poder infinito...
> Livra-nos, grande Deus, de tão triste, penoso cativeiro. (Basto 1928a, 6 [no. 8])

> ...Senhor, livrai o teu povo de tamanho cativeiro;
> livrai o teu povo por vosso divino poder;
> que das mãos dos inimigos queiráis, Senhor, defender.

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[35] For example, a prayer that an informant from Rebordelo (Vinhais) used to recite for her children as they left the house included the following passage:

	Que o Senhor nos livre
	de cão danado
15	ou por danar,
	d'águas correntes,
	de línguas de má gente,
	d'inimigos mortos e vivos,
	poderes de justiça,
20	ferros d'el-rei,
	todos os perigos maus
	que le puderem acontecer. (Fontes 1990-93, 88)

[36] Catholics were regarded as idolaters because of the dogma of the Holy Trinity (three Gods instead of only one) and the veneration of saints, including statues. It is for that reason that, when entering a church, the crypto-Jews used to say (and probably continue to say):

	Nesta casa entro,
	não adoro nem o pau nem a pedra,
	só a Deus, que em tudo governa. (Schwarz 79)

Adonai, amén. (Basto 1928b, 7 [no. 39])

Livraste-o de um Faraó;
por santo prodígio novo,
de outro Faraó mais duro
otra vez livra o teu povo. (Schwarz 64)

The prayer to Moses includes a contamination (vv. 23-24a) derived from a prayer concerning the four elements created by God ("Oração dos Quatro Elementos"). This short three-line fragment is better developed in four versions of *Passagem do Mar Vermelho* that incorporate the same prayer:

O Senhor criou quatro elementos:
céu e terra, noite e dia,
sendo tão concebidas,
tão altas e tão subidas
todas quantas elas são.
Aqui não há que negar:
Pode pôr e tirar,
fazer almas tornar. (Schwarz 73)

Não tem cabo nem fins,
criou quatro elementos:
céu e terra, noite e dia.
Sois o grande Deus das vidas,
tão altas e tão subidas,
todas quantas elas são,
que não há que negar:
vós podeis pôr e tirar
e almas fareis tornar. (Vasconcelos 213)

Irmãos da irmandade
do primeiro mandamento:
aquele que não tem cabo,
nem fim, nem acabamento.
Creio em quatro lamentos [elementos]:
céu e terra e noite e dia.
Bendito seja o Senhor
que faz tanta maravilha! (Vasconcelos 234)

Antes d'o ter mandado prò seu mandamento,
12   não tem cabo nem fim, criou o Senhor quatro elementos:

céu e terra, noite e dia.
14   Sois o Senhor das vidas,
tão altas e tão subidas,
16   todas quantas elas são.
Aqui não há que negar, não:
18   vós, Senhor, podeis pôr e tirar,
E almas fazer tornar. (Cruz, no. 9)

This prayer is somewhat confusing because, instead of making a petition as prayers usually do, it merely states that the Lord, who created the four elements, is the Lord of lives as well, which sounds more like a hymn of praise. Those elements –dust, wind, water, and shadow of walls in Machado's version; wind and earth, day and night in the ones cited above– no doubt represent a corruption of the four classical elements –earth, water, air, and fire (Cirlot 95-96). Note that the latter also appears in the Midrash (Ginzberg II: 341).

The other versions of the ballad incorporate additional prayers. Three end with a reference to king David's sin with Bethsabee.[37] Bethsabee was married to Urias, a soldier, and, having fallen in love with her, David has her husband placed in the front of the army in order to be killed. God causes David and Bethsabee's son to fall ill and die, but then forgives the king (*II Samuel* 11-12). The person who recites this prayer concludes by asking God for forgiveness for himself or herself and for all the people of Israel, no matter where they happen to be:

Pai nosso poderoso,
que nos haveis de perdoar,
assim como perdoaste a el-rei David
o seu pecado de Bersabé.
Faça-nos, Senhor, tão grande mercê:
perdoai-me também a mim
e a todo o povo de Israel,
para onde for e viver. (Schwarz 73)

One version turns Bethsabee into "Berrabé" (Cruz 56). In another, the person who prays also asks God to forgive his or her father and mother (Vasconcelos 234). The allusion to the sin of king David with Bethsabee in order to beg forgiveness for one's sins is also found in a prayer extracted by the Lisbon Inquisition in 1674 from Brites Henriques, a girl of about twenty from Mogadouro. However, it is not the same prayer:

Meu Deus todo poderoso,

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[37] See Schwarz 73; Vasconcelos 234; Cruz, no. 9.

Senhor de todo o universo,
não me dês o que mereço,
mas olhai o que padeço.
Vêde-me como quem sois,
vede minhas aflições,
que de nada me criastes.
Dai-me coração limpo e firme.
Vós, Senhor, que perdoastes
a David o pecado de Berzabé,
perdoa, Senhor, a nós,
pelo poder que em ti é. . . . (Schwarz 98)[38]

The version from Covilhã ends with a prayer that I have been unable to document elsewhere. After attributing the persecution of the Jews throughout the world to God's punishment for their sins, the person who recites the prayer begs God for personal deliverance and requests that God deliver the people of Isreal from the power of the "Ademistas" as He has delivered them before:

Andemos atribulados,
de terra em terra corridos,
pelos males dos nossos pecados.
Não sejamos do mundo corridos
nem de vós; al Diós,
esta petição vos meto
por toda esta geração.
Eu também quero ser digno
desse tão alto perdão.
Meu grande Deus,
que livraste os Israelitas
do poder dos Ademistas,
livrai-me, Senhor, também a mim,
a todo o povo de Israel
que for e vier,
e a todas as alminhas,
lembradas e esquecidas.
Ámen, Senhor, ao céu vá, ao céu chegue! (Vasconcelos
213)

These "Ademistas" are probably the inhabitants of Adama, one of the fortified cities that was given to the tribe of the Nephthalites after the conquest of Canaan by

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[38] The other prayers that the Inquisition extracted from this poor girl can be read in Schwarz 95-105.

Josue, who succeeded Moses (*Josue* 19:33-36). According to the Midrash, the people of "Admah" were neighbors of Sodom and Gomorrah, equally corrupt and especially known for their cruelty (Ginzberg I: 250).

So far, we have seen that four prayers have been appended to the Portuguese ballad. One version also includes a reference to the seventy-three names of God:

> 6   Louvaremos os setenta e três nomes do Senhor,
>   que é a honra e louvor do nosso cabo. (Ferré et al. 1987, 117)

This reference represents a floating motif,[39] since it appears in various prayers. The first example is from a prayer known as "Oração da Formosura." In the second example, the motif is used as an independent prayer:

> Em honra e louvor
> dos setenta e três nomes do Senhor seja!
> A formosura santa do meu
> Deus de Adonai sobre nós seja.
> O Senhor dos céus compõe
> as obras das nossas mãos,
> o Senhor dos céus as comporá. . . . (Schwarz 75)[40]

> Benditos e louvados,
> engrandecidos, realçados,
> manifestos, descobertos,
> honrados, festejados, exaltados,
> sejam os setenta e três
> nomes do Senhor, Adonai. Amén. (Basto 1928b, 8 [no. 43])[41]

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[39] The main motif index continues to be Stith Thompson's (1955-58). For the Hispanic tradition, see especially Goldberg 1998 and 2000.

[40] It is possible to demonstrate that this prayer dates at least as far back as the seventeenth century, as in 1674 Brites Henriques dictated one version (albeit without the reference to the seventy-three names) to her tormentors:

> A honra e louvor
> do Senhor dos altos céus
> seja a santa formosura
> de Adonay nuestro Dios,
> perfeita a obra das minhas mãos compõe,
> perfeita a obra das minhas mãos comporá... (Schwarz 104)

For another modern version, see Vasconcelos 225.

[41] Other modern versions: Machado 1952, 29 (no. 29); Paulo 1971, 90.

According to Schwarz, the number in question derives from a cabalistic book written at the beginning of the twelfth century by Rabbi Abraham-ben-Ibn-Ezra, from Toledo, known as Abenare, who determined that God's name consists of seventy-two letters: "Analizando, no seu livro cabalístico *Sefer Hashem* (Livro do Nome de Deus), a significação mística do tetragrama divino (*Iehovah*), com que os hebreus designam Deus, e compondo e somando os números correspondentes a cada uma das letras componentes, conforme os métodos cabalísticos, determinou o algarismo 72, ao que atribui uma especial significação cabalística, dizendo que representa o número de letras de que é composto o Nome de Deus" (27). As Schwarz indicates, it is very probable that, though increased by one number, the crypto-Jewish allusion to the seventy-three names of God has its origin in Abenare's cabalistic speculation.[42]

Since contaminations with other ballads are very frequent in the oral tradition, the combination of *A Pedra Mara* with *A Passagem do Mar Vermelho* is not surprising.[43] On the other hand, ballads do not usually become contaminated with prayers. The following outline of the contaminations and additions found in the nine versions used in this paper will help to understand more clearly the manner in which the ballad has survived:

1. Sá 235. 1) *Pedra Mara.*
2. Schwarz 72-73. 1) Four elements; 2) David and Bethsabee.
3. Alves 1909-47, VII: 709-10. 1) *Pedra Mara*; 2) Prayer to Moses.
4. Machado 1952, 39-46. 1) *Pedra Mara*; 2) Prayer to Moses; 3) Four elements.
5. Vasconcelos 212-13. 1) "Andamos atribulados."
6. Vasconcelos 233-34. 1) Four elements; 2) David and Bethsabee.
7. Ferré et al. 1987, 117. 1) Seventy-three names (in the middle of the ballad section); 2) Four elements; 3) David and Bethsabee.[44]
8. Garcia 80. 1) *Pedra Mara.*
9. Cruz 56. 1) Quatro elementos; 2) David and Bethsabee.

The additions or contaminations with various prayers came about because, despite its narrative character, the ballad is used as a prayer,[45] and paraliturgical prayers are said rapidly, one after another, in a mechanical way, getting mixed with each other to the point that it is often impossible to determine where one begins and the other ends. Since the portion of the ballad that corresponds to *A Passagem do Mar Vermelho*

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[42] I have adapted this paragraph from a previous paper, which contains a more detailed examination of the prayers that refer to the seventy-three names of God (Fontes 1992, 461-63).

[43] For a summary of the main eight transformations that characterize the oral transmission of ballads, see Fontes 2000b, 135.

[44] The last two prayers are omitted, but a note indicates that the ballad continued like Schwarz's version.

[45] As we saw, the crypto-Jews call it "A Oração da Água."

became considerably reduced, it is probable that the crypto-Jews decided to increase its length by adding prayers in order to make the poem seem more complete. Although two of the versions listed above (Sá and Garcia) conclude with *A Pedra Mara*, without further contaminations, it is very probable that, as in the case of Ferré et al., their respective collectors preferred to eliminate them.

<p align="center">***</p>

To conclude, *A Passagem do Mar Vermelho* (*á–o*) is one of the six crypto-Jewish ballads that survive in the Portuguese oral tradition. As we saw, it was originally composed in Spanish, and the Midrashic elements found in the Portuguese and Eastern Mediterranean Sephardic versions suggest that it was a Jewish ballad whose existence preceded the diaspora of 1492. Notwithstanding its considerable deterioration, the Portuguese poem incorporates verses from a previously unknown ballad, *A Pedra Mara* (*á–a*), which deals with events that took place after crossing the Red Sea, when the Jews were wandering in the desert. Given the circumstances in which the crypto-Jews had to live, the survival of the Portuguese poem is truly extraordinary, reuniting a people tragically separated more than five hundred years ago.

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