A POINT OF CONJECTURE:
DEFINING *CONVIVENCIA* THROUGH
THE SECULAR HEBREW POETRY OF AL-ANDALUS

b y

SARAH J. LEBEN

A THESIS

Presented to the Department of Romance Languages
and the Honors College of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts

June 1998

APPROVED:____ _____ _____

Professor Julian Weiss

An Abstract of the Thesis of

Sarah JoAnn Leben for the degree of Bachelor of Arts

in the Department of Romance Languages to be taken June 1998

Title: A POINT OF CONJECTURE: DEFINING *CONVIVENCIA* THROUGH THE SECULAR HEBREW POETRY OF AL-ANDALUS

Approved: _____
Professor Julian Weiss

During the eleventh century in al-Andalus, Jews living under the rule of Islam, amongst Muslims and Christians, experienced a cultural rebirth known as the Golden Age of Hebrew poetry (c.1000-1090). Yet there is no clear understanding of the coexistence of Jews and Muslims at this time; a relationship which contributed to Jewish cultural development. Through analysis of secular Hebrew poetry of the Jewish courtier poets of al-Andalus and evaluation of the historical evidence of the time, the nature of *convivencia* is revealed. The courtly poetry of Samuel Ha-Nagid (c.993-1055) and Moses Ibn Ezra (c.1055-1138) expresses the viewpoint and experience of the Jewish courtier poets of the Muslim courts of al-Andalus. Borrowing from Arabic culture poetical conventions and scholastic standards, the Jewish courtier poets created a new form of Hebrew high culture that called for a mastery of Hebrew culture and the sophistication of courtly standards. In a balanced coexistence of ethnicities, the Jewish courtier poets created and pursued secular Hebrew poetry in order to re-establish themselves as learned people.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to express my gratitude to my committee members: Professor Julian Weiss, Professor Susan Boynton and Professor Heather Tanner. I thank them for taking the time to be a part of this project. I would especially like to thank Professor Tanner for her dedication towards helping me to truly finish the paper.

On a personal note, I would like to extend my thanks to all of my wonderful friends who have seen me through and stuck by me throughout this process. Thank you Elaine, Rowan, Herschel, Alesha, Rachel, Heather, Trevor and Jessica. Your support was very important to me. I must and very much would like to thank my family. To the Dallastas and the Rathbuns, thank you for your willingness to extend your support. I am blessed to be surrounded by such love. In closing and most profoundly, thank you, Stephanie, for telling me the truth with a smile; Mom, for being my rose, my sunshine and my strength; and Dad, for taking the time and giving your all and being the seed of my success. I love you all.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Convivencia

Secular Hebrew Poetry, Culture and Ethncity

It is no coincidence that the Golden Age of Hebrew poetry (c.1000-1090) flourished in al-Andalus. Secular Hebrew poetry, created by Jewish courtier poets and originating from Muslim Spain in the eleventh century, has been examined and celebrated for its creativity and intricate nature. These creations had such an impact on Hebrew culture that its pursuit, in other countries and by new generations of poets, continued long after the balance of peoples and cultures that existed in al-Andalus had disappeared.

But the poetry from the Hebrew Golden Age preserved the atmosphere that fostered its creation. Ross Brann writes, "Secular Hebrew poetry became one of the most significant manifestations of the 'cultural *convivencia* ' of the Jews and Muslims of al-Andalus."[1] The term *convivencia*, coined by Americo Castro (twentieth century), roughly translates into coexistence, but its definition extends beyond "living together" to include cultural, ethnic and social connotations. *Convivencia* in its entirety means the internalized perception of group relations as it manifests itself in the culture of each group.

---

[1]Ross Brann, The Compunctious Poet: Cultural Ambiguity and Hebrew Poetry in Muslim Spain, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1991), 6.

According to Brann and many other scholars, secular Hebrew poetry is a representation of Hebrew culture as it coexisted with Muslim culture in al-Andalus during the Middle Ages. Therefore, by analyzing the poetry, the perception of the Jewish courtier poets' place in society and their relationship to Muslim society and culture can be both determined and understood.

Because contemporary preoccupation with multicultural issues can confuse the understanding of the terms culture and ethnicity, at times making them synonymous with each other, it is best to clarify their significance in al-Andalus. Ethnicity defined a person's lineage and their social and religious status in society. Within the greater Islamic society one's religion or faith was the common determiner of ethnic identity.[2] Ethnicity did not isolate people culturally. Culture represents the traits of a community or the expressions of the values of a community. People of the Mediterranean were members of many communities both beyond and within their ethnic communities. For the Jewish courtier poets, their community included their ethnic kin and community but it also included the Muslim and/or Christian courtiers. Culture did not determine one's ethnicity and ethnicity did not determine one's culture. With these definitions, how can *convivencia* be relevant and significant?

---

[2]Thomas Glick, Islamic and Chrisitan Spain in the Early Middle Ages, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 178.

Convivencia is important for understanding the relationship between Jews, Muslims and Christians because regardless of the mutability of culture, ethnicity separated people socially. In order to maintain power and purity of the Muslim populations of the Islamic Empire, laws were upheld that separated Muslims from non-believers (i.e. Christians and Jews). Regardless of a person's cultural similarity to their social counterparts, people were still separated by ethnicity. A Cordovan Muslim historian once remarked about Samuel ha-Nagid (ce993-1055/6), the Jewish vizier of Granada, "This cursed man was a superior man, although God did not inform him of the right religion. One would believe that his letters were written by a pious Muslim."[3] Samuel was a Jewish courtier poet who, by education and office, was a man of letters and state at the Muslim court of Granada. His skill in letters and politics did not change his ethnic identity. It must also be noted that Samuel might appear culturally similar, but he did not need to convert in order to achieve this. Samuel was acculturated to the norms of the Muslim court, as indicated by his letter writing and service at court. Did acculturation with Muslim court life erase his connection with his ethnic community?

---

[3]Arie Schrippers, Spanish Hebrew Poetry and Arabic Literary Tradition, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 54.

Answering this question and identifying whether the Jewish courtier poets adopted, borrowed or changed the Arab culture of the courts will allow us to see *convivencia* from the Jewish perspective. Secular Hebrew poetry reveals the culture of the Jewish courtier poets and is the key to unlocking the relationship between the Jews and Muslims of al-Andalus. It must be remembered that cultural differences or similarities between the Jews and Muslims, as found in the poetry, are "symptoms rather than determinate[s] of intergroup behavior."[4] Cultural differences and/or similarities indicate aspects of the relationship between Jews and Muslims in the courts of al-Andalus. The methods, such as reactive adaptation, cultural borrowing, or innovation, in which these differences and/or similarities were employed by the poets symbolize *convivencia*.[5] The transfer of cultural traits from Hebrew culture to Arab culture can indicate the intricate nature of the relationships between cultures and the carriers of those cultures. Defining *convivencia* provides history with a more sophisticated understanding of the past

---

[4]Vanden Berghe quoted in Glick, 294.

[5]See Glick, 293. Groups of poeple incorporated new traits into their cultures, in order to be in accord with new social realitites. The cultures undergo different processes in order to maintain their identities. Reactive adaptaiton is a method where the values of a dominate culture are "incongruent or incompatible" and thus new meanings are created to fit the values of the group. Culutral borrowing "seeks new meanings in the values of the dominate culture," still embracing their original use.

and also impacts the significance of the poetry that springs from the cultural relationships between Jews and Muslims in al-Andalus.

Studies examining the coexistence of Jews and Muslims through the secular Hebrew poetry of the Jewish courtier poets are sparse. Most works examine the poetry through literary analysis, while historical perspectives of the time only touch lightly on the poetry. The limited number of sources studies about the historical significance of secular Hebrew poetry does not restrict the conclusions drawn about *convivencia* by the one or two critics. In contrast, there is no limit to the differing viewpoints and labels given to the social, cultural and political position of the Jewish courtier poets in al-Andalus.

Regardless of the literary analysis' avoidance of the historical associations of the poetry, the methods used by scholars such as S.M. Stern, Linda Fish-Compton and Aríe Schippers examine and classify the poetry vís-a-vís its Arabic counterparts. This comparative approach can allow for an objective examination of the similarities and the differences between secular Hebrew poetry and Arabic courtly poetry. These scholars' work focuses on the art of the poetry and places the poetry in a relationship with its Arabic counterpart.[6]

---

[6]S.M. Stern, Hispano-Arabic Strophic Poetry, L.P. Harvey ed., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 44.

Schippers is the only one that gives a distinct viewpoint about the relationship. He writes:

> In Hebrew Andalusian poetry, Arabic conventions are assumed and Arabic poets are immitated; only language is different. Through the purely scriptual Hebrew there is suggested the influence of Biblical writing on this poetry, but this is only superficial: the old language is here expressing Arabic ideas.[7]

A glimpes into the nature of *convivencia* is disclosed by the frequency and manner in which distinctive elements of Arabic poetry are used. Jewish courtier poets employed genres such as the wine poetry and nature poetry, Arabic metaphors such as tears to wine and birds to poets, and stock characters such as the beloved, the spy or wine. Was there no meaning behind these assumed conventions?

The historical perspectives that aid in uncovering *convivencia* in al-Andalus range in scope from general relations between Jews and Muslims to concentrated historical studies of the Taifa kingdoms. One of the most prominent scholar of the Middle Ages and the Islamic empire is S.D. Goitien. From his work, *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions* to his voluminous *The Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World* Goitien has changed the perception of the Middle Ages, transcending the term "The Dark Ages." From his work, the Middle Ages in the

---

[7]Aríe Schippers, Spanish Hebrew Poetry and the Arabic Literary Tradition: Arabic Themes in Hebrew Andalusian Poetry, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 22.

Mediterranean becomes a thriving time of commerce and scholarship, trade and travel. Goitien exposes the layers of the Mediterranean society where Jews participated in overlapping communities of faith, vocation and legal status. His viewpoint of the Jew in Medieval Muslim society is best explained in the following passage:

> Despite the high degree of legal and civic autonomy enjoyed by [the Jews] at that time, and despite their status as semiforeigners, which they shared with the Christians in the realm of Islam and which was even more accentuated in Europe, in this period they mingled freely with their neighbors, and therefore, cannot have been much different from them. For as the Arab proverb has it, "people are more akin to their contemporaries than they are to their own forefathers."[8]

Goitien in his work, tries to point out the similarities in one's relationship to God and the world among Muslims and Jews which allowed them to coexist so successfully in a cosmpolitan society during the High Middle Ages. Goitien also notes that because the economy functioned separately from politics, this allowed for "an atmosphere of unity despite the constant wars and political upheavals."[9] Regardless of ethnic politics, Jewish, Muslim and Christian merchants of the Meditteranean continued to work together

---

[8]S.D. Goitien, A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab world as portrayed in the documents of the Cairo Geniza,(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 71.

[9]Goitien, A Mediterranean Society, 70.

and prosper. From Goitien it can be understood that in Mediterranean society there was a balance between the similarities and the differences of the people. More than chronicling the past events, S.D. Goitien's work uncovers past perspectives and relationships.

A student of Goitien's, Norman Stillman, pursues the historical avenue of the debate with a greater emphasis on the Jewish elite of al-Andalus. In his essay "Aspects of Jewish Life in Islamic Spain," he gives a glimpse of the elite group of men that created secular Hebrew poetry. To Stillman, the Jewish courtier poets were assimilated into a culture specific to al-Andalus. He describes this culture as "tripartite upper-class pride in the purity of language, lineage and religion."[10] Interestingly enough, Stillman does not identify the ethnic origin of Andalusian culture as either Muslim or Hebrew. The common value of Andalusian culture is its emphasis on purity. One's pursuit of purity connected one to the Andalusian community. Because this culture was ascribed to the upper-class, it seems that the courtiers were part of this culutral comunity. Whether Muslim or Jewish but the courtier must practice a purity in their faith and language. Stillman's work suggests a uniqueness of Andalusian society and culture but obscures the significance of ethnicity and religion as the

---

[10]Norman Stillman, "Aspects of Jewish Life in Islamic Spain," Aspects of Jewish Culture in the Middles Ages, Paul E. Szarmach ed., (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979), 67.

base of cultural identity. His claims fuel inquiry into more distinct studies about the coexistence of Jews and Muslims in al-Andalus and *convivencia.*

Two scholars who have focused more on the ideas of *convivencia* are Benjamin Gampel and Thomas Glick. Gampel gives good historical insight to the evolving position of the Jew in the societies of the Iberian peninsula. By examining the "contours" of *convivencia,* "its limits in times of culutral openness, and its possibilities even in time of great decline," he identifies *convivencia* between the Jews and other groups in the Iberian peninsula as an integrated pluralistic society.[11] Gampel emphasizes that even when the ethnic groups of the Iberian peninsula worked, traded and lived together, "at the same time, these groups mistrusted each other and were often jealous of each other's success, and the ever-present competition among them occasionally turned to hatred."[12] Gampel's skeptical vision of *convivencia* does not bring clarity to the relationships of Jews and Muslims, but he does remind the reader of both the sharing and conflict that took place on the Iberian peninsula.

---

[11]Benjamin R. Gampel, "Jew, Christians, and Muslims in Medieval Iberia: *Convivencia* through the Eyes of Sephardic Jews," Convivencia, Vivian B. Mann, Thomas Glick, and Jerrilyn Dodds eds., (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1992), 11.

[12] Gampel, 11.

But it is Glick who tries to bring greater clarity to the use and definition of *convivencia.* Glick, in both his essay "Convivencia: An Introductory Note" and his book *Islamic and Christian Spain in the Early Middle Ages* , brings to the discussion of *convivencia* the question: "to what extent, and how does, social distance configure the nature of culture interchange?"[13] Glick dubs the defining of culture boundaries as crystallization, which takes into account the social reality as a factor in cultural development. It is a process where a recipient culture "must in some ways adapt to the new situation in such a way as to bring the structure of society and culture into accord with a new reality."[14] These stylisitc changes occured when a gap exists between the "actual social configuration and its cultural model."[15] Interestingly enough, Glick points out that cultural changes take place at times of both structural crystallization and decrystallization. Moreover, both changes can happen at the same time. For example, Glick notes:

> In the eleventh [century], the fall of the Caliphate (loss) initiated a reorganization of the society in decentralized polities which seemed to respond well to economic and

---

[13]Thomas Glick, "*Convivencia* : An Introductory Note," Convivencia, Vivian B. Mann, Thomas Glick and Jerrilyn Dodds eds., (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1992), 2.

[14]Glick, Islamic and Christian Spain, 293.

[15]Glick, Islamic and Christian Spain, 200.

> ethnic realities.[16]

Glick's scholarship includes and explains the social factor that determined *convivencia.* In doing so he helps to clarify the discussion.

David Wasserstein, following the work of Thomas Glick, discusses the social and political reality of the Taifa kingdoms of al-Andalus. His more focused effort takes Glick's ideas of stereotypes and ethnicities and uses them to explain the political history of al-Andalus. From Wasserstein's work, politics both use and overlook ethnic stereotypes, proving their superficial nature.[17] These claims are important for the understanding of the social context of al-Andalus and thus, the cultural relationship between the Jews and the Muslims at that time.

But it is the work of Ross Brann and Raymond Scheindlin that directly examines *convivencia* through secular Hebrew poetry. Both of these scholars focus on the structure and make-up of the poetry in order to uncover the cultural reality of the Jewish courtier poets. Ross Brann writes:

> Golden Age Hebrew poetry, which signifies both the stylistic norms and the resistant national consciousness of the Jewish literati who invented it, must be seen therefore,

---

[16]Glick, Islamic and Christian Spain, 203.

[17]David Wasserstein, The Rise and Fall of the Party Kngs: Politics and Society in Islamic Spain 1002-1086, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 132.

> as literary discourse designed to mediate cultural ambiguity.[18]

Brann's focus on the internal ambiguity of the Jewish courtier poets is reinforced by Raymond Scheindlin's interpretation:

> When they [the temporal world and the reality of God] come together, as in the poems under discussion, they often produce a nervous kind of humor, for part of the pleasure these men derived from their way of life was of the "stolen waters" variety.[19]

Both Brann and Scheindlin believe that the court life of al-Andalus and Jewish tradition were incompatible. The poetry, in their opinion reflects an inner acknowledgement of this incompatibility. The composition of the poetry is a method to relieve the guilt of the Jewish courtier poets position in the society of al-Andalus and their engagement in its culture.[20]

Dan Pagis, whose study focuses on the elements of self-expression in the poetry, rejects this interpretation. Pagis argues that the poetry is a "synthesis, reflecting the influence of Arabic poetry and a revival of biblical diction."[21] In contrast to Brann and Scheindlin who define the poetry as a symbiosis, or a relationship of

---

[18]Brann, 24.

[19]Raymond P. Scheindlin, "A Miniature Anthology of Medieval Hebrew Wine Songs," Prooftexts 3 (1984) 272.

[20]Brann, 22.

[21]Dan Pagis, Hebrew Poetry of the Middle Ages and the Renaisssance, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 45.

two opposites, Pagis neutralizes the elements of the poetry and rather sees it as a unified entity. He refrains from discussing the degree of the relationship between the elements. Instead, he explores the presence of self-expression within the poetry and opens up the possibility of expression beyond the forms, themes and rhetoric of Arabic courtly poetry. His intent is "to argue once more that premodern Hebrew poetry was much more dynamic than is usually considered to have been the case."[22] At the end of his book *Hebrew Poetry of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, he offers up the poetry as a model of "poetic freedom within a cultural environment more open-minded than their [early twentieth century poets and critics] own."[23] He believes that it is his duty to defend secular Hebrew poetry against "the sanctimonious clericalism which has been increasing in recent years."[24] Pagis' definition of the relationship of the Hebrew and Arab elements of the poetry as a synthesis, allows for a new discussion of the poetry and its significance in uncovering *convivencia* in al-Andalus.

Much like Dan Pagis' work, Ammiel Alcalay in his book *After Jews and Arabs: Remaking Levantine Culture*, examines *convivencia* in response to the work of Brann and Scheindlin. Alcalay's intent in

---

[22] Pagis, 46.

[23] Pagis, 69.

[24] Pagis, 70.

his work is to clarify Levantine culture where the Jew is considered a "native, not a stranger but an absolute inhabitant of time and place."[25] The poetry is significant in his pursuit because he sees it as a "source of light" necessary to illuminate the past.[26] But he believes that the examination of history from the poetry should not stop with "just seeing the light."[27]

> [Defining the past] must begin,... by apprehending the sources of light and the present objects they shade or illuminate, and follow with an active, incessant engagement in the process of naming and renaming, covering and uncovering, consuming and producing new relations, investigating hierarchies of power and effect: distilling light into sun, moon, and fire.[28]

Alcalay does not interpret the poetry based on the differences between Hebrew culture and Arab culture, but instead he questions scholarship that does not examine the assumed dichotomy. He states:

> The legacy of hierarchical thinking clearly remains with us: we have not yet fully cast off the residue gathered by such amphorous concepts as the "rise" and "fall" of civilizations--concepts laced with bais.[29]

Alcalay, in his work, tries to eliminate the notion that "one standard applies to 'us' and another to 'them,'" with "us " being the Jews and

---

[25]Ammiel Alcalay, After Jews adn Arabs: The remaking of Levantine Culture, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 1.

[26]Alcalay, 2.

[27]Alcalay, 2.

[28]Alcalay, 2.

[29]Alcalay, 3.

"them" being Arabs.[30] What results from his deeper investigation is a new vision of the poetry. He sees the innovation of secular Hebrew poetry to be a result of a "transfer" of the "accumulated knowledge" of the Arab poetical tradition.[31] Moreover, in his examination of the poetry he sees Hebrew and Arab elements of the poem in a "relationship [that] is not really resolved but simply allowed to coexist within the space circumscribed."[32] Because of the accepted coexistance of these two elements, a blurring of the boundaries between sacred and secular occurs. In speaking of the poetry of the Jewish courtier poets, he write:

> No matter how secular their verse appeared, [they] still wrote according to strict standards of Andalusian poetics that insisted on the 'biblical purity' of its language, with all the inevitable explicit and implicit religious allusions that entailed. [33]

With this observation, Alcalay suggests that the secular and the sacred were intertwined in the poetry. In doing so he challenges the assumed dichotomy between Hebrew and Arab cultures which would not allow for this fusion. Unlike Brann and Scheindlin, Alcalay's

---

[30]Alcalay, 4.

[31]Alcalay , 160.

[32]Alcalay, 163.

[33]Alcalay, 162.

approach allows for new opinions of the poetry and permits the existing definitions of *convivencia* to be reexamined.

None of these works focus solely on the poetry during the time of the Taifa kingdoms or the classical era of secular Hebrew poetry; the conclusions made about secular Hebrew poetry and its relationship to *convivencia* encompass the entire time span of secular Hebrew poetry. There is no differentiation made between *convivencia* when both the poetry and the Jews as a community were most prominent in society and after the twelfth century when the Iberian peninsula had experienced dramatic social and cultural changes. Rather, scholarship makes claims about the coexistence of the Jews and Muslims from 1000 ce and equates them with the coexistence of Jews and Muslims five hundred years later. In order to de-mythify history and the perception of secular Hebrew poetry, its roots must be uncovered within the social context of the Taifa kingdoms of al-Andalus, where the poetry originated and existed in its most esteemed form. The tendency to generalize the nature of *convivencia* and Jewish perceptions of their cultural identity over hundreds of years misnames the cultural process used to create secular Hebrew poetry. *Convivencia* as it existed during the Taifa kingdoms of al-Andalus was a time when Jews were most prominent in society and at their most creative point of poetical writing and scholarship. All this is overlooked and made unimportant and insignificant by blending it into a uniformed and unchanging

relationship between Jews and Muslims. Because scholarship has grouped the classical era of secular Hebrew poetry with its predecessors as a common expression of the relationship between Hebrew and Arab culture, the classical era loses its significance as an artifact of a specific time and place.

This paper will examine the coexistence of the Jews and Muslims of al-Andalus during the Taifa kingdoms. Through the poetry of Samuel ha-Nagid (c. 993-1055/6) and Moses Ibn Ezra (c.1055-1138). By limiting the evidence to these two poets, the concern of the paper becomes focused to a specific time and place, considered the classical era of secular Hebrew poetry. My work is based on translations in both Spanish and English of the Hebrew originals and the notes and interpretations that follow them. My arguments do stand at a disadvantage because I can not read Hebrew, the original language of the poetry. But I feel that my argument is relevant in the discussion of *convivencia* because of the focus on the use of the elements of the poetry over the content. When I do attempt to decode the content it is done based on associated texts and historical understanding.

The evidence suggests that secular Hebrew poetry was conceived through cultural borrowing by the Jewish courtier poets. These men borrowed Arab poetic elements and courtly standards and used them to challenge and promote Hebrew culture. In doing so, the Jewish courtier poets attempted to re-establish their own

inner faith in the superiority of their culture and religion which the Jewish intelligentsia had begun to question in the wake of the establishment of the Islamic Empire throughout the Mediterranean. Secular Hebrew poetry reflects the position of the Jewish courtier poets as Jewish members of an Islamic society and defines the coexistence of Jews and Muslims in the courts of al-Andalus as competitive but not combative. Conflict existed in the society between ethnic groups because of politics.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Ethnic Relations in Wake of the Islamic Conquests

To understand the eventual creation of secular Hebrew poetry in al-Andalus the relationship between Jewish and Arab culture in the Middle Ages and the social reality in which the poets thrived, must be explained. Jewish cultural development flourished from the cultural interaction of Jewish courtiers and Arab culture in al-Andalus. The unification of the lands of the Mediterranean under Islam beginning in the eighth century, initiated the contact between Jews and Muslims socially and culturally. The social and political changes that followed the success of the Islamic empire had an impact on the Jews.

After the lands of the Mediterranean joined under the rule of Islam, all Jewish communities came together in understanding and practice of their faith. Information and learning was dispensed more easily in a unified Empire.[34] Increased mobility and interchange by the Jews resulted in the establishment of a Jewish center in Babylonia and a unification of Jewish tradition. The rabbis/Talmudic scholars of Babylonia dictated and regulated the teachings of the

---

34 Yom Tov Assis, "The Judeo-Arabic Tradition in Christian Spain," The Jews of Medieval Islam: Community Society and Identity, Daniel Frank ed., (New York: E. J. Brill, 1995), 112.

Talmud. Jews of the Mediterranean interacted and communicated more freely with each other than they had before.

At the same time that Jewish tradition became more uniform, all Jews became arabized, through learning to speak Arabic and living in Islamic society. This process was complete by the year 1000 ce.[35] Yet this change did not erase Hebrew culture. Hebrew scholarship kept Hebrew culture intact. "On the whole the Jews proved to be most receptive and open to external influences, while retaining their Jewish identity and Hebrew culture."[36] In language, Hebrew was employed in the synagogue and in many forms of Hebrew scholarship although it was not the daily spoken language of the greater Jewish community. Jewish scholars continued to study the Bible and its teachings. Hebrew culture still existed in Islamic empire, regardless of arabization.

Socially, the Jewish communities were still distinct parts of society because of their legal status as minority or *dhimmi.* With this label, a Jew could retain his/her faith. *Dhimmi* status separated the believers (Muslims) from the non-believers through a religious sanction which was also the legal law of the land. To insure purity in Muslim life, all faiths had their own courts and judges to dictate civil law. This allowed for a modest amount of autonomy for Jews

---

[35]Glick Islamic and Chrisitan Spain, 175.

[36]Assis, 112.

and Christians. The autonomous religious court system had obvious cultural and social repercussions: the court was a fulcrum of group cohesion and served to reinforce the distinctive cultural traditions of the group.[37] Also, being "People of the Book" or *dhimmi*, the Hebrew scripture was recognized by Muslims as divinely inspired.[38] As *dhimmi*, the Jews (and Christians) did not have to defend their faith and could practice without persecution.

Dhimmi status formed social boundaries in Islamic society but did not restrain actual contact between religious communities. This contact is defined as integration or a process of normalized day-to-day interactions.[39] The Jew was a member of his/her faith-community, but he/she was still an active part of Islamic society. Jews and Muslims often lived in the same neighborhoods and engaged in business with each other.[40] Simple coexistence was a daily manifestation of integration because each community lived in and around each other exchanging goods and skills as people of the greater Islamic society. Coexistence provided the immediate social context for cultural exchange.[41]

---

[37]Glick, Islamic and Christian Spain, 170.

[38]Glick, Islamic and Christian Spain, 168.

[39]Glick, "*Convivencia:* An Introductory Note," 4.

[40]Gampel, 11.

[41]Glick, "*Convivencia* : An Introductory Note," 4.

Ethnic Relations in the Iberian Peninsula

The establishment of Islamic rule in southern Spain (711-492) released the Jews from persecution and gave them the opportunity to live freely as Jews. Under the rule of the Visigoths, ristian by faith, society had many anti-Jewish laws. In one ngdom, in 613 ce, for example, it was ordered that all Jews were to e forcefully converted.[42] This all changed with the rule of Islam d the granting of minority status to the Jews. On the Iberian eninsula the Muslim conquest was a liberation for the Jews.

In the south of the peninsula, as in all lands of Islam, no area life was exempt from cross-community contact, not even the lamic royal courts. Here, Jews were employed as physicians and ientists. There was also an administrator that collected taxes from ie Jewish community for the Muslim government. Individual Jews ere chosen for skills and knowledge which would benefit the luslim court. The Jewish community had no responsibility in the ppointment of these men.

Even as Jews, these men in service to the Muslim caliph were ourtiers. They lived and participated in the culture of the court. A

---

[2]Gampel, 14.

The royal court in Cordoba encouraged Hebrew scholarship on the Iberian peninsula. The Jewish courtiers began to sponsor Jewish scholars, scientists and writers, just as the Muslims did.

> They imitated the class behavior of their Muslim counterparts by employing their economic resources and exerting their considerable social prestige in order to encourage the production and dissemination of Hebrew poetry as well as of philosophical speculation and scientific research.[46]

Furthermore, the Caliph's own political ambitions within the Islamic Empire, opened doors to the Hebrew patrons at court. The Caliph of the court of Cordoba was a survivor of the Umayyad dynasty of Damascus, which had initiated the dissemination of Arabic culture, but had later lost power to the Abbasid regime of Baghdad. [47] Understandably, `Abd al-Rahman favored the end of Spanish Jewery's dependence on the Babylonian academies in order to eliminate al-Andalus' dependence on the East.[48] With the support of Al-Rahman III (929-960) Jewish courtiers patronized Hebrew learning on the peninsula. For example, Hasday Ibn Shaprut (905-975) a physician in the courts of Abd al-Rahman III and his successor al-Hakam II (961-976) was a generous patron of the arts

---

[46]Brann, 8.

[47]Assis, 113

[48]Assis, 113.

and sciences. As the leading Jew of al-Andalus, he naturally felt it his duty to be Maecenas to his own brethren.[49] Hasday attracted new talent from the East such as Menahem Ben Saruq, Judah Hayyuj and Dunash ben Labrat, all scholars in the Hebrew language. These scholars, with Hasday's sponsorship created the beginnings of original Hebrew learning that originated from the Iberian Peninsula.

---

[49]Stillman, 58.

Taifas: Ethnic Identities and Social Realities

In 1031, the centralized Islamic power in al-Andalus was dissolved bringing an end to the great court of Córdoba and splintering the territory into separate kingdoms called Taifas. The environment of al-Andalus during the Taifa kingdoms (1031-1086 [fall of Toledo to Christians]/1090 [Invasion by Almoravides]) was characterized by conflict to maintain and extend the borders of each kingdom. The caliphs of the Taifa kingdoms practiced politics and ruled their kingdoms fueled by "territorial ambitions."[50]

Decentralization divided Islamic control in the south of Spain into twenty-two independent kingdoms. All the caliphs were Muslim but their ethnic backgrounds varied -- Arab, Berber or Slav. Yet the ethnic affiliations of each kingdom did not determine the society of al-Andalus. Within each state lived Jews and Christians, along with Arabs and Berbers. Each kingdom upheld the rules of Islam, including the *dhimmi* laws for the unbelievers. The framework of society, as it existed during the caliphate of Cordoba, remained intact despite the political changes that had occurred.

Along with the social framework of al-Andalus, court life was preserved after the fall of the caliph. Each Taifa kingdom had its

---

[50]Assis, 117.

own court to administer its kingdom and establish leadership. "Each court tried to the best of its abilities and resources to recreate in miniature the brilliance of the Umayyads of Cordo[b]a."[51] Even though the rulers of each kingdom varied in ethnicity, the culture of the court remained true to its early example from Cordoba. Transplanting the old ways onto the new political and social situations "merely demonstrate[d] that aristocracies str[i]ved to fill the void in leadership, using whatever tools they have at hand."[52] Each kingdom retained internal order by mimicking the structures of old al-Andalus.

What did change was the prominence of Jews politically and socially within the kingdoms of al-Andalus. The Jews retained their minority status, but Jewish courtiers became more active in the Taifa courts.

> Their [the Jews'] lack of numbers and of possible sources of help from outside the state made them appear less potentially dangerous or subversive, and thereby the more useful as officials whose loyalties might be relied on.[53]

The Jews still participated as they had before as physicians, poets and administrators, but now they were also appointed as viziers. In this position they led the army in battle and held political power

---

[51]Stillman, 62.

[52]Glick, Islamic and Chrisitian Spain, 207.

[53]Wasserstein, 192.

over the Muslims, Jews and Christians of their kingdoms. By increasing the participation of the Jewish courtier through government office and power the caliph insured support and dedication from the Jewish community throughout the times of chaos and insecurity. The Jews, by becoming more prominent in court, were also becoming an important part of politics in and outside of each kingdom.

Along with new political obligations, the Jewish courtiers increasingly pursued the development of their own Hebrew culture at court.[54] Just as Hasday had done one hundred years earlier, viziers such as Samuel ha-Nagid and his son Yosef supported the presence of Jewish scholars and poets in their courts. Their work had such an affect that a twelfth-century historian, Ibn Daud, wrote, "In the days of Nasi Hasday they [the poets] began to chirp, while in the days of Samuel ha-Nagid, they burst into song."[55] The promotion of the Jews at court brought more opportunities for Hebrew cultural development.

Yet, regardless of the cultural similarities of the court and the societies of the Taifa kingdoms to earlier al-Andalus, ethnicities were still distinct. From the end of the Cordoba Caliphate, throughout the

---

[54]Wasserstein, 217.

[55]quoted in Stillman, 59.

rule of the Taifa kings, ethnic massacres were common.[56] These massacres were directed at all ethnicities for political reasons and many times carried out by the masses who acted on prejudicial stereotypes. The first massacre against the Berbers occurred in Cordoba. In 1010, Berber troops were slaughtered by the masses of Cordoba who had become "afraid and angered by Berber hegemony in the capital."[57] In another case, Samuel ha-Nagid, as acting vizier of Granada, prevented the Zirid ruler from killing all the Arabs in Granada in 1058. The proposed massacre was in retaliation to the assassination of the Berber ruler of Ronda.[58] In both cases, the group attacked was designated by their ethnicity but the motive for the attack was political.

The use of ethnic stereotypes was heightened during the Taifas with the external political practice of alliances. Because of the size and strength of each kingdom, the Taifa states had to form alliances to survive and maintain their borders. Strategically speaking, the alliances were a way to contain an enemy within his borders and to avoid direct conflict with allies over resources.[59] What resulted was a

---

[56]Glick, Islamic and Christian Spain, 184.

[57]Glick, Islamic and Christian Spain, 184.

[58]Glick, Islamic and Christian Spain, 184.

[59]Glick, Islamic and Chrisitian Spain, 184.

checkerboard pattern of alliances where a political group was surrounded by their enemies and separated from their allies.[60]

It appears that the coalitions were ethnic in nature, suggesting further that political policy was created with ethnic solidarity in mind, but this is accidental. Alliances were a result of military demands and some rulers disregarded ethnic identity altogether when making them.[61] For example, the Arab Abbadids of Seville wanted to consolidate and increase their territory at the expense af all their neighbors.[62] Because of this, they made alliances with the smaller kingdoms that bordered them whatever the ethnic identity of the other kingdom's ruler. Ethnicity was not the prominent factor determining Taifa politics.

Ethnic differences reverberated in the society of al-Andalus in the form of stereotypes and prejudices, fueled by the quasi-ethnic policy of the Taifa rulers. The Andalusian-Arabs of Seville, the most powerful Taifa kingdom, created alliances with Berber states, but they greatly exploited ethnic stereotypes about the Berbers. An example of the impact of this is found in a poem from the kingdom of Seville, speaking about the Berbers of Granada. It reads, "A people who are considered to be nothing but Jews (probably a reference to

---

[60]Glick, Islamic and Christian Spain, 209.

[61]Wasserstein, 132.

[62]Wasserstein, 131.

the Zirids' employment of Jews in their administration), though they are called Berbers, have been reduced to nothing by your sword."[63] Aligning the Berbers with the unbeliever demeaned their status as Muslims and also their ethnic identities. For the ruling Arabs of Seville, the creation and use of stereotypes against Berbers and Jews helped to reinforce and bring support to their political policies within al-Andalus. Ethnicity was used as a weapon by the Taifa rulers.[64]

Internally, ethnicity played a role in politics. In the kingdom of Granada, the rulers considered ethnic differences when they determined their own internal politics.

> In Granada, there seems to have been a clear policy of using the employment of Jews in the administration as a means of maintaining the ethnic balance in the state, in order to prevent the Andalusian Arabs [equal in ethnicity to those of the kingdom of Seville] section of the population from becoming a danger to the ruling Berbers. [65]

The Caliph of Granada, regardless of his belief in the intrinsic value of various ethnic groups, had to appoint people in his court in order to maintain his power. Ethnicity, first used as a political weapon externally, became a political factor internally.

Through the Caliph's actions, the Jewish community became a part of the power politics of the Taifa kingdoms. Prominence

---

[63]Wasserstein, 130.

[64]Wasserstein, 132-3.

[65]Wasserstein, 214.

brought opportunity but it also brought exposure. In reality, the Jewish courtiers and the Jewish community of Granada were just as vulnerable as the other ethnic groups to massacres. Just like the other Muslim ethnic groups suffered in ethnic massacres, the Jews could also be attacked. In 1066, this possibility became a reality. Yosef, the son of Samuel ha-Nagid and acting vizier of Granada, was killed along with other Jews, courtiers and non-courtiers alike.[66] 4000 Jews were believed to have been killed in Granada that day, with devastating results to the Jewish population in the city.[67] Stereotypes and prejudice which defined ethnic distinctions and determine social distance served as a justification to violently eliminate different ethnic groups.

Although Jews did live in Granada after the massacre and continued to participate in the court, they were never again as powerful as they had been in the time of the two Nagids.[68] The Taifa kingdoms continued for another thirty years until the Zirids of Granada enlisted the help the Almoravides, a religiously orthodox group of Berbers from the North of Africa. After taking control of southern Spain in 1090, the Almoravides expelled the Jews and

---

[66]Wasserstein, 209.

[67]David Wasserstein, "Jewish Elites of al-Andalus," The Jews of Medieval Islam: Community, Society, and Identity, Daniel Frank ed., (New York: E.J. Brill, 1995), 107-8.

[68]Wasserstein, The Rise and Fall of the Party Kings, 209.

Christians from al-Andalus in an attempt to purify Muslim society and regain control of the land in the name of Islam. The diverse and thriving society of al-Andalus was forever changed.

SECULAR HEBREW POETRY AND *CONVIVENCIA*

Andalusian Poetics

In the wake of Islamic success and the Arabization of the Jews of the Mediterranean Jewish intellectuals experienced a cultural inferiority complex. The most prominent scholar, Saadaya Gaon (ce 882-942) , created works that responded to the challenges posed by Islamic culture. Apologetic in nature, his work was written to explain the failures of Hebrew culture.[69] Following Gaon's work and ideas, Jewish scholars compared their culture to Arabic culture and immersed themselves in scholarly pursuits in an effort to correct their self imposed feelings of inferiority. In the face of Arabic culture, the Hebrew scholars saw something that caused them to question their own faith. The pursuit of Hebrew culture by Gaon and his followers was a way to re-establish the Jewish intelligentsia's faith in their religion and culture.

Gaon worked to redress the prevailing ignorance of the Hebrew language and culture.[70] He composed an Arabic version of the Bible and also promoted scholarship in Hebrew grammar for the scientific study of Scripture.[71] By adapting the Bible to the language all Jews

---

[69]Assis, 113.

[70]Brann, 27.

[71]Brann, 26.

spoke, Gaon sought to expand knowledge of Hebrew culture among the Jews. His study of Hebrew vocabulary and grammar was to better understand the Scriptures in their original form. Both accomplishments strengthened Hebrew culture; the first made the Hebrew Bible more accessible to the Jewish community, and the second, allowed for better translation and understanding of the Bible. Saadaya Gaon's work and prestige as a Jewish scholar made him an influential character in the minds of future Jewish literati of the Mediterranean and al-Andalus.

The Jewish intelligentsia, ardent followers of the newly invigorated pursuit of Hebrew culture, benefited from their presence at court. The court also provided a means to understanding Arabic culture and a way to learn from a culture and thus improve their own.

> Jews leaned the Arabic language and literary models not by passively absorbing them from the environment [of the courts] but through concentrated study.[72]

Because of their study, Hebrew cultural scholarship began to parallel Arab culture through its literary styles. More importantly, the Hebrew Bible began to be used as a linguistic and literary resource.[73] By borrowing Arabic standards of style and extending their

---

[72]Raymond P. Scheindlin, Wine, Women, and Death: Medieval Hebrew Poems on the Good Life, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 5.

[73]Brann, 23.

meanings to incorporate Hebrew culture, the Jewish intelligentsia began to "consider biblical form aesthetically and stylistically perfect just as its content was considered authoritative."[74] For the Jewish courtier poets, Arabic culture provided new ways to establish the superiority of Hebrew culture and religion.

The Jews also paralleled the culture of the Muslim courts by reinforcing the prestige of scholarship. It is through patronage that most scholars found work and Hebrew cultural pursuit found support. By employing their economic resources and exerting considerable social prestige, Jewish courtier patrons were able to encourage production and dissemination of Hebrew poetry as well as philosophical speculation and scientific research.[75] These acts of patronage were an integral part of the Muslim court life and provided a means for scholars to pursue literature and scholarship as a vocation. The Jewish courtiers created their own system of patronage that paralleled their Muslim counterparts and with it helped to establish centers of learning and scholarship in the Jewish community.

The patronage of Hasday Shaprut (905-975) laid the groundwork which eventually made al-Andalus a center of Hebrew scholarship and learning. His generosity and ambition attracted

---

[74]Brann, 23.

[75]Brann, 20.

scholars from the east, many of whom were disciples of Saadaya Gaon. One such scholar, Dunash ben Labrat (d.c. 990), after arriving in al-Andalus, created a new innovation in Hebrew poetry. Using the newly established Andalusian linguistic standard of pure biblical diction, or original Hebrew in which the Bible was written, Dunash composed poetry arranged in Arabic meters. This new metrical system "transposed the distinctive prosodic patterns of Arabic into Hebrew."[76] His innovative fusion became known as Hebrew secular poetry and came to distinguish the Jewish courtier poets of al-Andalus.

Hebrew secular poetry was seen as a striking innovation for two reasons. First, it revived the use of biblical vocabulary and diction.[77] Before the late tenth century, poetry had been written in postbiblical Hebrew, created in Rome and "containing many elements derived from or akin to Greek, Latin and Arabic."[78] Poetry written in this form of Hebrew remained in the genre of liturgy or sacred writings.[79] Hebrew in its pure form had fallen into disuse because of the difficulty of its grammar and also the infrequency of its use. Secondly, by employing Arabic meters, Hebrew poetry mixed sacred

---

[76]Brann, 30.

[77]Pagis, 6.

[78]Goitien, 64.

[79]Pagis, 6.

words with a profane form. This characteristic "seem[ed] to imply an equivalence between Arabic, at most a profane cognate and Hebrew, the sacred language."[80] Hebrew poetry, before Dunash, had remained true to tradition, keeping within sacred forms and styles. The work of Dunash took Hebrew poetry into new territory, the secular, while using the sacred language of the Bible. These distinguishing characteristics became the standards of secular Hebrew poetry, known as Andalusian poetics.

Andalusian poetics were easily acquired by the Jewish courtiers through their simultaneous study of Hebrew culture and Arabic culture, or *adab*. *Adab* was secular in nature because they were conceived before the establishment of Islam. This allowed the Jewish courtiers to openly embrace and pursue *adab* without religious inhibitions.[81] Furthermore, *adab* taught the Jewish courtiers all about Arab poetical forms. Identified as proficiency in literary composition, encompassing many disciplines and reflecting the nature and the extent of an Arabic education, *adab* provided the courtier with the knowledge and understanding of Arabic poetry's standards.[82] These standards were a framework that the Jewish courtier poet incorporated into Andalusian poetics.

---

[80]Brann, 30.

[81]Scheindlin, 5.

[82]Anwar Chejne, Muslim Spain: Its History and Culture, (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1974), 198.

Adab also introduced new social standards of education and presentation, which not only affected their poetry but also the Jewish courtier's character. Because of their education in *adab*, the Jewish courtier poets acquired Arabic courtly norms which they applied to their own social standings as the elite of the Jewish community.

> Their aim [in education] was to be a part of the highest level of a society that judged a man largely by his social graces, linguistic skills, and literary taste.[83]

With their command of *adab*, Jewish courtier poets could be recognized for their education by their fellow Jews as well as their Muslim counterparts.[84] One's command of *adab*, while determining his social standings (along Arabic standards in their own peer group) also revealed the "high quality of soul, good upbringing, urbanity and courtesy" of a courtier.[85] The Jewish courtiers' study of *adab* enabled them to dwell in specific social circles as refined individuals, at court and in the Jewish community. Their acquisition of

---

[83]Scheindlin, 5.

[84]It must be noted here that regardless of the almost equal schooling by the Jewish courtiers and the Muslim courtiers, the Jewish courtiers were never considered as equals. Their ethnic status still separated them from their Muslim counterparts. It was written of Samuel Ha-Nagid by a Muslim historian: "This cursed man was a superior man, although God did not inform him of the right religion. One would believe that his letters were written by a pious Muslim." (Schippers, 54) This defect, in the eyes of the Muslims, still kept Jews on the outside of Muslim high society where they participated but never turly fit in.

[85]"Adab," The Encyclopaedia of Islam Vol. 1, A.R Gibb, J.H. Kramers, E. Lévi-Provençal and J. Schacht eds., (Leiden:E.J. Brill, 1960), 175.

Andalusian poetics determined not only their education but also the quality of their character.

Along with forms and standards of poetry and poetical creation borrowed from Arab culture, Andalusian poetics had another distinctive element that was from Hebrew culture. In secular Hebrew poetry, poets employed biblical Hebrew within the standardized Arabic form of poetry. A word in the Hebrew vocabulary held multiple meanings that were derived from the their use and significance in Scripture. The original biblical and, therefore, sacred meaning of certain expressions changed when they were transposed to the context of the court, a secular situation. In other instances, the expression from the words used was very much the same as in their biblical context.[86] Whether writing within the themes of the wine party or discussing the beauty of a woman, the redness of wine, or the grandeur of the court, Jewish courtier poets employed the vocabulary of the Bible along with the explicit and implicit religious allusions they contained.[87]

The innovation of Andalusian poetics along with the concentrated pursuit of the new poetry produced a reputation of excellence and creativity in Hebrew culture to the Jewish courtier poets of al-Andalus. It was not long until this new form of poetry,

---

[86]Schripper, 31.

[87]Alcalay, 162.

spread rapidly beyond the borders of al-Andalus.[88] The Jewish courtier poets of Muslim Spain were distinguished further when al-Andalus became the center of Hebrew scholarship after Babylonia fell at the end of the tenth century. The new esteem for secular Hebrew poetry and the poets of al-Andalus in the Mediterranean contributed to the extensive pursuit of the poetry by the Jewish courtier poets in the eleventh century.

What began as an effort to resurrect the Jewish intelligentsia's pride in Hebrew culture culminated in al-Andalus with the creation of Hebrew secular poetry. Encouraged by Arabic culture, Jewish courtiers revived their interest in the scholarly sophistication of Hebrew culture. This new form of Hebrew poetry reflected the prestige and education of the Jewish courtier poets. Arabic court culture gave Hebrew culture new standards by which to develop. These standards reinvigorated Hebrew culture aesthetically and stylistically. Yet it was from their own experience that the Jewish courtier poet based his poetry. This can be seen in the poetry itself.

> Secular poetry was concerned not with the congregation but with the individual--his emotions and meditations, *his place in society and the world.*[89]

---

[88]Pagis, 6.

[89]Pagis, 45.

The manipulation of Arabic conventions, the perception of the court and court participation, the conception of the court based on Hebrew ideology, and the incorporation of biblical references, were all used to define the courtly experience of the Jewish courtier poet as a part of Hebrew culture.

Secular Hebrew poetry was a new form of Hebrew high culture that accentuated the poet's courtly education and distinguished his place in society. The standards of Andalusian poetics, challenged Hebrew scholars to present a more mastered and sophisticated Hebrew culture. Hebrew secular poetry assured the Jewish courtier poets of the superiority of their culture. The poetry's success and prestige renewed Jewish faith in the superiority of Hebrew culture and therefore the Jewish religion during the eleventh century in al-Andalus.

The Veil of Conventions

Specific standards, derived from Arab courtly culture dictated the use of conventions in courtly poetry.

> Secular Hebrew poetry, which represented a fusion of Arabic prosody, form, and style with biblical Hebrew diction and imagery, was conventional in content and stylized form.[90]

These conventions ranged from themes to metaphors to the schematic form of the poetry. How the poets could combine and use the poetical conventions of secular Hebrew poetry set one poem apart from another. Therefore, a poet embraced the conventions in order to gain prestige for their creations. These conventions help to distinguish courtly poetry.

Examining the poetry, it appears that Jewish poets closely adhered to the conventions of Arabic poetry. Samuel's poem "The days of cold" is a good example.

> The days of cold are past and days
> of spring have buried winter's rains.
> The doves are sighted in our land;
> They flock to every lofty bough.
> So friends, be true, and keep your word.
> Come quickly, do not disappoint a friend.
> But come into my garden. There are
> Roses scented with myrrh to pluck,
> and drink with me, amid the buds and birds
> Assembled there to sing the summer's praise.
> Wine, red as my tears for loss of friends, or red
> as the blush on lovers' cheeks. [91]

---

[90]Brann, 7.

[91]Moses Ibn Ezra, "The Rose," Scheindlin trans., Wine, Women and Death, 35.

As in all the Hebrew secular poems of the era the speaker of the poem relishes in the beauty of the court garden. Samuel's use of nature is a common convention of the poetry. It is spring moving into summer. There is wine and the birds are singing. The speaker calls his friends together to make the scene complete. The poem seems to advocate the material beauty of the court with its utilization of the conventions of Arabic poetry.

Some critics have suggested that the presence of conventions in the poem remove the possibility of profundity and trap its intent in within specific genres. As one critic notes, wine poems "are either descriptive poems... or they are meditative poems in which the poet muses on the feelings usually sad ones, which the wine arouses in him."[92] Critics tend to see the "The days of cold" as a typical wine poetry, Arab in nature. The meaning of the poem is limited when definitions of its composition and subject matter are bound to simple conventions.

Yet the alleged limitations of conventions are swept away when the poetry is juxtaposed to its historical context. Moses Ibn Ezra (c.1055-1138) remarks on the transition between the fall of the caliph in Cordoba and the formation of the Taifa kingdoms:

> Then at the end of that century [ninth century] arose in Spain a

---

[92]Scheindlin, "A Miniature Anthology," 269.

> cruel war, which has no equal, and which was known under the name war of the Berbers. Then calamities of every kind spread and the world was full of misery. Hunger prevailed in all the cities and scarcity bore down on the people. The catastrophes also reached the gates of Cordoba itself. This town nearly fell into ruins. Then all sciences went into decay, because there were no scholars left and the people had their hands full with their misery. When times got better and the country could take a breath , another generation shone: its poems were beautiful and their themes were inspired by cheerful and pleasant life. [93]

In this passage Moses laments the loss of scholarship because of the ravages of war. After mentioning how Cordoba was hit by the atrocities of war he then describes the loss of scientific scholarship. By making this juxtaposition, Moses reveals the connection between scholarship and Cordoba, where the court of the Caliph was situated. Moses relays to the reader the terrible loss of scholarship, a casualty of war, which separated scholars from their pursuit of knowledge. Because these pursuits were done at court he is also expressing his lament for the loss of court life.

The similarities between Moses' historical comment and Samuel's poem are many. Samuel refers to the war as "The days of cold" (line 1) and "winter's rains" (line 2). In the ending verses he compares wine to the tears of his heart for friends lost during the storms of war. The remaining part of the poem is a call to those that will be, as Moses has described, "another generation." Samuel,

---

[93]Schippers, 51.

fulfilling the responsibilities of his authoritative position at court, is attempting after war to bring together those who Moses will later look on respectfully. The connection between the poem and the historical passage point to a common respect for court life by Moses and Samuel. Both men are saddened that the disappearance of the court because of war causes the loss of learning and the pursuit of scholarship.

Another historical passage that reinforces Samuel's poem as an expression of his patronage of scholarship at the court is a well quoted description of Hebrew poetry and court life in al-Andalus. Ibn Daud, a twelfth-century historian and apologist wrote, "In the days of Nasi Hasday they[the poets] began to chirp, while in the days of Samuel ha-Nagid, they burst into song."[94] This comment reinforces the message of Samuel's poem. The chirping birds that Samuel writes about are the poets who appear after the war and whose verse gives splendor to the court. In the poem, his invitation to the court party alludes to his patronage. In the historical passage when Samuel is associated with Hasday, he too is recognized as a patron of Jewish scholarship. The historical context gives a deeper meaning to Samuel's participation in the court party, as well as the importance of the court for scholarship. The conventions which seem

---

[94]quoted in Stillman, 59.

to limit the poet's expression to only hedonistic viewpoints, are rather a tool for self-expression.

In a similar fashion, Moses has a poem which displays his respect for the court and his reasons for promoting court life. In another seemingly conventional poem, Moses displays the darkness of Berber culture and the light of court culture by writing about his disappointment in the dark powers of winter and his elation at the return of the sun.

> Decembers frost has fled like shadows; gone
> Are Winter's rains, his horse and cavaliers.
> The sun has come around to Ares' head,
> Alighted there and settled on his throne.
> The hills are wearing hats that bedecked with buds;
> The valley has on vests of grass and herbs,
> Releasing fragrances for us to sense,
> Throughout the winter hidden deep inside.
>
> Pass round the cup that makes my joy to rule,
> And roots out sorrow from my aching heart;
> And spill the waters of my tears to quench
> Its flames that burn so hot within.
> Beware of Time: the gifts that he bestows
> Are venom mixed with honey to taste sweet.
> Beguile yourself at morning with his joys,
> But know that they will vanish with the sun.
>
> So drink by day till the sunset washes the silver with golden light.
> And drink in the dark till dawn puts all his negro troops to flight.[95]

---

[95]Moses Ibn Ezra, "December's Frost," Scheindlin trans., Wine, Women, and Death, 143.

In the first stanza Moses reveals his preference for the beauty of the court, with its robed members, in contrast to the dark and treacherous storm of war. His speech about the sun in lines three and four alludes to the presence of a patron, respectful and regal in comparison to the savage nature of the warrior spoken of in the first two lines. The presence of the patron or nobleman, represented by the sun, brings the court together. In the presence of the sun, the members of the court are summoned, such as the hills and the buds as is mentioned in the fifth line of the poem. Yet, Moses warns that one should revel in the presence of the court, knowing that the joys found in the gathering of friends and the pursuit of letters can easily disappear as soon as the sun is gone. In the end, time changes the night to day, and the court and all of its true beauty and greatness return. The poem is a piece of self-expression, where Moses uses conventions to state his opinions.

Examining the poem further uncovers Moses manipulation of conventions to speak about a specific ethnic group of al-Andalus. The Berbers were stereotyped as violent warriors. Just as Samuel begins his poem describing life after war, Moses too speaks of winter as war with its warriors on horseback (line 1). In this line Moses is alluding to the *fitna*, or Berber war at the end of the ninth century, which he spoke of in his historical passage. It was this war that brought down the revered court of Cordoba. The Berbers led the uprising against the court; therefore, following the war, the Berbers

were characterized in al-Andalus as violent and arrogant soldiers and horsemen.[96] Moses expresses this stereotype in his poem, and again pushes the boundaries of poetical conventions of subject and theme.

Moses manipulates Arabic conventions further in the middle stanza of the poem. Here he asks for the wine, as in convention a lover would do to relieve the overriding emotions he has for an unrequited love or separation from his beloved. This theme is out of place because the poem does not speak of a beloved, as conventions would dictate. When a "poem reverses the usual posture...or rather ignores it, [then it] conveys (certainly intends to convey) a personal experience."[97] The veil of convention has been stripped away by Moses maneuvering. Therefore, it can be presumed, the speaker's sorrow is the result of the cold harshness of winter or of the war, which has caused the absence of the court.

In both poems, Samuel and Moses take certain liberties with the conventions of Arabic poetry. Originally it was thought that the conventions used in secular Hebrew poetry eliminated the possibility of individuality or self-expression within the poetry.

> Its *style*, [scholars] argue, was for all its splendor rather formulaic, restricted by prosodic and rhetorical

---

[96]Glick, Islamic and Christian Spain, 184.

[97]Pagis, 14.

> conventions; the *scope* of the school was limited by a narrow selection of themes and ever-recurring motifs; and its *intent*, ...often down played the individual and the specific in favor of virtuoso reworkings[sic] of traditional material for the enjoyment of a sophisticated audience. [T]his seemed a poetry of wit, not of experience.[98]

But from the explanations given above of Samuel's and Moses' poems, the poets used the conventions as a tool for self-expression. Both "Days of Cold" and "December's Frost" mention war, as it happened historically in the period when the poems were composed. In doing so, Samuel and Moses present subject matter that moves beyond regulated courtly standards.[99] In "December's Frost" Moses has manipulated conventional rhetoric to declare his personal voice. Moses talks of his preference for the court and his dismay at its dismantling because of war. As a man of letters, the presence of the court allows him to pursue his livelihood. Samuel in "The days of cold" describes how he values the court as a place of scholarship and not as a festive party. Samuel was trying to increase the participation in the court and the prestige of his circle of poets. He used his poetry and position at court to promote the creation of secular Hebrew poetry as a patron of Jewish courtier poets. In either

---

[98]Pagis, 6.

[99]See Dan Pagis, 8. "By 'individuality' scholars have also meant the poem's setting, the situation it presents.... For these settings and motifs underwent essential changes, some very striking and obvious...."

case, the poets present their own voices and not the generic voice of convention.

Both Samuel and Moses have extended the meaning and use of Arab poetical conventions and made it evident that the Hebrew courtier poets were not imitating the courtly conventions. Moreover, they were not just assimilating Arab poetics. Because of the presence of a personal voice and individual style within their courtly creations, the Jewish courtier poets exhibit cultural borrowing. The Jewish courtier poets took the values of Arabic culture and sought new meanings in them which applied to their own experience and culture.[100] Their creation of secular Hebrew poetry was a part of Hebrew culture at court and not Muslim court culture.

---

[100]Glick, Islamic and Christian Spain, 293.

The Controversy of Innovation: Ambiguity and Tradition

Even with the knowledge that Samuel and Moses used the conventions of Arab poetry to express their experience, controversy remains about the use of Arab culture to structure expression written in Hebrew. Two critics, Ross Brann and Raymond Scheindlin are literary scholars who focus on the seemingly conflicting relationship between Hebrew and Arab culture.

Both Brann and Scheindlin believe that the sacred can not coexist with the secular without conflict or confusion. Brann poses the question: "How did the poets handle the contradiction of living within two cultures *governed by fundamentally opposing value systems?* "[emphasis mine][101] Brann believes that Arab and Hebrew culture are naturally separated and different, and therefore names the joining of both cultures in the poetry as a symbiosis or the coexistence of two dissimilar objects. Moreover, Scheindlin comments that "the [Jewish courtier poets] inhabited two worlds, and as long as their political and social status was stable, they did not dwell on the contradictions between them."[102] Jewish participation in the courts and through their composition of the poetry is interpreted as a conflict of cultures. In day to day life, the courtiers wrote

---

[101]Brann, 18.

[102]Scheindlin, Wine , Women and Death, 7.

poetry at court and also worshiped God in the sacred world of the synagogue but according to Scheindlin, the courtiers were aware of the two separate spaces they were inhabiting but did not acknowledge the dichotomy. Either space could not blend into the other because Hebrew culture was sacred while Arab culture was worldly. Both Brann and Scheindlin would agree the poet was a courtier only in the court and a Jew only in the synagogue.

The opposition of both worlds, as described by Scheindlin and Brann, had an affect on the Jewish courtier poets that they believe is evident in secular Hebrew poetry. Both critics define the participation in dual worlds as ambivalence on the part of the Jewish courtier poets. Brann, by identifying court culture as something foreign to Hebrew culture, presents a poet in conflict who must choose one value system or another. He claims that the Jewish courtier poets composed secular Hebrew poetry as a sign of their own conflict with contradictory literary, social, and religious commitments.[103] Scheindlin believes ambivalence, which arises out of "tensions between the demands of religion and the attraction of the larger society," to be a common part of aristocratic lifestyle in the Golden Age.[104] Just like Brann, he also believes that the poets expressed their confusion, about the opposition of the sacred and the

---

[103]Brann, 22.

[104]Scheindlin, "A Miniature Anthology," 277, 291.

secular worlds in which they lived through their poetry. For both Brann and Scheindlin, the meaning of the poetry rests in the opposition of Hebrew and Arab culture, and signifies a conflict of spirit.

"The Reward" by Samuel Ha-Nagid appears as an example of this, in Brann and Scheindlin's opinions. This poem combines participation at court with a person's commitment to God.

> Your debt to God is righteously to live,
> And His to you, your recompense to give.
> Do not wear out your days in serving God;
> Some time devote to Him, some to yourself.
>
> To Him give half your day, to work the rest;
> But give the jug no rest throughout the night.
> Put out your lamps! Use crystal cups for light.
> Away with singers! Bottles are better than lutes.
>
> No song, nor wine, nor friend beneath the sword--
> These three, O fools, are all of life's reward.[105]

Scheindlin dismisses the reference to God by designating it as parody. He writes, "...but the theologically outrageous notion that God owes man anything at all turns the tone to parody."[106] In his opinion, the literal message of the poem can not be seriously considered as Samuel's viewpoint. The Hebrew elements about God and Jewish servitude, when mixed with the Arabic form of the poem, rescind the authentic nature of the sacred references. Scheindlin

---

[105]Samuel Ha-Nagid, "The Reward," Scheindlin trans., "A Miniature Anthology," 285.

[106]Sheindlin, "A Miniature Anthology," 289.

continues, in his comments on the poem, "...we realize that the poet has marshaled all this sententiousness in order to advise us to devote as much of our lives to pleasure as we dare."[107] In his opinion, the sacred references are only pithy sayings. Using them, Samuel tries to establish an authoritative voice that deserves respect because he uses the Talmud. Samuel loses Scheindlin's respect because he is combining the sacred words with the court poetry. Because of Scheindlin's belief in the opposition of Hebrew and court culture he can not accept the literal meaning of the poem or seriously consider the voice of the poet as it is presented in the poem.

Another poem that seems to illustrate this opposition of worlds is Moses' poem entitled "The Rose".

The garden wears a colored coat,
The lawn has on embroidered robes,
The trees are wearing checkered shifts,
They show their wonders to every eye,
And every bud renewed by spring
Comes smiling forth to greet his lord.
See! Before them marches a rose,
Kingly, his throne above them borne,
Freed of the leaves that have guarded him,
No more to wear his prison clothes.
Who will refuse to toast him there?
Such a man his sin will bear.[108]

---

[107]Scheindlin, "A Miniature Anthology," 286.

[108]Moses Ibn Ezra, "The Rose," Scheindlin trans., Wine, Women and Death, 35.

Moses begins the poem with a display of the court setting. All the players in the court are dressed in appropriate attire and "renewed by spring" (line 5). The poem is an exaltation of the king who has come forth dressed appropriately just like his subjects. Conventions set the poem at court: the use of nature, the praise of wine, and the king of the court, who appears as a rose. The poem appears to be a typical example of courtly poetics and values. Scheindlin, in his interpretation, defines this poem a declaration of the social rules for the secular.

> The courtiers rejoice at the restoration of their lord but their lord expects more from them than mere joy; he expects an act of allegiance, an affirmation of his courtiers' fealty. The force of this political metaphor would have been acutely felt by the courtier-rabbis of Moses Ibn Ezra's circle. King Rose has a demand to make his followers: in allegiance to him, they are all to drink wine in the garden, and whoever abstains will bear his guilt.[109]

Because Scheindlin believes that the sacred world and the secular world were lived in separately by the Jewish courtier poets, he defines the last lines of the poem, "Who will refuse to toast him there? Such a man his sin will bear"(lines 11,12) as having a political tone.[110] With viewpoints such as Scheindlin's the reader is given little room to accept and understand the poem as it appears. The

---

[109]Scheindlin, "An Miniature Anthology," 279.

[110]Scheindlin, "A Miniature Anthology," 279.

reader must choose sides between what the poet writes and how the critic perceives the reality of the Jewish courtier poets.

Earlier Hebrew wine songs have caused a similar stir with critics. The first Hebrew wine song composed by Dunash Ben Labrat (before 960) contained similar juxtapositions of sacred and secular as Samuel's and Moses' work. Arabic prose was mixed with ideas of Jewish tradition:

> And he said: "Don't sleep! Drink fine wine,
> amidst myrrh and lilies, henna and aloes,
> in groves of pomegranates, palms and vines
> lined with lovely saplings, coursed by tamarisks,
> the murmur of fountains, the strain of lutes
> and the sound of minstrels with flutes and lyres.
> Every tree is full, every branch graced by fruit
> and the birds, each in kind, lilt among the leaves.
> The doves voice a plaintive melody and their
> mates answer, cooing like deep-toned reeds.
> We'll drink by the lily-bordered flower beds,
> we'll eat sweets and wash them down by the bowlful,
> we'll raise our goblets and act like giants.
> In the morning I'll rise to slaughter
> ample choice bulls, rams and calves.
> We'll anoint ourselves with fine oil
> and burn incense made of aloes.
> Come on, before fate lowers its boom--
> let's enjoy ourselves in peace.
>
> I lashed out at him: Be still, be still.
> How can this come first, when the Temple,
> God's footstool, has fallen to the uncircumcised?
>
> You spoke like a fool, you chose idle rest
> Your talk is vain, like that of dolts and curs!
> You left off studying the Law of God the Highest,
> even now, as you rejoice, jackals run wild in Zion.
>
> How can we drink wine
> how even raise our eyes
> when we are nothing,

loathed and despised?[111]

The obvious contradiction in attitude between the advocator of the court and the speaker of the poem presents two viewpoints inhabiting the same space at court. Applying Scheindlin's interpretation of Samuel's poem to Dunash's work one is left with the impression that the poet is more loyal to the message given by the Hebrew elements of the poem than the courtly elements. According to these critics a reader can not believe in a balanced coexistence of the beginning stanza and the last three stanzas of Dunash's poem but instead must focus on the perceived tension of the poet's position as a Jewish courtier.

Ammiel Alcalay in his chapter entitled "A Garden Enclosed" explains the thoughts of such critics of Dunash's work. Just as Scheindlin and Brann advocate that the Hebrew and Arabic elements can not coexist in the poetry without ambiguity, Dunash's critics also argue that the poet and the reader must choose sides between the two elements in the poem:

> Interpretation of the poem has also, traditionally, been divided into two schools of thought. One sees the first long stanza as a somewhat clumsy but nevertheless acceptable attempt at imitating an Arabic wine song with the last three short stanzas apologetically tacked on as a reassuring nod to "tradition." The second version sees things the other way around: the first stanza as a preening, almost contemptuous display of prowess mocking "oriental" indolence, with the last three stanzas carrying the weight and the real message of the poem:

---

[111]Dunash Labrat, "And he said," Alcalay, 160-161.

> the real message, again, being "tradition, tradition, tradition," but this time with the accent and intonation of Tevye from *Fiddler on the Roof*, heaping guilt upon a fellow Jew wandering out of the fold. [112]

In either school of thought, Alcalay points out that Hebrew tradition is always given greater legitimacy in the poem. With the first school of thought, the Arab poetic form is attempted but an apology is given for this attempt. The second school sees an overwhelming support for tradition and the first long stanza as more of a mockery than a true pursuit of Arabic form and theme. In both cases, the critics are placing a stronger significance on Jewish tradition in the life of the poet and giving very little recognition to the significance of court culture solely because the poet is Jewish.

Just as understanding of Samuel's and Moses' poems is limited by an emphasis on incompatibility between Jewish tradition and Arab culture, Dunash's poem creates similar confusion for its critics according to Alcalay. He notes that the confusion lies in the fusion of the religious or traditional elements of the poetry with the secular. Yet he does not attribute the confusion to the contradiction of worlds but rather "th[e] relationship of medieval literature to the 'religious' that poses the most problems in many contemporary approaches to it."[113] In both Brann and Scheindlin's work, there seems to be no

---

[112]Alcalay, 161.

[113] Alcalay, 162.

attempt to understand the approach to religion taken by the Jewish courtier poets in the Middle Ages. Such an understanding investigation would explain the fusion of the secular and the religious. Dan Pagis agrees, "We tend to attribute to Jewish tradition a more puritanical attitude then it actually held."[114]

External evidence suggests that peaceful coexistence of the religious and non-religious values made up the ethical system of the Jewish courtier poets. In evaluating the coexistence of these elements in the letters of the Cairo Geniza, S.D. Goitien discovered that,

> The religious and non-religious values often paralleled one another so closely that the emphasis on one or the other, or on both, depended in each case on the circumstances, and even more on the social position and individuality of the writer and receiver of the Geniza letter.[115]

Goitien has pointed out that the maxims and principles of conduct known from the books on statecraft and courtly life were "incorporated in [the] moral code of the Jewish courtier poet."[116] In writing letters and poems, the Jewish courtier wrote under the standards that controlled both their Hebrew culture and the ideals of

---

[114]Pagis, 62.

[115]S.D. Goitien editor, "Religion in everyday life as reflected in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza," Religion in a Religious Age, (Cambridge: Association for Jewish Studies, 1974), 9.

[116]Goitien, Religin in a Religious Age, 9.

the court. In doing so, these elements coexisted in their work, just like they did in the ethics of the Jewish courtier poets.

Moreover, the Jews were not alone in the fusion of the sacred and the secular worlds in their lives and work. Not only did the norms of the court seem to contradict Jewish tradition, but "neither were they fully in accord with the religious law and religious spirit of the larger society from which they had been adopted."[117] Because religious law defined the secular world, Muslim society held many contradictions as well. In their own poetry, "religious images [such as comparing love to the joys of Paradise] like these [were] common, despite the fact that their use in this fashion [did] not conform to the tenets of Islam."[118] It seems that courtly culture accepted the contradictions of worldly values and traditional religious values. As members and students of the courts, the Jewish courtier poets learned and accepted this balance of secular and sacred and thrived culturally.

This perspective of court values when applied to the poetry, relieves the presumed tension between the sacred and the secular elements. In light of Alcalay's interpretation of Dunash's poem, Samuel's "Reward" displays a delicate balance of Hebrew and Arabic

---

[117]Scheindlin, "A Miniature Anthology," 274.

[118]Linda Fish Compton, Andalusian Lyrical Poetry and Old Spanish Love Songs: The Muwashshah and its Kharja, (New York:New York University Press, 1976), 63.

elements that epitomize the values and life of the Jewish courtier poets where the sacred and the secular were inter-related to each other.

> Your debt to God is righteously to live,
> And His to you, your recompense to give.
> Do not wear out your days in serving God;
> Some time devote to Him, some to yourself.
>
> To Him give half your day, to work the rest;
> But give the jug no rest throughout the night.
> Put out your lamps! Use crystal cups for light.
> Away with singers! Bottles are better than lutes.
>
> No song, nor wine, nor friend beneath the sward--
> These three, O fools, are all of life's reward.[119]

The first stanza explains what is known as "the Talmudic ideal of *Torach `im derekh erets*, study and prayer paired with work for one's livelihood."[120] Instead of the court life being a diversion for the courtier, the second stanza calls the poets to court to compose poetry within the conventions of Andalusian poetics. It was in the courts that poetry was composed and in line six of the poem Samuel writes: "But give the jug no rest throughout the night." As was explained in Samuel's poem "the days of cold" and Moses' poem "December's Frost," the call to court was signified by the invitation to drink. In the lines of the poem that follow, "Put out your lamps! Use crystal cups for light. / Away with singers! Bottles are better than lutes."

---

[119]Samuel Ha-Nagid, "The Reward," Scheindlin trans., "A Miniature Anthology," 285.

[120]Goitien, Religion in a Religious Age, 13.

(lines 7,8), Samuel asks the courtiers to participate in the court and he sends away the entertainment so that the courtiers can focus on their poetry. Samuel in the poem is advocating the life of the Jewish courtier poets, where their work was done at court.

It was Saadaya Gaon (ce 882-942) whose feelings defined the "balance reached after controversies and doubts."[121] He "disapprov[ed] of asceticism and of a life totally immersed in [one's] business or other occupations."[122] The vocation and livelihood of the Jewish courtier poets was secular Hebrew poetry, based on the conventions of Andalusian poetics. It was in the court that these men pursued their profession. The Jewish courtier poets led a life no different than the "Jewish middle class of skilled artisans, merchants, druggist and physicians, who worked hard for a livelihood, but also were diligent with their prayers and eager to do...religious study."[123]

Samuel advocates the balanced life described by Gaon in the last stanza of the poem. The last lines declare that all of the rewards, song, wine and friends, are given while the Jew is performing his service to God through the balanced life. The Jews believed that God was constantly watching their actions and thus they were always

---

[121]Goitien, Religion in a Religious Age, 13.

[122]Goitien, Religion in a Religious Age, 13.

[123]Goitien, Religion in a Religious Age, 13.

being judged by Him. This viewpoint provided security and hope to the Jews that they would be "reward[ed] in this world, or at least in the world to come."[124] "The Reward" is not a contradiction of the sacred and the secular; it is a poem that promotes the Jewish way of life -- the balance of religious and worldly pursuits in service to God.

Moses' poem "The Rose" can be understood in the same manner. Contrary to Scheindlin's opinion, the poem is not restricted to the court party. The last lines of the poem read, "Who will refuse to toast him there?/ Such a man his sin will bear" (lines 11,12). With the mere mention of the word "sin" Moses introduces a new element into the poetry. When he equates the act of refusal to a sin, Moses is placing the judgement of court participation in the hands of God. It is not an act judged by worldly standards, but by the divine standards of God. These last lines encompass one of the main beliefs of Judaism and also Islam. It is understood that "Islam, like Judaism, is a religion of commandments, in which the minute observance of ritual and ethical injunctions is intended to sanctify every moment of the believer's life and to make him continuously aware of his being a servant of God."[125] As a courtier, the standards of court are followed to uphold a courtier's devotion to God. If the

---

[124]S.D. Goitien, "Attitutdes Towards Government," Studies in Islamic History and Institutions, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966), 21.

[125]Goitien, "Attitudes Towards Government," 20.

standards are ignored or refused by arrogance, the courtier will be punished for the sin he has committed. By defining the participation at court as is done in the last lines of the poem, Moses is expressing the moral codes of the Jewish courtier poets that intertwine both religious and non-religious values.

Both Samuel's and Moses' poems contain Hebrew and Arabic elements that, when joined in the poetry seem to oppose each other, instead of working together. Yet by studying the moral values of the Jewish courtier poets, which are a mix of court life and Jewish life as conceptualized during the Middle Ages, the poetry is not about conflict nor contradiction. Clarifying the values of the Jewish courtier poets as a balance between the secular and the sacred opens the poetry to different interpretations. Furthermore, the poetry reflects the poets lives. The Hebrew and Arabic elements, just as they commune in the poetry, coexist in the life of the courtier poet without being consumed by a contradiction of worlds and loyalties.

Embedding: Biblical References and Secular Hebrew Poetry

Embedding, or the incorporation of biblical references in the poetry, is another element of Andalusian poetics that distracts critics. Biblical references are thought to be incompatible with conventional Arabic court poetry because of their religious significance. For the modern-day reader, these biblical references can be deciphered through the meanings of the Hebrew words used. These references are difficult to decipher; however, because secular Hebrew poetry places these references outside of their normal context.[126] Therefore, the Biblical passages, because they are not in their original context can be obscure.

Many of the biblical references are obscured further because of the education and skills necessary to compose and comprehend the poetry.

> Tampoco es sencilla la lengua que emplean los poetas, ya que aunque procuran que sea la misma de la Biblia, su predilección por los términos poco frecuentes, el rebuscamiento en muchos casos, y las figuras retóricas inspiradas en los códigos de estética de la época habitualmente seguidos por los poetas árabes, así como las alusiones tomadas de la propia tradición judía bíblica y rabínica, dificultan no poco la lectura y comprensión de la poesía hispanohebrea.[127]

---

[126]Schippers, 37.

[127]Frederico Pérez Castro, Poesía Secular Hispano-Hebrea, (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigacines Cientificas, Instituto de Filogía, 1989), 16-17.

> [Neither is the language that the poets used simple, even though they make sure that it is the same language as the Bible, their predilection for infrequent terms, in many cases the esoteric, and the rhetorical figures inspired by the aesthetic codes of the time, habitually followed by Arab poets, like the allusions adopted from their Biblical and Rabbinical Hebrew tradition, rather obstruct the reading and comprehension of the Sephardic poetry. (translation mine)]

A reader uneducated in the courtly standards of the Jewish courtier poets, is excluded from a full understanding of the poetry. Thus, instead of the poetry being constructed solely to convey a meaning, the poetry becomes a display of a poet's astute education through his ability to include hidden biblical references. The obscure nature of the biblical references is an obstacle to the poets' meaning and the reader's acceptance of the poem.

The use of the biblical allusions and language can be interpreted as another accessory to enhance the ornate nature of the poetry. Andalusian poetics conceptualized poetry as a "consciously crafted artifact, an ornamented garment fitted onto an autonomous subject."[128] The imagery of the poetry, ornate with literary references, metaphors and other rhetorical tools, did not affect the subject matter of the poem. For example, in Moses' poem "December's frost", there are two biblical references found. The last line reads, "y por la noche -- hasta que huya como un negro/ y la mano del alba agarre su talón." (lines15,16); (and through the night-- until the night flees like a Black man with the sunrise's claw

---

[128]Pagis, 19.

grabbing at its heel. [translation mine]) In a Spanish translation by Frederico Pérez Castro there is a note given for the last line that refers to Genesis 25:26. It reads: "Afterwards his brother came forth, and his hand had taken hold of Esau's heel; so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them." In the biblical story of Esau and Jacob, the first is a hunter and the second a tent dweller. This biblical reference not only gives a mental image for the last line of the poem, it also defines the main characters of the poem. The sun is Jacob, who in the passage is a man of the tent and "el negro" is Esau, who is a hunter. Esau as a hunter is likened to the winter or the war in the poem. Knowledge of the passage from Genesis connects the imagery of the poem and enriches its colors and dimensions.

The use of a biblical reference as an ornament is also evident in line seven and eight from the Hebrew words used. "Releasing fragrances for us to sense,/ Throughout the winter hidden deep inside."[129] In the poem the scents of the garden that are being released were withheld by winter's storm. This line refers to the biblical passage from Job 31:33. It reads, "If I have concealed my transgressions from men,/by hiding my iniquity in my bosom." The words "concealed" and "hidden" are central to the passage. The lines of poetry are a metaphor to the withholding of festivities and

---

[129]Scheindlin, Wine, Women, and Death, 134.

scholarship at the court. By including this reference within the line of poetry, Moses emphasizes the act of hiding and deepens the description of the concealment of the court by winter's storms. This biblical reference emphasizes the imagery of the poem by making the concept of withholding more profound, and reinforces Moses' ability to mix the two cultural traditions.

Samuel's poem "We pass our lives" features more examples of hidden biblical references. Some references are easy to decipher, but others in the poem are not.

> My friends we pass our lives if in sleep;
> Our pleasures and our pains are merely dreams.
> But stop your ears to all such things, and shut
> Your eyes--may Heaven grant your strength!--
> Don't speculate on hidden things; leave that
> To God, the Hidden One, whose eyes sees all.
>
> But send the lass who plays the lute
> To fill the cup with coral drink,
> Put up in kegs in Adam's time,
> Or else just after Noah's flood,
> A pungent wine, like frankincense,
> A glittering wine, like gold and gems,
> Such wine as concubines and queens
> Would bring King David long ago.
>
> The day they poured that wine into the drum,
> King David's singer Jerimoth would strum
> And sing: "May such wine as this be kept
> Preserved and stored in sealed-up kegs and saved
> For all who crave the water of the grape,
> For every man who holds the cup with skill,
> Who keeps the rule Ecclesiastes gave,
> Revels, and fears the tortures of the grave."[130]

---

[130]Samuel Ha-Nagid, "Pass our lives," Wine, Women and Death, Scheindlin trans., 55.

There are three obvious biblical references. In the second stanza he speaks of "Adam's time" or the Garden of Eden, before the fall. In the next line he alludes to the Great Flood when Noah was on the Ark. Closing the middle stanza he refers to the time of King David, the second king of Israel. These references are easy to decipher and understand. Within the poem they act as images which emphasize the age of the wine and also its greatness because of the historical figures it is associated with. The final stanza includes more obscure biblical references -- the rule of Ecclesiastes. Jerimoth, a court musician of King David's mentions Ecclesiastes. Samuel's choice of Jerimoth, a character mentioned only once in the Bible, displays his erudition. This reference also situates the poem and the values of the rule of Ecclesiastes at court. Because Jerimoth speaks about Ecclesiastes , the discussion of the poem becomes a discussion at court. Jerimoth is expressing the values of the Jewish courtier.

Both Brann and Scheindlin believe that these are superficial references "included in an attempt to sacralize [Samuel's] unique literary...endeavors."[131] Instead of the biblical references enriching the images, characters or setting of the poem, these critics believe that the use of biblical references is a misguided effort to give sacred

---

[131]Brann, 58.

recognition and legitimacy to the author's own participation in court life. Brann himself claims,

> Such a romantic imagination as the Nagid's, and such a bold ideological program, nearly obscure the rhetorical strategy: to foster a typological association (that is, of historical recurrence) which will confer upon him complete legitimacy.[132]

Agreeing with Brann's opinion of Samuel, Scheindlin remarks about the mentioning of Jerimoth in line sixteen of the poem: "Here the Nagid has outdone himself in obscurity, choosing as King David's spokesman a biblical personage that even a medieval rabbi might have been slow to identify."[133] Scheindlin's comment paints an egoistic picture of the Nagid who is more interested in displaying his education than creating good poetry. For Brann and Scheindlin, the presence of biblical allusions support Samuel's personal agenda to immortalize his courtly position and personality. The typologies that are utilized in the poetry are not connected to the subject or theme of the poem, but rather Samuel and his participation at court.

It is the essence of "embedding" that can mislead readers such as Brann and Scheindlin. Embedding is significant to secular Hebrew poetry because it makes the poetry distinct to Hebrew culture and not an imitation of Arabic courtly poetics and conventions. Alcalay explains its usage in the poetry:

---

[132]Brann, 55.

[133]Scheindlin, "A Miniature Anthology," 290.

> Poets often begin from citations embedded within the body of the text so as to make them appear as if they were added on latter as fillers.[134]

This statement shows how easy it is to observe the historical references of the Bible as separate from the poem itself, as if they were only flourishes which enhanced the poet and not the poem. It was part of the poets' practice to make references appear as appendages. But "embedding" also gave purpose to biblical references beyond ornamentation. Al-Harizi (c.1170-1235), who wrote to preserve the methods of Andalusian poetics explains embedding further and in doing so refutes Brann's and Scheindlin's arguments.

> There are ways to poetry, and paths and roads to rhymes. They have art forms guarded and arranged. But the best of the arts is to take a verse from the prophetical books and build a choice and lovely theme onto it.[135]

The use of biblical verse is the foundation of a poem not so much for its religious interpretation, but for the literary and historical connections that expand and give dimension to the subject of the poem. The reference can never be perceived as static.[136] As Alcalay

---

[134]Alcalay, 172.

[135]Alcalay, 172.

[136]Alcalay, 172.

eloquently explains it, the poetry calls for intense participation from both the poet and the reader.

> Rather, it remains perpetually mobile, hiding and revealing different things as it moves with the poet's relationship to the text within its new context, and with the "crisis of choice" faced by the reader in directing remembrance and intellect in the act of interpretation.[137]

The reader, just like the author, must be educated to understand the poetry in its fullest meaning. The education of the reader gave them certain abilities to feel and interpret the poem that would take them beyond what they saw or merely heard. Alcalay continues:

> This kind of awareness assumes that figures of speech have the power to provoke psychological, intellectual, even mystical connections and correspondences.[138]

The true meaning of the poem extended beyond the words. Embedding was the method to take the reader past the framework of the poem to include the reader in understanding the complete meaning of the poem.

For the Jewish courtier poets, the inclusion of biblical references was another method to explain their personal experience in the society of al-Andalus. The poetry displays their education which was a mixture of Arabic courtly and poetical conventions and their own Hebrew culture. The biblical references connect the poetry

---

[137]Alcalay, 172.

[138]Alcalay, 172.

to this education and also emphasize the Jewish courtier poets' perspectives as Jews and not assimilated renditions of Arab courtiers. Because these passage are from the Hebrew Bible, the meaning of the poems are rooted in Hebrew thought and values. Acculturation to court culture by the Jewish courtier poets modified their methods of presentation but not their values. Their perspectives of the court as well as their participation, remained Jewish in nature.

Resolution: Defining *Convivencia*

Secular Hebrew poetry, during the classical era of the Golden Age of Hebrew poetry(eleventh century), reflects the position of the Jewish courtier in medieval Muslim society of al-Andalus. As court members, the Jewish poets followed the same standards to achieve prestige as all members did within the court. These standards were not dictated by ethnicity. Ethnic identities still created social distance because of politics, but for the Jewish courtier poet this did not hamper their cultural development. Through *convivencia* , or the special form of social coexistence combined with ethnic distinctions, the Jewish courtier poets held onto their Jewish identities and composed secular poetry from their perspectives.

Secular Hebrew poetry expresses the viewpoint and experience of the Jewish courtier poet in the court. Borrowing from Arabic culture, poetical conventions and scholastic standards the Jewish courtier poets created a new form of Hebrew high culture that called for a mastery of Hebrew culture and the sophistication of courtly standards. As an innovation in Hebrew culture it presented challenges to the traditional expression.

The distinct characteristics of Secular Hebrew poetry reveal this expression. Jewish courtier poets borrowed and manipulated Arabic conventions to relate their own experience. Their reasons for

supporting the court are in based in Hebrew ideology. Furthermore, court life and art was a vocation and not a distraction to them. The court was not a place where the Jewish courtier poets shed their Jewish identities. These identities were an intricate part of their experience. Lastly, the incorporation of biblical references distinguished both the poetry and the poet. Embedding gave a stronger voice and presence to the Hebrew perspective. It also displayed the prestige and superiority of the Jewish courtier poets in the Jewish community, which reflected the sophistication and superiority of Hebrew culture to the Mediterranean society of the Middle Ages. The secular Hebrew poetry of Samuel ha-Nagid and Moses Ibn Ezra reveals two poets challenged by their own ambitions but confident of their positions in society. The poetry represents to the poets the superiority of Hebrew culture as it existed in the Muslim society of al-Andalus during the reign of the Taifa kingdoms.

CONCLUSION

Secular Hebrew poetry of the Jewish courtier poets of al-Andalus reveals a process of cultural borrowing inherent in their creations. This method of cultural development indicates the independent position of the Jewish courtier poets within the courts of al-Andalus and the non-threatening nature of Arab poetics. More significantly, the study of *convivencia* and the conclusions reached uncover past interpretations of the poetry rooted in present day political orientations. Dan Pagis notes, "In modern times, medieval and Renaissance love poetry, far from being the exclusive concern of scholars, has been directly relevant to the rise of Hebrew literature and culture."[139] The significance of the Jewish identity and culture in modern times along with the creation of the nation of Islam, has increased interest in secular Hebrew poetry. The passion to distinguish Hebrew culture can invade the analysis of the poetry and thus let unquestioned assumptions of people and cultures dictate analysis.

Because of current world politics and social theory, ethnic tolerance and coexistence between Muslims and Jews is a popular subject. Identifying clearly the relationship between these two groups in Spain during the Middle Ages can provide encouragement

---

[139]Pagis, 69.

and set examples which support proposals for peace in the Middle East as well as in the United States. Yet motivations such as these have distinct consequences towards the review of the evidence. Current political viewpoints, both conservative and liberal, can cloud the truth and mislead the scholar as well as the reader in their interpretations if the past.

With respect to *convivencia* in al-Andalus, the impact of such political viewpoints can skew the results of research and therefore, incorrectly distinguish the poetry. Art is sacrificed for its inherent qualities when politics use it for propaganda. For example, dichotomizing Hebrew and Muslim culture hinders the possible coexistence of the two. In the poetry, if a poet uses Hebrew elements, they should not be denied as Hebrew in nature, but they should equally not be overemphasized to force a point of view out of proportion to their actual significance within the poetry. Presupposing that Hebrew and Muslim culture can not inhabit a space peacefully shapes the interpretation of the poetry. A better understanding of the what the cultures were and how they worked together in the past would be fostered by re-examination. As Edward Said remarks in his book *Orientalism*, even if scholars "are trained in literature and philosophy respectively, not in politics or ideological analysis [they can not avoid] the modern political-intellectual culture" towards the Middle East that he calls Orientalism.

> [Orientalism] is an *elaboration* not only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made up of two halves, Orient and Occident) but also of a whole series of "interests" which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, it not only creates but also maintains; it *is*, rather than expresses, a certain *will* or *intention* to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world.[140]

Said's work makes the scholar and the reader accountable for the assumptions such as Muslim culture being the opposite of Hebrew culture assumed within the arguments. Because the discussion of *convivencia* in al-Andalus tries to uncover the relationship between Jews and Muslims the external evidence about these relationships must be clarified and separated from modern political-intellectual culture.

An objective historical study of *convivencia* depends upon a pure approach to the poetry. In order to do so we must sometimes "[submit] to [the] confusing but exhilarating intricac[ies]" of the past which can manifest itself in artifacts such as the secular Hebrew poetry of al-Andalus.[141] It appears contradictory to try and look at the poetry in its pure form as individual expression and in doing so seek out and find complexities. Allowing scholarship based on unexamined preconceptions which dismiss or negate the poetry as

---

[140] Edward W. Said, Orientalism, (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 12.

[141] Alcalay, 2.

art eliminates the true possibilities found within the delicate balance of cultures in the poetry.

APPENDIX

December's Frost

Decembers frost has fled like shadows; gone
Are Winter's rains, his horse and cavaliers.
The sun has come around to Ares' head,
Alighted there and settled on his throne.
The hills are wearing hats that bedecked with buds;
The valley has on vests of grass and herbs,
Releasing fragrances for us to sense,
Throughout the winter hidden deep inside.

Pass round the cup that makes my joy to rule,
And roots out sorrow from my aching heart;
And spill the waters of my tears to quench
Its flames that burn so hot within.
Beware of Time: the gifts that he bestows
Are venom mixed with honey to taste sweet.
Beguile yourself at morning with his joys,
But know that they will vanish with the sun.

So drink by day till the sunset washes the silver with golden light.
And drink in the dark till dawn puts all his negro troops to flight.[142]

---

[142]Moses Ibn Ezra, "December's Frost" Scheindlin, trans., Wine, Women and Death, 143.

The Days of Cold

The days of cold are past and days
of spring have buried winter's rains.
The doves are sighted in our land;
They flock to every lofty bough.
So friends, be true, and keep your word.
Come quickly, do not disappoint a friend.
But come into my garden. There are
Roses scented with myrrh to pluck,
and drink with me, amid the buds and birds
Assembled there to sing the summer's praise.
Wine, red as my tears for loss of friends, or red
as the blush on lovers' cheeks.[143]

[143]Samuel Ha-Nagid, "The days of cold," Scheindlin, trans., Wine, Women and Death, 72.

The Reward

Your debt to God is righteously to live,
And His to you, your recompense to give.
Do not wear out your days in serving God;
Some time devote to Him, some to yourself.
To Him give half your day , to work the rest;
But give the jug no rest throughout the night.
Put out your lamps! Use crystal cups for light.
Away with singers! Bottles are better than lutes.
No song, nor wine, nor friend beneath the sward--
These three, O fools, are all of life's reward.[144]

---

[144]Samuel Ha-Nagid, "The Reward," Scheindlin trans., "A Miniature Anthology," 285.

The Rose

The garden wears a colored coat,
The lawn has on embroidered robes,
The trees are wearing checkered shifts,
They show their wonders to every eye,
And every bud renewed by spring
Comes smiling forth to greet his lord.
See! Before them marches a rose,
Kingly, his throne above them borne,
Freed of the leaves that have guarded him,
No more to wear his prison clothes.
Who will refuse to toast him there?
Such a man his sin will bear.[145]

---

[145]Moses Ibn Ezra, "The Rose," Scheindlin trans., "A Miniature Anthology," 277.

We Pass Our Lives

My friends we pass our lives if in sleep;
Our pleasures and our pains are merely dreams.
But stop your ears to all such things, and shut
Your eyes--may Heaven grant your strength!--
Don't speculate on hidden things; leave that
To God, the Hidden One, whose eyes sees all.

But send the lass who plays the lute
To fill the cup with coral drink,
Put up in kegs in Adam's time,
Or else just after Noah's flood,
A pungent wine, like frankincense,
A glittering wine, like gold and gems,
Such wine as concubines and queens
Would bring King David long ago.

The day they poured that wine into the drum,
King David's singer Jerimoth would strum
And sing: "May such a wine as this be kept
Preserved and stored in sealed-up kegs and saved
For all who crave the water of the grape,
For every man who holds the cup with skill,
Who keeps the rule Ecclesiastes gave,
Revels, and fears the tortures of the grave."[146]

---

[146]Samuel Ha-Nagid, "Pass our lives," Scheindlin trans., " A Miniature Anthology," 288.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

"Adab." Encyclopaedia of Islam Vol. 1. Eds. A.R. Gibbs, J.H. Kramers, E. Lévi-Provençal and J. Schact. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960. 175-176.

Alcalay, Ammiel. After Jews and Arabs: The Remaking of Levantine Culture. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

Allah, 'Abd. El siglo XI en la primera persona. Trans. E. Levi-Provençal and Emilio Garcia Gomez. Madrid: Alianza Tres, 1982.

Assis, Yom Tov."The Judeo-Arabic Tradition in Chrisitian Spain." The Jews of Medieval Islam: Community, Society and Identity. Daniel Frank, ed. New York: E.J. Brill, 1995. 111-124.

Brann, Ross. The Compunctious Poet: Cultural Ambiguity and Hebrew Poetry in Muslim Spain. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1991.

Castro, Frederico Pérez. Poesía Secular Hispano-Hebrea. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas, Instituto de Filolgía, 1989.

Carmi, T., editor. The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse. New York: The Viking Press, 1981.

Chejne, Anwar. Muslim Spain: Its History and Culture. Minneapolis: UP of Minnesota, 1974.

Cole, Peter. Selected Poems of Shmeul HaNagid. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Compton, Linda Fish. Andalusian Lyrical Poetry and Old Spanish Love Songs: The Muwashshah and its Kharja. New York: New York University Press, 1976.

Dodds, Jerrilyn, editor. The Art of Islamic Spain. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992.

-----. Architecture and Ideology in Early Medieval Spain. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1990.

Frank, Daniel, ed. The Jews of Medieval Islam: Community, Society and Identity. New York: E.J. Brill, 1995.

Gampel, Benjamin R. "Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Medieval Iberia: *Convivencia* through the eyes of the Sephardic Jew." Convivencia. Eds. Vivian B. Mann, Thomas Glick and Jerrilyn Dodds. New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1992. 11-36.

Glick, Thomas F. Islamic and Christian Spain in the early Middle Ages. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1979.

-----. "*Convivencia*: An Introductory Note." Convivencia. Eds. Vivian B.Mann, Thomas Glick and Jerrilyn Dodds. New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1992. 1-9.

Goitien, S.D. ed. "Religion in everyday life as reflected in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza." Religion in a Religious Age. Cambridge: Association for Jewish Studies, 1974. 3-17.

-----. A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab Wrold as portrayed in the documents of the Cairo Geniza. Berkeley: Univeristy of California Press, 1967.

-----. "Attitudes Towards Government." Studies in Islamic History and Institutions. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966. 197-213.

Hitte, Philip K. History of the Arabs. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1970.

Mann, Vivian B., Thomas Glick and Jerrilyn D. Dodds, eds. Convivencia: Jews, Muslims and Christians in Medieval Spain. New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1992.

Pagis, Dan. Hebrew Poetry of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Berkeley: California University Press, 1991.

Roth, Norman. Jews, Visigoths and Muslims in Medieval Spain: Cooperation and Conflict. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994.

Schippers, Arie. Spanish Hebrew Poetry and the Arabic Literary Tradition: Arabic Themes in Hebrew Andalusian Poetry. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994.

Said, Edward W. Orientalism. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.

Sáenz-Badilos, Angel and Judith Targarona Borrás. Poetas Hebreas de al-Andalus Siglos X-XII Antología. Cordoba, 1990.

Scheindlin, Raymond P. Wine, Women and Death: Medieval Hebrew Poems on the Good Life. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1986.

-----, Alan Mintz and David G. Roskies eds."A Miniature Anthology pf Medieval Hebrew Wine Songs." Prooftexts. John Hopkins University Press: September 1984. Volume 4, Number 3, 269-300.

Stern, S.M. Hispano-Arabic Strophic Poetry. L.P. Harvey, ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974.

Stillman, Norman A. "Aspects of Jewish Life in Islamic Spain." Aspects of Jewish Culture in the Middle Ages. Paul E. Szarmach, editor. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979. 51-85.

Watt, W. Montgomery. A History of Islamic Spain. Edinburgh: Edinburgh U.P., 1965.

Wasserstein, David. The Rise and Fall of the Party Kings : Politics and Society in Islamic Spain 1002-1086. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1985.

-----. "The Jewish Elites of al-Andalus." The Jews of Medieval Islam: Community, Society and Identity. Daniel Frank, editor. New York: E.J. Brill, 1995.

Weinberger, Leon J., trans.. Jewish Prince in Moslem Spain: Selected Poems of Samuel Ibn Nagrela. Alabama: UP of Alabama, 1973.

Ye'or, Bat. The Dhimmi: Jews and Christians Under Islam. London: Associated Press, 1985.