Trousseau Lists of Jewish Brides from Izmir

Between an Official Document and a Personal Narrative*

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Introduction

Visiting the homes of Jewish families of Turkish origin living in Israel, as part of a museum project seeking to capture, document and collect vestiges of the traditional material culture of the diverse Jewish ethnic groups, prior to their immigration to Israel, I was shown mainly quantities of whitewear, sheets, tablecloths, curtains, nightgowns. Some of them beautifully embroidered and edged with lace, some sparkling white, ironed and neatly folded, some with yellow stains of age, some worn out, and some as new. All these were cherished remnants of trousseaus of generations of women who prepared them, proudly displayed them, washed ironed and stored them in chests, and kept them, apparently, more than other things.[1] These were the first indications of the centrality and significance of the dowry institution among the Jews of Turkey. Only later, in retrospect, could I apprehend some of the complex feelings and at times contradictory meanings which were enfolded in these textiles and the charged roles they played in the women's lives.[2]

The relationship between brides and their trousseaus is multidetermined, complex and charged. The tension inherent in this relationship stems from the inter-

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* Note to the reader: All rabbinical Jewish books appear in their Hebrew name transliterated into English. The reference in them is to the number of paragraph *siman* in Hebrew as this is the easiest way to locate the place in different editions.

1 This project, entitled "Survey of the material culture of the Jewish communities," was carried out by the Jewish Ethnography department at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, headed by Aviva Muller-Lancet. The project, aimed in its initiation to document and collect the material culture of the Jewish communities from the diaspora prior to modernization, in order to preserve its diversity for future generations, and yield an in-depth portrait of the traditional ways of life on the verge of disappearance.
The survey among the Jews of Turkey in which I participated with Mrs. Miriam Russo-Katz took place from 1974 to 1989, and resulted in a monographic exhibition and a thematic catalog: Esther Juhasz, ed., *Sephardi Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, *Aspects of Material Culture* (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 1989, English ed. 1990).

2 An early version of this paper was read at the World Congress of Jewish studies 1997. I would like to thank readers of early versions of this article Dr. Penina Morag-Talmon, Dr. Roni Weinstein and Prof. Galit Hasan-Rokem for their insightful comments. A version of this article was published in Hebrew "Trousseaus of Jewish Brides from Izmir: Biographical Objects," in *Textures, Culture, Literature, Folklore. Dedicated to Galit Hasan-Rokem*, ed. Hagar Salamon, Avigdor Shinan (The Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies. Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 2013), vol. 2 , 461–484.

section between the personal and the communal, the public and the private, the exposed and the concealed, between sumptuousness and modesty, honor and shame. Trousseau items are of the most personal, even intimate belongings of the bride brought to her new home. These personal items prepared or bought to suit an individual person are at the same time, fashioned to comply with social requirements and etiquette. They display, along with the individual taste and style, societal conventions, norms and pressures. The trousseau, its contents and the ceremonies in which it was presented and appraised obey strict social codes and hierarchies. At this intersection the social imperative enters the private sphere and directs and dominates individual choices.

The social norms transmit dual, and even conflicting messages on various levels, the individual has to cope with them and maneuver a way through them, in order to satisfy all parties involved. For example, on one level the bride is expected to convey modesty and humbleness, and on a different level every family desires to send the bride wrapped with the most sumptuous finery the family can afford.

Although, allegedly, the trousseau represents the bride acting as her "carte de visite" in her new home and in her new status in society, it is well-established that the trousseau of a bride, in a society where arranged marriages are the rule, is a mirror reflecting the social standing and status of a family in society.

One might say that the content of the trousseau encapsulates a woman's anticipated biography, actually and metaphorically as outlined by societies' norms and expectations from her as a woman, wife and mother. The items of the trousseau objectify the planned stages of life which she is expected to go through.

The preparation of the trousseau is conceived as a mission that will shape the course of a woman's life. A befitting dowry will contract a good match, and the disappointment of not succeeding to attract a desired husband might linger as a bitter memory.

The trousseau items can be designated as "biographical objects,"[3] mediating objects which are entangled with the events of a person's life. Hoskins, who coined this term, distinguished between two types of biographical objects, objects chosen by the person himself as significant to him and objects incumbent on him by their involvement in his life. It would seem that trousseau items, which hover between the personal and the socially incumbent, between pride and shame, between success and disappointment belong to both groups and move in between them.

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3 See Janet Hoskins, *Biographical Objects, How Things Tell the Stories of People's Lives* (New York; London: Routledge, 1998), Introduction, 1–25. See also Janet Hoskins, "Agency, Biography and Objects," in *Handbook of Material Culture*, ed. Christopher Tilley, Webb Keane, Suzanne Küchler, Mike Rowlands, and Patricia Spyer (London; Thousand Oaks; New Delhi: Sage, 2006), 74–85.

Dowry in Izmir

This article will look at the intricate relationships between women and their trousseaus by examining the trousseaus of the Jewish women in the community of Izmir. I will look at the relationship between women, objects and texts, between women and men, and women and other women. I will examine the juncture between the personal and the public, the formal and the informal as they are revealed through the contents of the trousseaus, their appraisals, their strict ordering and listing, and through the ceremonies which surround the dowry customs.

I will also examine the trousseau contents as objects representing an expected ideal biographical course of a Jewish woman in Izmir. Objects chosen by brides and their mothers to represent the bride, and those considered indispensible and mandatory by the accepted social codes. These objects contain explicit and implicit biographical aspects. For example fabrics which are intended to be used for babies' clothes and diapers, or those intended for shrouds, though not listed as such.

Historically the Jewish community of Izmir was founded in the 17th century by Sephardi Jews who settled in the Ottoman Empire.[4] Culturally this community shared its heritage with the greater circle of the other communities of the Sephardi diaspora, yet, regional and local variations have developed.[5] Dowry customs in the Jewish community of Izmir were also in close discourse with dowry customs of non-Sephardi Jewish communities, namely the Romaniot Jews[6] and with the neighboring Muslim[7] and Christian communities.[8] Thus one can discern similari-

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4 Sephardi, meaning Spanish, relates to Jews, descendants of the Jews who arrived in the Ottoman Empire after the 1492 expulsion from Spain. The Izmir community was founded by descendants of Sephardi Jews who came already from other Ottoman communities. It expanded with the growing importance of the port of Izmir.

5 For marriage and dowry customs of Sephardi communities in the Ottoman Empire see Esther Juhasz, "Marriage," in Juhasz, ed., *Sephardi Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, 196–217; Mark Glazer, "The Dowry as Capital Accumulation among the Sephardic Jews of Istanbul," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 10/3 (Aug., 1979): 373–380. For dowry customs in Salonica see Gila Hadar, "Marriage as Survival Strategy among Sephardic Jews of Saloniki, 1900–1943: Continuity and Change," *Mikan 8/El Presente Studies in Sephardic Culture 1* (2007): 209–225. For inner community descriptions of dowry customs see note 35 below.

6 Romaniot Jews are descendants of the Jews who lived in the Byzantine Empire, now very small communities in Greece only. The Spanish refugees outnumbered the local Jews upon their arrival and were in conflict with them regarding many customs. For the marriage and dowry customs of the Romaniot communities see Rae Dalven, *The Jews of Ioannina* (Philadelphia: Cadmus Press, 1990), 129–146, and Annette B. Fromm, *We Are Few, Folklore and Ethnic Identity of the Jewish Community of Ioannina* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008), 62–72.

7 In Muslim societies, as in Turkey, the traditional system of marriage payments is the bride price system and not the dowry. But it is customary and even mandatory, that fathers would provide their daughters with trousseaus as befitting their social standing and honor. On bride price and dowry see Jack Goody, "Bridewealth and Dowry in Africa and Eurasia," in *Bridewealth and Dowry*, ed. Jack Goody and Stanley Jejaraja Tambiah (London:

ties in the types of objects included in the trousseau, in the prestige assigned to them, and in their ceremonial display and assessment.

The period in question is a transitional period in the Jewish community between arranged marriages and those decided upon by the personal will of the bride and groom. This generated disagreements between parents and their offspring, and internal conflicts within prospective brides. On the one hand, by being willing to identify with their trousseaus and be represented by them, they might procure a good husband according to the prevailing social norms, but not chosen freely by them. On the other hand, by rebelling against the obsolete dictates of the dowry institution they might not marry, or miss a respectable marriage.

A central axis around which the significance of the dowry revolves is the meeting point between honor and shame: the pursuit of honor and the fear of shame.[9]

Cambridge University Press, 1973) 1–58; John L. Comaroff, ed., *The Meaning of Marriage Payments* (London: Academic Press, 1980).

On dowries in Istanbul see Alan Duben and Cem Behar, *Istanbul households, Marriage, Family and Fertility 1880–1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 87–107; 142–148. On transition in bridewealth customs in Republican Turkey see Paul J. Magnarella, "The Turkish Bridewealth Practice in Transition," *Muslim World* 59 (1969): 142–152. On dowries among the urban and rural Turkish population in contemporary Turkey see Özlem Sandıkçı and B. Ece İlhan, "Dowry: A Cherished Possession or an Old-Fashioned Tradition in a Modernizing Society," in *Contemporary Consumption Rituals: A Research Anthology*, ed. Cele C. Otnes and Tina M. Lowrey (Mahwah; New Jersey; London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 2004), 149–178.

8 In Greek society the dowry plays a central cultural role and many studies examined its various aspects. For just a few examples see Michael Herzfeld, "The Dowry in Greece: Terminological Usage and Historical Reconstruction," *Ethnohistory* 27/3 (1980): 225–241; Renée B. Hirschon, "Under One Roof: Marriage, Dowry and Family Relations in Piraeus," in *Urban Life in Mediterranean Europe: Anthropological Perspectives,* ed. Michael Kenny and David I. Kertzer (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 299–323; Jane Lambiri-Dimaki, "Dowry in Modern Greece: An Institution at the Crossroads Between Persistence and Decline," in *The Marriage Bargain, Women and Dowries in European History,* ed. Marion A. Kaplan (New York: The Institute for Research in History: Haworth Press, 1985), 165–178; Paul Sant Cassia and Constantina Bada, *The Making of the Modern Greek Family, Marriage and Exchange in Nineteenth-Century Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), especially 103–139.

9 A great deal has been written about the tension between honor and shame in Mediterranean societies from various points of view, particularly prominent are studies concerning gender relations, marriage and marriage payments. One of the pioneering studies which many followed is *Honor and Shame: the Values of Mediterranean Society,* ed. Jean George Peristiany (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965). A seminal article on the subject of male and female honor (included in this collection) is Pierre Bourdieu, "The Sense of Honour," published also in his *Algeria 1960* essays, translated by Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 95–132.

On honor as a central value in Ottoman Jewish society see Yaron Ben-Naeh, "Honor and Its Meaning among Ottoman Jews," *Jewish Social Studies* 11/ 2 (Winter 2005): 19–50. On women's honor in Ottoman society see idem, "Feminine Gender and Its Restriction in the Ethical Regulations of Ottoman Jewry," *Pe'amim* 105–106 (Autumn/Winter 2006): 127–149 (Hebrew).

Honor being a fundamental value in Ottoman Jewish society, many customs surrounding the engagement and dowry are directed by behavioral norms linked to it. The quantity and the quality of the dowry express the honor of the bride and her family. This is manifest, for example, in the custom to increase the value of the trousseau in the list: "It is customary in our city to record the sum of *medudim* [cash money] precisely, no more no less. But with regard to the trousseau it is customary to add forty for each sixty, this being done in the families' honor, to increase the dowry money,"[10] the Sephardi saying "*el onor no se merka kon paras*" (honor is not bought with money)[11] expresses the central duality which accompanies the rapport between the dowry and the sense of honor, as it signifies its overt meaning as well as its opposite at the same time. On the one hand, the accumulation of the dowry requires a substantial economic investment, and the detailed monetary assessment sums the family's honor in monetary terms, but on the other hand, the discourse surrounding the dowry attempts to distance and suppress the overt monetary aspect so that honor will seem dissociated from it.

By juxtaposing several types of formal and informal sources, oral and written, I will attempt to decipher some explicit and implicit messages communicated through the objects and the texts surrounding the trousseau regarding its significance on a personal and social levels.

The principal formal legal documents include a corpus of trousseau lists and betrothal *shiddukhin* deeds from the Jewish community of Izmir which span from 1854 to 1933.[12] Trousseau lists, apart from being valuable historical documents for the study of daily life, material culture and particularly the history of dress, are indicators of socio-economic stratification, they embody social behavioral codes and encapsulate a multi-vocal discourse in which the bride's voice might not be the principal one.

Other legal sources are *halakhic* discussions in rabbinical literature from the community of Izmir and other neighboring communities concerning disputes over dowry, inheritance requirements and customs.

On honor playing a major role in Jewish Italian weddings see Roni Weinstein, *Marriage Rituals Italian Style: A Historical Anthropological Perspective on Early Modern Italian Jews*, translated by Batya Stein (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2003), chapter 4 "'A Woman's Voice Is Lewdness': Gossip, Honor, and Social Control in the Marriage Ritual," 213–261.

10 Hayyim Pallaggi, *Hayyim ve-Shalom* (Izmir, 1857), 2: 28.

11 This proverb (taken from E. Shaul, *Folklor de los Judios de Turkia* (Istanbul: Isis, 1994), p. 44 no. 53), was chosen by Ben-Naeh as the title to the Hebrew version of his article: Ben-Naeh, "Honor and Its Meaning."

12 These lists are found in the Izmir community marriage registers, in the Izmir Community Archive at the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People (CAHJP). I would like to thank the Archives for letting me use this material. I am grateful to Dr. Dov Cohen for his valuable help in transcribing and deciphering many lists for me, and for sharing with me his wide knowledge on the Jewish community of Izmir.

The informal sources include interviews with members of the Jewish community of Izmir, conducted in the 1970s and 1980s,[13] as well as written personal accounts, memoirs, newspaper articles and folk poetry.

Although the interviews related to a later period than the lists, the preparation of the trousseau and especially its display and appraisal, came up in the interviews as formative and influential events, at times joyful, at times painful. They imprinted the memories of the women and impacted their lives. In the early decades of the 20th century the listing of the trousseau waned, novelties were introduced to its contents, and the display of the trousseau diminished as well, however, even then the importance of the dowry as a prerequisite condition for marriage still prevailed.[14]

Dowry Customs in Izmir

According to the social code of the Jewish community in Izmir a girl could not get married, economically and socially, without a dowry, nor without certain items in her trousseau. The size and value of the dowry were indicators of the family's socio-economic position.[15] It was the task of the father to draw up the financial agreement and provide financial means, and that of the female side of the family, mother and daughter to prepare the material content of the dowry – namely the trousseau.

After the two families had reached an agreement to marry off their children, an engagement deed *Shiddukhin* was signed. In this deed the date of the wedding was set, certain conditions were stipulated, and the economic commitments undertaken by each family were specified, such as the responsibility to support the couple in the first few years after their marriage. The economic agreements included the amount of dowry in cash money or in property, which the father of

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13 As part of the museological project, see note 1 above. I am indebted to the members of the Izmir Jewish community, in Israel and in Turkey, who shared with me their experience and memories.

14 On the continuation of the dowry institution mostly as means toward maintenance of economic status among the Jews of Istanbul see Glazer, "The Dowry as Capital Accumulation." On the existential importance assigned to the dowry and its persistence in second-world-war Salonica, even in the face of death, see Hadar, "Marriage as Survival Strategy," 212–218. On the continued importance of the dowry among the Romaniot Jews of Ioannina, see Fromm, *We Are Few*, 62–72.

15 The trousseau lists from Izmir are no doubt valuable sources for the study of the socio-economic stratification of the Jewish community as reflected in the value of the dowries. Yet, in this article I focus on the dowry customs and the values and norms which direct them, and these seem to be shared by all classes, as the lower classes attempted to emulate the upper classes in their manners and practices. For a similar process of emulation in dowry customs see Jane Schneider, "Trousseau as Treasure: Some Contradictions of Late Nineteenth Century Change in Sicily," in *Beyond The Myths of Culture*, ed. Eric. B. Ross (New York: Academic Press, 1980), 323–355.

the bride took upon himself to pay. Sometimes certain articles considered as financial assets, especially jewelry, and customary presents for the groom were mentioned specifically.[16]

Therefore the birth of a baby girl was conceived as a heavy financial burden as one had to comply with the social imperative of providing her with an appropriate dowry reflecting the family's standing and honor.[17] The trousseau was accumulated from the birth of the girl on, as the Sephardic saying indicates "[Once] the girl [is] in her diapers – the dowry is already in the chest"[18] this has already directed the baby girls' lives toward marriage.

The mother started accumulating articles for her daughter's trousseau, some she prepared herself, some she passed on from her own trousseau, and some she purchased. However, the bride's clothes were prepared in the time between the betrothal and the wedding. The cutting of the trousseau dresses commenced in a ceremony which took place in the bride's home, among female members of both families.[19] There the first ceremonial scissor cutting of the fabric was performed by a relative, a "happy woman" ("*una mujer bien kazada*," [a happily married woman]) whose parents and children were alive.[20] In affluent families a seamstress and embroiderers were hired to make the trousseaus. In less well-to-do families the female members of the family, grandmothers, aunts, and the bride herself, joined to complete the trousseau on time. Sometimes the articles were purchased in shops specializing in trousseau items, which still exist today, or ordered from the fashion centers of the time, Istanbul or Paris.

Grooms of all social strata and their families had certain expectations and exigencies, and they had to be met. These were expressed in a popular song written in the 1930s by Gershon Zadik and Moshe Kazez criticizing the acceleration in demands by grooms and the fantasies of women:

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16 Juhasz, "Marriage," 197. Engagement deeds from Izmir are much fewer than the trousseau lists.

17 The obligation to prepare a dowry for the daughter was conceived as part of the "Burden of a Daughter" see Ruth Lamdan, *A Separate People, Jewish Women in Palestine, Syria and Egypt in the Sixteenth Century* (Leiden; Boston; Cologne: Brill, 2000), chapter 2 "From Childhood to Marriage – The Burden of a Daughter," 24–57.

18 For this proverb see Michael Molho, "Birth and Childhood among the Jews of Salonica," *Edoth, A Quarterly for Folklore and Ethnology*, 2/3–4 (April–July 1947): 255–268 (p. 256). On a similar proverb in Sicily see Schneider, "Trousseau as Treasure," 325.

19 A corresponding ceremony was held for the commencement of the sewing of the baby's clothes and diapers (*kortar fashadura*) when the woman was in her fifth month of pregnancy. Miriam Russo-Katz, "Childbirth," in *Sephardi Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, *Aspects of Material Culture*, ed. Esther Juhasz (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum 1989, English ed. 1990), 254–270, here 256. On this ceremony in its symbolical contemporary version see Rachel Amado Bortnick, "The Jewish Women of Turkey," *Jewish Folklore and Ethnology Review* 15,2 (1993): 96–103 (p. 100).

20 See Russo-Katz, "Childbirth," 256; Amado Bortnick, "The Jewish Women of Turkey," 100.

"great is the burden of the dowry…
young men are wont to exploit…
those whose purse is empty cannot marry, what bad luck
even water drawers demand full *ashugar* [trousseau].
Both rich and poor women exceed the bounds of reason.
They desire muslin with a ribbon an embroidered *combinaison*"[21]

A few days prior to the wedding the trousseau was displayed publicly in the bride's home. This display was known as *ashugar* (trousseau) or *presyado* (assessment). The trousseau was hung upon the walls, spread on tables, or strung up on ropes across the room. The relatives of both bride and groom came to view the trousseau, express admiration for its beauty and richness and appreciation of the labor invested in it. However, the official purpose of the display was to assess the monetary value of the trousseau. To this end two or more community notables were invited to serve as assessors (*presyadores*). The assessors examined each item, recording its detailed description in a list (*lista* or *rol*). These itemized lists were sometimes delivered to the groom's family for inspection.

It should be said that this appraisal was a critical focal point of the marriage ceremonies and disagreements between the parties over the value of the dowry were a frequent occurrence.[22] They were very much feared as they put the family honor at stake and could cause a breakup of the engagement and marriage.

The Trousseau Lists

The trousseau (*ashugar)* in Izmir was just one component of the dowry, the *dota*, which consisted of all the property the bride would bring to the marriage as agreed upon by the two families. Likewise, the trousseau lists were one document of several which recorded the marriage agreements. In a Jewish wedding the marriage agreements and payments are contained in a series of documents and deeds differing in their legal status.[23] The principal, legally binding document is the

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21 Moshe Attias, *Cancionero Judeo-Español; Canciones Populares en Judeu-Español* (Jerusalem: Centro de Estudios sobre el judaismo de Salonica, 1972) (Hebrew and Ladino), no. 18, 251 (English translation from Juhasz, "Marriage," 200).

22 According to Rabbi Hiya Pontrimoli who lived in Izmir in the early 19th century, in his time, each side, that of the bride and that of the groom, invited two eminent people from the community on their behalf and the city scribe to serve as assessors. This had caused disagreements and quarrels between the families. In order to prevent this, it was hence decided by the rabbis that the community scribe will be the sole assessor. As recounted in his father's book R. Binyamin Pontrimoli, *Shevet Binyamin* (Salonica, 1824), 271. (I am grateful to Dr. Yaron Ben-Naeh for referring me to this source and to other rabbinical sources on this subject.)

23 On these documents as connected to the dowry see Shlomo Dov Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, *The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Genizah*. (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1967–1993) vol. 3, 123–142.

marriage contract (*ketubbah*), without which no Jewish marriage is valid.[24] In the *ketubbah* the husband vows to provide for his wife as long as the marriage persists, and promises to pay her a sum of money in case of divorce. This sum, according to some customs, as is the case with Sephardi *ketubbot* as those from Izmir, is based on the actual dowry brought by the bride with several increments according to custom. In Izmir: "For the community official writes the marriage contract on the sole basis of the *lista*, that is the *rol* that the official gives him from the bride's father, written and signed by the groom himself, and on the basis of the said *rol* the official determines the dowry payment undertaken by the groom in the marriage contract."[25]

Other documents were the various versions of engagement deeds, in which the economic and financial arrangements were recorded, and trousseau lists which feature only in some communities. The trousseau lists varied regarding their contents, structure and legal status according to communal customs. They were either incorporated in the *ketubbah* text, written on its reverse side, or written on separate pages.[26] In Izmir, the Sephardi custom of listing the detailed trousseau assessments on separate pages of the *rol* or *lista* continued till the early 20th century. But, contrary to the earlier Sephardi custom of discarding the lists after the groom's family have inspected the contents of the trousseau,[27] in Izmir the lists were copied, by the community scribe into the community books.[28] There they were kept for records, to be consulted in cases of the dissolution of marriages due to divorce, death of the husband or the wife (with no children), when the sum of the *ketubbah*

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24 The text of the contract is standardized, but there are variations regarding conditions stipulated and regarding the relation of the promised sum of money in case of divorce, and its relation to the value of the dowry.

25 R. Nissim Avraham Ashkenazi, *Sefer Ma'aseh Avraham*, 1 (Izmir 1855), 8.

26 For examples of lists *rol* framed in Sephardi *Ketubbut* from the Balkans and Romania see Milicia Mihailovic, *Judaica in Yugoslavia* (Beograd: Proex Prosveta, 1990), 77–79; Shalom Sabar, "Ketubbah," in *Jewish Marriage Contracts of the Hebrew Union College Skirball Museum and Klau Library* (Philadelphia; New York: The Jewish Publication Society, 1990), nos. 175; 183.

27 R. Yosef Caro (author of the *Shulhan Aruch*, the accepted code of Jewish law) in his halakhic work *Beit Yosef* from 16th-century Safed discussed this custom:
"The notebook (the list) is delivered to the groom to ensure that no item or items have been omitted from what he was shown during the assessment; however, there is no need to preserve the notebook until such a time as the woman should be widowed […] However, once [the groom] has received the said property in his house, the notebook is discarded […] Moreover, the matter of the notebook is the accepted custom of the Sephardim even abroad wherever they reside." *Beit Yosef*, *Even ha-ezer*, *Dinei ketubba* 2 (Jerusalem, 1960) (English translation from Juhasz, "Marriage," 201). On the differences between Sephardim and Musta'arabs (Native Arabic-speaking Jews of Palestine since the Mamluk period who adapted many Arab customs) in the listing of the dowry and the assessment of the trousseau see Lamdan, *A Separate People*, 250–253.

28 It is unknown since when the Jews of Izmir registered the trousseaus in the community books. Among the Jews of Italy, as among the general population, it was customary to document all the stages of economic agreements, including the dowry, and register them in the office of the municipal notary, see Weinstein, *Marriage Rituals Italian Style*, 80–83.

had to be paid to the wife, or her inheritors. The detailed listed assessments were taken into account in order to establish what should be the actual payment. This raised disputes over the actual value of the trousseau after a lapse of time, as the value of the items diminished.[29] In Izmir, as we learn from R. Hiya Pontrimoli, the list was valid as a legal document. It was customary to pay all the sums mentioned in the list including the habitual increments, but not including the sum which augmented the value of the trousseau at the time of the assessment. He mentions also that even in the absence of the marriage contract a widow could be paid her "*ketubbah*" according to the list only.[30]

The lists follow a fixed structure. The text is in Hebrew and Judeo-Spanish (Ladino) written in Hebrew letters in cursive script. The list itself combines words in Judeo-Spanish, Turkish, Hebrew and French as the items listed reflect the prevalent contemporary nomenclature.[31] It should be said, though cautiously, that Jewish women did not generally speak Hebrew or read Hebrew script, and therefore had no direct access to the lists.[32]

The lists open with a blessing formula, the details regarding the bride and groom and the date of the wedding. At the head of the document four categories of payment are listed:[33]

medudim: the cash money given,
nedunia[34](dowry): the total assessed value of the articles in the list,
tosefet (increment): two increments imposed on the groom,
matana (gift): this is an ambiguous category that lists the value of gifts given by the bride's family that are not considered as dowry (see below).

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29 On regulations concerning women's inheritance customs in the Jewish community of Istanbul and their relation to the dowry assessment and related legal issues see Leah Borenstein-Makovetzky, "Istanbul Inheritance Regulations and Their Bearing on the Community Life in the Ottoman Period," in *Society and Community*, ed. Avraham Hayyim (Jerusalem: Misgav Yerushalayim Institute, 1991), 3–23 (Hebrew); idem, "The Jewish Family in Istanbul in the 18th and 19th Centuries as an Economic Unit," in *Sexuality and the Family in History, Collected Essays,* ed. Israel Bartal and Isaiah Gafni (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 1998), 305–334 (Hebrew).
On the wider contexts of these legal issues and their repercussions in communities of Palestine and Syria in the 16th century see Lamdan, *A Separate People*, 24–57; 171–201; 250–253.

30 Pontrimoli, *Shevet Binyamin,* 191, 192, 271.

31 I use here the transcription of Judeo-Spanish, even of words derived from Turkish, as this was the spoken language by the Jews of Izmir and this is the way they were written in the lists.

32 I would like to thank Dr. Michal Held for sharing her views on the subject with me. On the inaccessibility of such texts by women see Matthias B. Lehmann, *Ladino Rabbinic Literature and Ottoman Sephardic Culture* (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), 131–133, and Yaron Ben-Naeh's review of this book in *Zion*, 72/4 (2007): 485–495 (Hebrew).

33 On this formula being the custom of the Izmir community see Pontrimoli, *Shevet Binyamin,*192; Pallaggi, *Hayyim ve-Shalom*, 28 (see quotation above).

34 In Hebrew there is no distinction between dowry and trousseau.

The lists do not enumerate all the dowry payments in cash; these are recorded in the prenuptial agreements. They record in detail the bride's personal belongings, the cash money settlements and some valuables, such as status symbols, which are not registered in detail but are counted under the category "gift."

The Contents of the Trousseau

The typical contents recorded consistently in the lists include several categories of items registered in the following order:

Clothing: outer clothes and underclothes (*vestidos y čamashires)*.
Home textiles: matresses, blankets, pillows and bed linen (*blankeria*) and fabrics for the household such as tablecloths, curtains, towels.
A dowry chest (*sepet*) and a rug (*sejade or tapet*).

As we know from the interviews and from other sources, the bride brought other things which were not recorded in the lists. Two such significant groups were jewelry and silverware.[35]

Reading through the lists, in and between the lines, what was given in the trousseau and what was not, what was given and not listed or the order of importance, one can attempt to envisage the life experience that stood behind it.

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[35] On the contents of dowries in close Sephardi communities as reflected in internal sources see:
In Salonica: Moshe Attias, *Romancero Sefaradi* (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1949), 39 (Hebrew); idem, "Minhagei nisuin be-Saloniki," (Marriage customs in Salonica), *Edot* 1 (1946): 28–35 (Hebrew), especially 29–32.
In the Sephardi community in Jerusalem: Ya'akov Yehoshua, *Childhood in Old Jerusalem*; vol. 2 *The House and the Street in Old Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1966), 63–66 (Hebrew).
In Rhodes: Rebecca Amato Levy, *I Remember Rhodes…* (New York: Hermon Press, 1987), 17–20.
The desired and customary categories of objects brought in Sephardi trousseaus are the subject matter of the versions of the folk song entitled "The Good Dowry", see
Abraham Galanté, *Histoire des Juifs d'Anatolie*, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Conseil Communal des Sociétés Béné-Bérith, 1937–39), vol. 1 "Les Juifs d'Izmir," 348–349; Isaac Levy, *Chants judéo-espagnols, recueillis et notés par Isaac Levy*, 4 vols. (London; Jerusalem: World Sephardi Federation, 1959–1973), vol. 3 nos. 107–110, 96–98. Batya Maoz, "Nineteen Annotated Epic Songs," in *Max Grunwald, Tales, Songs and Folkways of Sephardic Jews, Texts and Studies,* Folklore Research Center Studies 1, ed. Dov Noy (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1982), 117–181, no. 13, 157–159 (Hebrew). The songs enumerate jewelry, clothes, bedding and also slaves who will take care of the firstborn baby.
On the contents of Turkish urban and rural dowries: "chest dowries" *sandık çeyizi*, "appliance dowries," and "gift dowries" see Sandıkçı/İlhan, "Dowry: A Cherished Possession or an Old-Fashioned Tradition," 159–164.
On the contents of Greek dowries see Lambiri-Dimaki, "Dowry in Modern Greece," 169–170; on evolution and change in Athenian dowries see Sant Cassia/Bada, *The Making of the Modern Greek Family*, 106–115.

Clothing

The bride's apparel, outer clothes and underclothes, were the largest most prominent group of articles in the trousseau until the turn of the 20th century, when traditional Ottoman style dress was still worn. Underclothes, though in modern European style, continued to feature as an important component in later, more modern trousseaus when the quantities of the outer clothes diminished.

The bride's clothes, their quantity and quality were a metonym for the bride's beauty, femininity, modesty and honor.[36] They were the personal items of the trousseau close to her body and thus biographical objects par excellence.

The outer clothing consisted of the principal Turkish *entari*[37] dresses, jackets and outdoor scarf-wraps (*marama*) while the *ferace* coat veil is rarely mentioned. These Ottoman-style articles of dress were all in similar cut with slight variations, differing mainly in fabric and trimmings. The fabrics and trimmings determined the quality, prestige and value of each garment. Therefore the lists enumerate meticulously every garment in detail, including fabrics, colors, lining, embroidery and trimmings. The fabrics ranged from embroidered *taffeta* silk to woolen cashmere weave and plain and patterned silks (*čanfes sevayi*), patterned and brocaded striped silks (*selimiye*), mixtures of cotton and silk (*čitari*), or plain cotton (*čit*). The trimmings setting off the front closing, neckline, sleeves and seams were made of braided ribbons, metal thread braiding (*oya harč shirites, oya klavidon*); short jackets or longer coats lined with squirrel fur (*sinjap tawshan*), or with weasel fur linings, are mentioned in the lists as well.

The underclothes (*čamashires*) were not less important and were invested with much painstaking labor. They were given in batches of six or a dozen – the more the better.

In the earlier period the typical Turkish underclothes included chemises (*kamizas)* and underpants (*shalvar* or *čintian).* They were made from a variety of undyed striped fabrics, combinations of silk linen and cotton in smooth or crepe weave (*burunjuk pembezar kukulitra)* adorned with delicate trimmings, mainly *oya* needle lace, which the girls were seated to make. In the transitional period these were replaced by white linen or *cotton batiste* European-style underwear, *pantaloons*, *brassieres* and slips and augmented by sleepwear, nightgowns, negligées and the like, all richly embellished with European-style lace and embroidery.

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36 On the importance of clothing and their economic and symbolic significance in relation to other groups of dowry items in 19th-century Athenian dowries see Sant Cassia/Bada, *The Making of the Modern Greek Family*, 106–111; 123–129.

37 On *entari* dresses as the principal garment in Ottoman dress see Nancy Micklewright, *Women's Dress in 19th-century Istanbul: Mirror of a Changing Society*, Ph.D. diss., (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1986), 135–185.

Fig. 1: Entari dresses, Izmir, Turkey, late 19th and early 20th c. Collection of The Israel Museum, Jerusalem. The dress in the foreground: The wedding dress of Miriam Zion née Roditi (1863-1908) married to Yoseph Zion (Behor) in 1876. Extended loan from Dov Cohen Nof- Ayalon, in memory of Miriam Zion née Roditi. The dresses in the background: Gift of Mathilda Gordon in memory of her parents Victor and Regina Pisanti, Izmir; Lydia Ben Mayor, Izmir; Regina and Joseph Sadi, Bat Yam; Mrs and Mr. Robert Russo, Tel Aviv. Photograph Mauro Magliani.

The clothes were listed in a hierarchal order from the *primer vestido*, the first, most sumptuous gown – the wedding dress, through the second, for other nuptial ceremonies, the third for the Sabbath and "visits,"[38] and so forth to the last, the final garb – the shroud. This meant that practically and metaphorically the bride was "packed for life," she was provided with clothing for a lifetime, implying that the marriage will last all her life. The list of dresses, the purposes of which were known to all, delineated the anticipated biography of the bride.

38 Formal and semiformal visits (*vijitas*) on Sabbath and Jewish holidays were an important social institution for women, part of the formalities of social life, see Amado Bortnick, "The Jewish Women of Turkey," 100; Yaron Ben-Naeh, "Leisure Time of Jewish Women in Late Ottoman Jerusalem," *Mikan 8/El Presente Studies in Sephardic Culture* 1 (2007): 179–192 (pp. 188–189) (Hebrew).

Fig. 2: Typical needle lace Ottoman trimmings for underwear and bed linen. Collection of The Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Photograph Nahum Slapak.

The wedding dress which appeared in the early lists as the first dress prior to the 1890s was the most sumptuous *entari* dress, not necessarily white. From circa 1890, a new style of wedding dress was in vogue. It was made from dark velvet or pastel satin and heavily embroidered with couched metal thread, known in Turkish as *bindalli* (with a thousand branches).[39] This wedding gown marked only a transitional phase between the traditional *entari* dress and the white European wedding dress which prevailed since the early 20th century.

The custom of including the shrouds in the dowry continued till around the middle of the 19th century. R. Hayyim Pallaggi, the eminent Rabbi of Izmir (1788–1869) explained that people stopped including the shrouds in the trousseau as the proximity of death caused uneasiness and fear.[40] The presence of the shrouds in

39 These dresses, though being essentially Turkish, reveal in their tailoring, as well as in their embroidery motifs in the so-called "Turkish baroque" style, strong European influences. On this dress as part of a set of similarly embroidered house furnishing textiles see below.

40 "And it was customary in years past to include shrouds as well in the dowry that a man gives his daughter." R. Hayyim Pallaggi, *Zedakah Hayyim* (Izmir, 1874), homily on Dress, 3 (thanks to Dov Cohen for referring me to this source). R. Pallaggi commends this custom of making the shrouds in times of joy in life and not in haste after a person has died. It is

the trousseau was not always as a distinct garment intended only as shroud, it was also customary to use garments worn during lifetime as shrouds.[41] A query addressed to R. Shlomo Halevi regarding the value of the shrouds of a wife who died in her youth exemplifies the direct connection between a bride's trousseau and her honor even after her death. The widowed husband recounted that immediately after the death of his wife, the bride's mother took some sumptuous dresses and fabrics from her daughters' trousseau (a *sayo* made of *hitai* and a gold embroidered *sirma* dress) to use as her shrouds. Although he was aware of his legal duty to cover the expenses of the burial of his wife, he complained that his mother-in-law exaggerated in the extravagance of the shrouds. In his response R. Halevi states that one's duty is to pay for his wife's burial as appropriate, "in accord with his own honor and his wife's honor if it is higher." However if, in the widower's opinion, the mother-in-law overrated the value of the shrouds appropriate for his wife, she should repay him the difference.[42] The disagreement between the husband and mother-in-law, might have echoed a disagreement over the value of the trousseau which occurred at the assessment prior to the wedding. Their disagreement concerned the value of the bride's honor between her wedding and her death and the way it should be represented by her shrouds. The mother, who provided her daughter's trousseau and presumably did her utmost to represent her daughter's and her family's honor at the wedding, felt it to be her duty to preserve and repre-

customary in some Jewish communities to prepare the shrouds during the lifetime as *memento mori* inducing a person to repent and behave morally. On the custom of preparing shrouds for the bride and groom as part of the dowry of the bride, in the Sephardi community of Tetouan, Morocco, and donning them at the wedding under the wedding gowns, see Alia Ben-Ami, "Decorated Shrouds from Tetouan, Morocco," *Israel Museum Journal* 8 (1989): 31–40. On the use of parts of the set of shrouds at critical points in the lifetime among Ashkenazi Jews see Corinne Ze'evi-Weil, "Les vêtments mortuaires des Juifs d'Alsace," in *Les Juifs d'Alsace*, Exhibition catalog, ed. Ester Muchawsky-Schnapper (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 1991), 41–47 (French and Hebrew).

41 As I gather from oral information it seems that the inner chemises (*kamizas*) worn as under dresses were probably used also as shrouds. Other items pertaining to the dowry or the marriage gifts were sometimes also intended to be used in connection with death. Such was the *ogadero* necklace kept by Jewish women from Rhodes as a personal resource in order to purchase a plot in the graveyard and a tombstone. See Miriam Russo-Katz, "Jewelry," in *Sephardi Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, *Aspects of Material Culture*, ed. Esther Juhasz, (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum 1989, English ed. 1990), 172–195.
It was also probably the custom to spread the "first dress" in the trousseau over the coffin of a bride who died before her wedding. This is hinted in folk song recounting a romantic encounter between a girl and her lover, as she fears to die before she marries she asks her mother to spread her wedding dress over her coffin. Attias, *Cancionero*, no. 26, 90–91.
On home textiles donated to the synagogue to commemorate the trousseau owners see below.

42 R. Shlomo haLevi, *Sefer Lev Shlomo*, (Salonica, 1808), Even Ha'ezer 39.
On legal and economic connections between regulations concerning dowry and inheritance in the Jewish community of Istanbul see Borenstein-Makovetzky, "Istanbul Inheritance Regulations." On perpetuating a person's honor in death among Jews in the Ottoman Empire see Ben-Naeh, "Honor and Its Meaning," 27–28.

sent appropriately the family's honor through her trousseau, also at her daughter's death.

Since the turn of the 20th century and into the 1930s, European fashions gradually replaced traditional wear and *entaris* gave way to skirts and European-style blouses.[43] The preparation of full, life-long wardrobes, which was relevant so long as traditional dress was worn, became irrelevant, as with the advent of fashion where the cut of the dresses changed frequently following the dictates of fashion. Therefore the quantity of actual clothes in the trousseau diminished and gave way to underclothes, bed linen and home textiles; and lengths of fabric are listed instead of actual clothes.

Nevertheless the hierarchal ordering of the trousseau items in units called *vestidos* (garments) continued to guide the listing of the trousseau and there were codes denoting which type or color of fabric was appropriate for each type of dress. These codes were a cultural knowledge shared by those who prepared the trousseaus, those who wrote the lists, and also by cloth merchants. Advertisements in the local Judeo-Spanish newspapers illustrate the tenacity of these codes and of the dowry institution as a whole. For example Mr. Duenyas, an Izmir shop owner, advertises in 1898 his extremely cheap prices for a respectable trousseau for 15 *mecidies*. Somewhat replicating the form of a trousseau list, he enumerates the fabrics and quantities needed for each dress. For the first dress – the bridal dress – he offers a white fabric, for the second dress he offers a black fabric.[44] As part of the replacement of the sewn garments by unsewn fabrics for future sewing, the lists feature a sewing machine as one of the 'vestidos': "*Por sekundo vestido makina Singer*" (as a the second garment a Singer sewing machine).[45] This shows that the responsibility of the bride's family to dress her for her future life after marriage was still maintained as a social obligation, but it shifted from an actual obligation to a potential one not necessarily materialized before the wedding.

If from the earlier period we have albeit only the written mute testimony of the detailed lists, from the transitional period, when clothing styles were changing, we have additional voices which attest to conflicting views vis-à-vis the choice of clothes and other items for the trousseau, criticizing the display of the trousseau and the sustainability of the dowry as a social institution.

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43 The process of modernization of dress in Jewish communities in Muslim countries was complex and non-homogenous. It took place at different paces in each community and within the different socio-economic classes. Each community produced a local version of modern dress. The modernization in the dress of Jewish women in Izmir, which is revealed also in the trousseau lists, went through several phases from traditional Ottoman attire to old-fashioned European dress maintaining the traditional headgear the *tokado* to modern Western fashion wear. See Esther Juhasz, "Costume," in Juhasz, ed., *Sephardi Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, 152–162.

44 *Il Meseret* 1898 all along the year.

45 On the ambivalent function of the sewing machines as modernizing agents and perpetuating traditional women's roles, see below.

Awareness and enthusiasm toward the new fashions, shared by mothers and daughters about to be married, generated a conflict between the traditional obligation to furnish the bride with a long-term wardrobe and the wish to be dressed according to the latest fashions. Two 1898 newspaper articles from Izmir dealing with the "burden of the trousseaus" attest to the complex attitude of prospective brides and their fathers – the providers of the dowry – toward the trousseau.[46] These articles, written by men, criticize the fierce competition between brides-to-be, some of whom were already educated in modern schools, who wish to present the most up-to-date wardrobe in their trousseaus and to surpass their friends and relatives in the quantities of their clothes and particularly in their fashion novelties.[47] According to these articles the girls pressurized their fathers, who evidently wanted to provide the daughters with the most befitting and finest trousseaus, to procure for them the most expensive fabrics from Istanbul and Paris and provide them with the latest fashion dresses. The writers reprove the double standards of these girls. On the one hand the girls criticize the dowry institution as obsolete and refuse to abide by its rules, on the other hand they exploit their fathers' sense of obligation to follow the tradition, and their fear of shame, and demand to be provided with large and costly wardrobes which lay a heavy economic burden on their fathers, who sometimes cannot afford them.

The words of Alexander Benguiat himself also reveal an ambivalent attitude and double standards. He identifies with tradition and nostalgically misses the "simple" traditional clothes and their good quality, at the same time he calls for the abolition of the display of the dowry and for the reduction of the quantity of clothes brought in the trousseau and their extravagance. He praises the quality of the old-time fabrics and trimmings which rose in their value and could be used by the husband as financial assets and be sold in times of need, ignoring the economic burden they lay on the fathers' shoulders. He describes the deterioration he sees in the quality of the fabrics and workmanship which is due, in his opinion, to the transference of the sewing from the family home to modern "professional" seamstresses who sew the garments just for show. He blames all these changes on the rising bourgeoisie in the community, the "nouveaux riches" (*los rikos parvenidos*) who encourage the competition and use the dowry display to exhibit their wealth and new status.

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46 Shlomo Avraham, "Los Ashugares," *Il meseret* 2, June 14, 1898, the response of Alexander Benguiat, the editor of the newspaper "La yaga de los ashugares," *Il meseret* 4, June 28, 1898. On this newspaper and the modernist agenda of its editor see Avner Levi, "Alexander Benguiat and His Contribution to the Ladino Literature and Journalism," in *The Sephardi and Oriental Jewish Heritage Studies*, ed. Issachar Ben Ami (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1982), 205–212 (Hebrew).

47 Women's "natural" desire to have quantities of sumptuous clothes and jewelry which drives their husbands to poverty and can even bring about calamities on the whole nation is a repeated motif in Jewish ethical literature. For some examples from the Ottoman literature see Ben-Naeh, "Feminine Gender and Its Restriction," 143.

The question still remains, did the changes in the fashion of the dresses and other trousseau items toward modernity signify more personal liberty and an essential social change? According to interviews with women who married in Izmir in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, it seems that the conflicts surrounding the dowries between the younger generation and their parents concerned the style of the trousseau items and less the inextricable association between dowry and marriage or its actual influence on contracting a good match.

Home Textiles

The next category of articles in the list is textiles for the home which included bedding, tablecloths, curtains, mattresses and pillows, and diverse furnishing textiles. The more sumptuous furnishing textiles were intended for ceremonial use on the Jewish holidays and especially in the life-cycle events from the wedding itself through birth, and used eventually as objects of memory after death.

Sets of whitewear, bed linen, curtains, tablecloths adorned with lace trimmings along with the bride's underclothes and nightwear became from the 1930s and 1940s onward the mainstay of the trousseau.[48] Similar to the fluctuations of style in the underclothes, bed linen also changed from Turkish-style bed linen made of undyed striped fabrics, combinations of silk, linen and cotton in smooth or crepe weave trimmed with typical Turkish needle lace, to white linen or cotton edged and inserted with European-style lace trimmings. Bed linen, whether in the traditional Turkish style or in the modern European style, was made from identical or similar fabrics with embellishments similar to those on the bride's underclothes. Thus in a real and metaphorical way they were intertwined and inseparable, identifying the bride's body with her home and more specifically with the intimacy of family life. The underwear, as well as the stacks of white bed linen, "decencies," carried with them a symbolical cultural baggage. They were the token of the bride's purity and virginity, which were her most important assets. They symbolized propriety and restrained sexuality.[49] In the Jewish ritual context white underclothes and bed linen signified the bride's obligation to keep the

48 In the museum's survey these were the items preserved most and found in the homes of families originating from the Jewish communities of Turkey.

49 On the connection between whitewear and purity, virginity and decency see Schneider, "Trousseau as Treasure," 333–339.
Among the Greek Jewish communities, Sephardi and Romaniot, influenced by Greek customs, the preparation of the mattresses prior to the wedding gained a symbolical meaning. Women from the bride's family went to the sea to wash the wool that would fill the mattresses in a ceremony called "the washing of the wool." They, so to speak, "purified" the mattresses before the wedding night. Attias, *Romancero*, 40; Fromm, *We Are Few*, 67–71.

menstruation laws, one of the three cardinal precepts incumbent on Jewish women after her wedding.[50]

The increase of the quantities of bed linen in the trousseaus and its identification with the trousseau was one manifestation of the Westernization which influenced Mediterranean communities' life and culture in many ways.[51] In the case of the trousseau its contents and significance transmitted the values of the European bourgeoisie which conveyed twofold contradictory messages of modernity and liberation along with an underpinning of the identification of the woman with the home and her traditional roles in the house and in the family. The French-orientated schools of the Alliance Israélite Universelle in which the girls learned also sewing and European white embroidery, were one of the principal "civilizing" agents which attempted to emancipate and liberate the girls to a certain extent and at the same Westernize them through initiating them into the bourgeois value system.[52] "The receiving of Western education by women […]. was perceived as beneficial for the acquisition of new manners and ways that would add polish and hence facilitate marriage in societies that had come to culturally value the outer accoutrements of Western mores."[53] The schools gave the girls a formal Western education along with professional instruction in sewing and needlework as part of the productivization program intended to reform the professional profile of the Jewish communities. The professional education for girls, which was taught as part of the school curriculum and in apprenticeship

50 The two other precepts are the separation of *hallah* and kindling the Sabbath light. The menstruation law (*niddah*) is the prohibition of sexual relations between husband and wife while the woman is menstruating and for seven days after until the woman purifies herself in the ritual bath. The woman has to count seven days after the flow stops before she immerses herself, these are called clean days or "whitening days" and are customarily marked by the wearing of white underwear. The husband and wife sleep in separate beds and the bed linen is changed in every stage.

51 On sets of embroidered whitewear becoming major and indispensible components of girls' trousseaus as part of the modernization process and its contradictory significance in Sicily see Schneider, "Trousseau as Treasure."

52 The Alliance Israélite organization founded by Jews in France in 1860 established a network of modern schools for boys and girls in Jewish communities all around the Mediterranean. Their aim was to educate the "Eastern" Jews in the European manner and teach them modern professions. On the educational and "moralizing" agenda of the Alliance Israélite and its influence in Mediterranean Jewish communities see Aron Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews: The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Politics of Jewish Schooling in Turkey, 1860–1925* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 101–120; idem, *Images of Sephardi and Eastern Jewries in Transition, The Teachers of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, 1860–1939* (Seattle; London: University of Washington Press, 1993).
On the apprenticeship programs of the Alliance Israélite in Turkey see Esther Benbassa and Aron Rodrigue, "L'Artisanat Juif en Turquie a la fin du xix^{eme} siècle," *Turcica* xvii (1985): 113–126. On the education of girls and the twofold role of the sewing and embroidery lessons see Esther Benbassa, "L'éducation féminine en Orient: l'école de filles de l'alliance Israélite universelle à Galata, Istanbul (1879–1912)," *Histoire, économie et société* 4 (1991, 10^{e} année): 529–559. The girls' school in Izmir was founded in 1878.

53 Rodrigue, *Images of Sephardi and Eastern Jewries*, 80.

workshops, taught them sewing and embroidery[54] thus directing them, at least partly, back to their traditional occupations.

Emulating European bourgeois manners, stacks of whitewear came to be identified with the trousseau without which a decent girl could not be married. As the prestige of whitewear, associating them with the upper strata of society, lay in their quantities, girls from middle and lower strata were pressed to produce even larger quantities of whitewear, with the hope of attracting a good match and maybe ameliorating their social position.[55] This, in turn, increased the demands of grooms of all social strata. Thus, as part of Westernization and modernization came an intensification of the efforts of girls to produce "good dowries," which paradoxically bound them even more to the preparations of their trousseaus. This acceleration of the demands of the dowry in whitewear as well as in other trousseau items, as an influence of Westernization, is reflected in the popular song:

> "… they labor all their life,
> Wasting away with their needles.
> They are exhausted of blood,
> Unable to prepare everything as required,
> Beds and bed covers are demanded
> even by the porter / of good cotton a set of linen drapes he requests…"[56]

Similarly, the introduction of the sewing machine, a novelty, an "object of desire," as a significant component of the trousseau and an important and valuable article in the household, had some contradictory effects.[57] The sewing machine aided the woman in freeing some of the time which had to be devoted to her many sewing chores, however at the same time it created new chores she could do at home. It equipped her and enabled her to be economically independent or to complement the family income by sewing for others, without necessarily leaving the house. "Seek a worthy wife who will work well with her needle and scissors who knows how to support her household."[58] Thus many Jewish girls worked as seamstresses toiling in the preparation of their own trousseaus and/or preparing trousseaus for other well-to-do brides.

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54 Jewish girls learned sewing and embroidery in European style also in other schools and in small private workshops run by Jewish women, in Izmir as in many other urban Jewish communities in the region.

55 Schneider, "Trousseau as Treasure" points to the "enslavement" of lower-class girls to the preparation of the embroidered "beds" in emulation of the upper classes.

56 Attias, *Cancionero,* no. 18, 251 (English translation from Juhasz Marriage, 200).

57 On the introduction of the sewing machine and its domestication as part of the concept of the bourgeois home see Adrian Forty, *Objects of Desire* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995, first edition 1986), 94–100; Diane M. Douglas, "The Machine in the Parlor, A Dialectical Analysis of the Sewing Machine," *The Journal of American Culture* 5/1 (Spring 1982): 20–29. On the sewing machine in the dowries of Salonica Jewish women see Hadar, "Marriage as Survival Strategy," 215. On the sewing machine as one of the three indispensible items of the dowry among the Jews of Ioannina see Fromm, *We Are Few*, 62.

58 Attias, *Cancionero,* no. 18, 251.

Fig. 3: Embroiderers' workshop for white embroidery with Singer sewing machines. Kırklareli, Turkey, c. 1930. Photographic Archive of the Isidore and Anne Falk Information Center for Jewish Art and Life, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Photograph courtesy of Mrs. Pins Benei Brak.

Fig. 4: A bride wearing a *bindal* dress after the wedding, Ruschuk? Early 20th c. Photographic Archive of the Isidore and Anne Falk Information Center for Jewish Art and Life, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Courtesy of the SimanTov family, Jerusalem.

Among the sumptuous home furnishing textiles, one group of gold embroideries, typically brought in trousseaus of Jewish brides in many Ottoman communities, stands out as a most meaningful group with strong biographical as well as Jewish religious and ritual connotations. In the 1890s and through the early 20th century it was the fashion to give brides a set of lavish golden embroideries made of velvet or satin fabrics embroidered with heavy couched metal thread to be used throughout their lives.[59] In accordance with economic possibilities, this set included a bed cover, various cushion covers and square multifunctional pieces, *bogo*, used as wrappers, sometimes it included also a *bindallı* dress.[60] These were intended for the bride's anticipated major life-cycle events. In the wedding itself they were used to construct the Sephardi-style wedding canopy, the *talamo*. The nuptial benedictions were said as the bride and groom stood wrapped in the groom's prayer shawl under the *talamo* symbolically shaped as a house and made from the bride's trousseau textiles which enveloped them. Hence they were used to deck the bed prepared for the woman after birth (*kama de parida*) where she received her guests after birth. A piece from this set was used to bring the baby boy to his circumcision. In "The Good Dowry" song the mother enumerates the trousseau items she gave her daughter, she associates the uses of the gold embroidered textiles with the awaited life-cycle events: "*Ya la di kama armada que le eche de bien cazada*" (I gave her a magnificent bed, that her marriage may succeed). "*Yo le di kama de sirma que se eche de buen parida*" (I gave her a bed decked with gold embroidery in the hope that she give birth).[61] These gold embroidered articles as well as the *bindallı* dresses were eventually donated to the synagogues, converted into Ark curtains, Torah mantles and binders, reading desk (*bimah*) covers, and the like, frequently with dedicatory inscriptions added on.[62] These were at times in memory of the women who owned them after their passing away, or the women themselves donated them in memory of departed family members. By donating their trousseau items to the synagogues, the women created a personal bond between themselves and the synagogue. As the habit of donating these textiles to the synagogue endured long after these embroideries had gone out of fashion, and were substituted by other textiles in the trousseaus, these embroideries became identified in the Sephardi Ottoman communities as synagogue tex-

59 Esther Juhasz, *Gold Embroideries and their Use in Sephardi Communities of the Ottoman Empire*, M.A. thesis (unpublished) (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1979) Hebrew; Juhasz, "Textiles for the Home and Synagogue," in Juhasz, ed., *Sephardi Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, 65–119; 68–85.

60 See above.

61 Levy, *Chants Judéo-espagnols*, vol. 3, no. 107, 96; no. 110, 98.

62 These embroideries, in fashion in that period among the middle- and upper-class urban Muslims and Christians, were used to embellish ritual ceremonies and festive occasions. The Jews appropriated the uses of these embroideries and adapted them to their own rituals and customs. Thus the gold embroideries, adapted from the surrounding culture as fashionable items without any Jewish specificity, were appropriated as Jewish through their use in the synagogue.

Fig. 5: Torah Ark curtain composed from a wrapper and cushion covers. Dedicated in memory of Mrs. Rivkula, the wife of Eliyahu Gabbai, Izmir, 1907. The collection of The Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Photograph David Harris.

tiles. The conversion, of these trousseau items, left marks of their original tailoring, so that the trousseau items in their new roles harked back to their former owners. Thus, the trousseaus of Jewish women were memorialized in Sephardi synagogues which have become their repositories, long after the passing away of the brides who received them for their weddings.

> "In the old synagogues of the Sephardim are preserved to this day fine silk Ark curtains embroidered in heavy gold thread, sometimes sparkling, sometimes having lost their brilliance, and in the middle of the Ark curtain, words to uplift the souls of those who had departed from the world in fullness of years or in the flower of their youth. These ark curtains were the same few splendid *kaveseras* that were spread on the beds of women lying-in, and that after many years were taken out of their wooden chests and hung up before the Ark of the Holy One […]"[63]

The identification of the clothing of the bride with the home textiles as with the underclothes and the bed linen emphasized the nexus between the women and the home. As if the trousseau dressed the bride, and she "dressed" her new conjugal home.[64] Extending this identification Shlomo Dov Goitein wrote somewhat ironically, analyzing trousseau lists of Jewish brides from medieval Egypt:

> "[...] but the colourful and richly patterned sophas, couches, pillows, spreads and hangings which often were made of the same materials as a Geniza[65] woman's dresses, could be regarded as an extension of herself; or vice versa, she in her attractive clothing formed so to speak, the most impressive item of the interior decoration of the home."[66]

In continuation, it should be said that the home textiles particularly the stacks of linen which served their symbolical role by their sheer presence in the trousseaus, were not always in actual use at the home. With the changes of fashion they were preserved as family heirlooms and memory items. They came to signify for the women of the younger generations the appreciation of the handicraft invested in them. In many cases they were kept by daughters as personal memories of their mothers and as a testimony of their mother's skills in embroidery and lace which they did not possess but still appreciated.[67]

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63 Yehoshua, *Childhood in Old Jerusalem,* 366 (English translation from Juhasz, "Textiles," 75).

64 This expression of women dressing their homes in their trousseau textile was prevalent in Greece, see, for example: Eleftherios Pavlides and Jana Hesser, "Women's Roles and House Form and Decoration in Eressos, Greece," in *Gender and Power in Rural Greece,* ed. Jill Dubisch (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986), 68–96, 73.

65 Genizah is the store-room or depository in a Jewish synagogue (or cemetery), for worn-out Hebrew-language books and papers written in Hebrew script that were stored there before they could receive a proper cemetery burial, it being forbidden to throw away writings containing the name of God, *genizot* also contained writings of a secular nature. Here the reference is to the Cairo Geniza documents on which Goitein based his monumental work.

66 Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, 4, 310.

67 On a similar process among Turkish daughters and mothers see Sandıkçı/İlhan, "Dowry: A Cherished Possession or an Old-Fashioned Tradition," 185.

The Dowry Chest

Chests appear constantly in the lists. Before the advent of European furniture, they were the common domestic storing place. During the preparation of the trousseau the chests were steadily filled with the bride's clothing and bed linen, home furnishings tied up in wrappers. Apart from their practical function, the dowry chests served symbolically as the bride's private space.[68] First in her natal home, later in her new home, and in between, only in one instance, on the occasion of the display of the trousseau, its contents were exposed publicly. Even after the European cupboards replaced the chests, chests were still used and kept. Many were brought by their owners in the 1950s as they immigrated to Israel.

Jewelry

A comparative examination of the presence and absence of categories of items in corpuses of trousseau lists shows that jewelry stands out exceptionally, as missing, in the Izmir lists.[69] All the more so as in Izmir, as we know from oral and textual sources jewelry was considered an indispensible part of a woman's dowry and apparel.[70] A father could not give away his daughter without giving her some pieces of jewelry, in accordance with his financial possibilities and social standing. The most valuable jewels, traditionally given by the father, were a chain necklace (*ogadero*) with matching bracelets (*manias de caton*), others were coin necklaces, earrings and more.[71]

It was customary, and one might say even mandatory, in Izmir, as in other Jewish Ottoman communities, that part of the cash money (*medudim kontante*), which the groom received from the bride's father in order to invest in business,

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68 See David B. Rheutbottom, "Dowry and Wedding Celebrations in Yugoslav Macedonia," in Comaroff, ed., *The Meaning of Marriage Payments*, 221–248.

69 See, for example, trousseau lists from the Jewish community of Baghdad, Yitzhak Avishur, *The Jewish Wedding in Baghdad and Its Filiations*, 2 vols. (Haifa: University of Haifa, 1990), 2: 33–39; 51–53 (Hebrew).

70 Another missing category from the Izmir trousseau lists, with which I will not deal here, is silverware which was considered a "must" in Izmir dowries. Particularly important was a set of silver dishes for serving sweets (*tavla de dulse*) of which it was said that a girl cannot get married without. On the custom of serving sweets, its social and cultural meanings, and the silver plates used for it in Izmir see Esther Shmeruk-Juhasz, "The Custom of Serving Sweets among the Jews of Izmir," *The Israel Museum News* 15 (1979), 72–79.

71 Jewelry was given by the groom and by other family members in the prenuptial ceremonies such as the "*besa mano*" ceremony and during the wedding ceremonies as well. On the various types of jewelry worn by Jewish women in Ottoman communities including those customary in Izmir and their importance as gifts and financial assets see Russo-Katz, "Jewelry." On the different legal status of jewelry given by the father or by the groom as gleaned from rabbinical discussions and adjudications regarding woman's inheritance disputes see Borenstein-Makovetzky, *Istanbul Inheritance Regulations*.

in learning a trade etc., was paid in jewelry. Also, upon receiving the money, the groom would buy his bride jewelry from this money.

> "[…] and it is our accepted custom that the husband must [my underline] make jewelry from the sum brought by the wife […]. For what is given at this point is in respect of the *medudim* received from the bride's father and corresponding to the sum he makes golden jewelry and articles etc. […] according to the custom of Istanbul and most other places that the *medudim* [cash money] is given in order to buy jewelry for the wives to beautify themselves […]."[72]

In Izmir, pieces of jewels given by the father as cash money or the obligation of the groom to buy them with the money he receives were recorded in the betrothal deed *shiddukhin* in which the economic obligations undertaken by each family were noted.[73]

It seems likely that the explanation of the absence of the jewelry from the overt listing might ensue from their dual roles as symbolical prestige markers and as financial assets, and the inherent tension between these two functions.[74]

Giving the jewelry as part of the money intended for the husband's use and simultaneously to be displayed on his wife's body created a complex situation.[75] The concurrent twofold functions of the jewelry given to the brides, as articles to beautify themselves and as cash reserves from which the husband could draw for his business, predisposed them as causes of disagreements and quarrels between man and wife on issues regarding economic need versus social visibility and respect. When a husband requested his wife to part with her jewelry which she donned on the Sabbath in the synagogue, or on ceremonial occasions,[76] in order to sell or pawn them, fluctuations in the economic situation of the family were exposed and this instigated in the woman, who appeared without her jewelry, a sense of humiliation and shame and a diminution in the family honor.

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72 Shemuel ben Moshe Hayyim, *Shemen haMishha* (Istanbul 1840), 1: 95, (English translation cited from Juhasz, "Marriage," 198) for rabbinical sources for this custom see Borenstein-Makovetzky, *Istanbul Inheritance Regulations*, 16–17.
For a comparison of the Sephardi and Musta'arab customs see Lamdan, *A Separate People*, 35–36.

73 See, for example, *shiddukhin* deeds from the Bikkur Holim synagogue community in Izmir from 1859, 1860, Izmir Community Archives.

74 On the dualism and tension between economic and symbolic value of gold jewelry given at weddings in contemporary Turkish culture see Burcak Ertimur and Özlem Sandıkçı, "Giving Gold Jewelry and Coins as Gifts: The Interplay of Utilitarianism and Symbolism," *Advances in Consumer Research* 32 (2005): 322–327.

75 For example, a question brought to Rabbi De Boton: Ya'akov de Boton, *Edut be-Ya'akov* (Salonica, 1720) 34, about a husband who forcibly took his wife's bracelets and hence she fled back to her parents. These particular bracelets, as explained, were those that all women don, and it was disgraceful to be without them. The rabbi's responsum deals in detail with the husband's right to use the wife's jewelry gifts. He presents also the wife's position who says that had she known he was going to deprive her of her jewelry she would not have married him.

76 On the jewels given to the bride in her trousseau for the purpose of adorning and beautifying herself on the Sabbath and Jewish holidays see R. Meir Shem Tov Melamed, *Mishpat Tsedek* (Salonica 1799), 3: 54.

In Izmir jewelry (and silverware) was considered a gift, unlike the other trousseau articles, a token of the bride's father goodwill and generosity toward his daughter, and maybe as such it seemed inappropriate that it should be quantified, at least not on an overt level. Yet, although apparently the father was not obligated to bestow his daughter with jewelry, the special status assigned to this gift in the social conventions surrounding the wedding and dowry customs, made this a socially binding requirement.[77] The father's gift was categorized as a special type of gift called "the praise of her natal family," this meant that the father gave his daughter jewelry to reward her for preserving her modesty and thus she merited them as she safeguarded her own honor and by extension her father's and family's honor.

> "Regarding what she is given in praise of her youth […] these gifts are given in her honor and are given by her father and mother as a reward for her modesty that she preserved her virginity 'The king's daughter is all glorious within' [Psalms 45:14], […]"[78]

This means that by endowing his daughter with jewels the father maintained and proclaimed his daughter's honor and his own which was dependent on his daughter's modesty.[79] He rewarded her for preserving her modesty by adorning her with jewelry. So in fact the customary norm of giving one's daughter jewelry, as marriage presents, was binding and the father could not allow himself socially not to give his daughter these customary gifts.[80]

The Appraisal of the Trousseau

In conclusion I would like to look again at the ceremony of the display of the trousseau and at its official and informal appraisal.[81] This was a climactic event, one of the highlights of the wedding ceremony's embodying intrinsic tensions.

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77 In modern Greece, as interpreted by Sant Cassia and Bada, the dowry as a whole is conceived as a gift, a gift the daughter may demand of her father, Sant Cassia/Bada, *The Making of the Modern Greek Family*, 83.

78 R. Yosef David, *Petah Beit David* (Salonica, 1720), 99. (This is but one example of many, thus defining this type of gift.)

79 The association between the bride's modesty and jewelry gifts is implied also in the *kezada* ceremony held a few days before the wedding (which is being revived today). There, a marzipan cake in the form of two birds/doves is prepared, and a "happy woman" breaks it over the head of the bride, just as the round cake (*roska*) is broken over the bride's head as she comes out from the ritual immersion, both hinting at the approaching wedding night. Then the bride receives jewelry presents from the women present. On these ceremonies see Juhasz, "Marriage," 205–206; Amado Bortnick, "The Jewish Women of Turkey," 100. On the nexus between a woman's modesty, her honor and her family's honor see Ben-Naeh, "Honor and Its Meaning," 25–27.

80 Other wedding gifts were also obligatory, such as those the father of the bride had to give the groom between the betrothal and the wedding. Failure to give them could cause a legal claim. In Izmir, for example, see Ahkenazi, *Sefer Ma'aseh Avraham*, 1: "Even ha-Ezer," "Hilkhot Kiddushin": 7. (Juhasz, "Marriage," 198–200).

81 For this ceremony among the Romaniot Jews of Ioannina see Fromm, *We Are Few*, 62.

At this point, the trousseau, which had been hidden in chests, was exposed in public for everyone to see, to be approved by the groom's family and the community officials, soon to be packed away again and transferred to the groom's home.[82] This event was described in different tones, some underscoring the festivity, the joy and pride, others emphasizing the intrinsic tensions and anxieties. Ya'akov Yehoshua described this appraisal nostalgically but ironically:

> "The hanging of the *ashugar* in the appointed day was done by the mother of the bride assisted by the bride herself and other female members of the family. After having set everything in good taste and understanding they positioned themselves close to the assessor to plead with him and to intercede with his judgment. The *hacham* [rabbi] Nissim Ya'ish did not haste, he looked to and fro around the room, smiling with an air of seriousness on his face. He took out of his caftan's pocket some tobacco, sniffed it while looking here and there as if contemplating the value of the merchandise. Then the bride's female relatives and her mother surrounded him praising and exalting the merchandise. Hacham Nisim Ya'ish felt now at ease, he took off his overcoat and started listing each article and its monetary value in tiny letters. From time to time he would handle a bed sheet or a dress or look at a coat or a pair of socks. Some times he would inquire about some article. The bride's mother offers him some shorbet or coffee or a good thick cigarette the father has prepared in advance. At times a "clash" would occur between the parties, but it was brushed away quickly with a smile […]"[83]

As aforesaid, the official evaluating of the trousseau was done by men. These were respected, trustworthy members of the community, considered to have the required expertise to assess women's apparel to their details. The display included private items such as underwear and whitewear. These were exposed, to the eyes, scrutiny and assessment of men. This asserted a social patriarchal control over the woman's intimate sphere, and of the marital intimacy. By doing so the community stepped into the private sphere of the bride, assuming control over her decency and conduct and for the sake of this control, even the accepted boundaries of modesty were transgressed.[84]

Moreover, as the trousseau articles were mostly sewn, embroidered and braided by women and officially evaluated by men, the assessment thus assumed control over women's work also. By vesting the power of assessment in the hands of men, the economic value of the items was given the highest priority, and the patriarchal power of the "value of the bride" was symbolically exercised.

The male control over the female intimacy was further exercised symbolically through the custom according to which it was the groom's responsibility to spon-

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82 The display of the dowry was customary among Turkish Muslims albeit with different emphasis. In 1925 it was banned as part of the laws which prohibited religious traditional ceremonies. These laws were cancelled 1969 as they limited individual freedom. According to Magnarella, ("The Turkish Bridewealth Practice in Transition," 150–151) this law was never enforced as this tradition was so deeply rooted in Turkish culture.

83 Yehoshua, *Childhood in Old Jerusalem*, 2, 64.

84 On formal and informal control of women in Jewish Ottoman communities see Ben-Naeh, "Feminine Gender and Its Restriction," 132–134.

sor the female party which accompanied the bride's ritual immersion prior to the wedding.[85] Upon receiving the trousseau in his house, the groom would send the bride money to pay for the party and a parcel. The parcel (*bogo de banyo*) contained articles to use in the bathhouse, a sumptuous set of towels, soaps, clogs and cosmetics to be used at the *hamam* and the party.[86]

Beside the public, officially documented, male assessment of the trousseau another informal, oral, female evaluation took place. Family and friends, male and female, were invited to the display, and it attracted especially prospective brides and mothers of prospective brides' grooms. Everybody was curious to see what each bride brought and how it was displayed. After a long time of preparation and latency everything was exhibited. The women examined the workmanship, the precision and style. They also inspected the aesthetics of the display detecting camouflaging devices designed to amplify the quantities of items and to highlight its better parts.[87]

Though their observations remained on the interpersonal level, or could be considered as gossip,[88] those part of the official appraisals were most powerful in establishing the bride's reputation, and implicated no less, on her image.

These judgments spread the word in the community about the bride's talents, her capacities or incapacities as a housewife, her modesty, propriety and diligence, thus establishing her standing in her new home with her prospective husband and most commonly, with her mother-in-law.[89] They influenced also the

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85 This was her first ritual immersion required by Jewish law in preparation of the wedding night.

86 On this ceremony see Juhasz, "Marriage," 205–210. An analysis of this ceremony as practiced by the Jewish women in Rhodes see Michal Held, "Between the River and the Sea – a Multi-Layered Reading of a Judeo-Spanish Wedding Song from the Island of Rhodes," *Mikan 8/El Presente Studies in Sephardic Culture* 1 (2007): 91–121.

87 On an informal appraisal of the dowry trying to work out the cost of the various components see Rheutbottom, "Dowry and Wedding Celebrations in Yugoslav Macedonia," 228, 238.

88 On the encounter of formal and informal texts, written and oral, and the hierarchy of male and female texts see Galit Hasan Rokem, *Tales of the Neighborhood, Jewish Narrative Dialogues in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), chapter 1, 1–27. On gossip and social control in Jewish Italian marriage ceremonies see Weinstein, *Marriage Rituals Italian Style*, 125–154. On some social functions of gossip see Roy F. Baumeister, Liqing Zhang, and Kathleen D. Vohs, "Gossip as Cultural Learning," *Review of General Psychology* 8/2 (2004): 111–121.

89 In Athens two separate dowry appraisal ceremonies took place. One male, public and formal attended by the fathers of the couple and their brothers, the priest and the city notary who checked the contents of the trousseau if it matches what had been agreed upon in the prenuptial agreements. The other was a female ceremony in which the trousseau was displayed aesthetically, in order to boast the bride's diligence and good taste. There, the groom's presents to the bride were exhibited also so as to signify the acceptance and approval of the trousseau and the wedding by the groom and his family. Sant Cassia/Bada, *The Making of the Modern Greek Family*, 107–108.

reputation and prestige of the family of the bride as being generous or stingy for future marriages contracted with it.[90]

The social importance assigned to such informal evaluations was more conspicuous in trousseau displays which did not include a formal economic assessment. In the Jewish community of Baghdad, for example, the display of the trousseau took place after the wedding, already in the groom's house on the Sabbath following the wedding called "Women's Sabbath." This was an emotionally charged social occasion attended by women only, in which the women determined and transmitted to the community the reputation of the bride and her family. In this case the female informal evaluation was the sole power of social control.[91]

The informal female assessment provoked the competition between families and between prospective brides and accelerated the exigencies of the trousseaus. It also amplified the tension between tradition and innovation, between conformity and originality which surrounded the displays since the advent of modernization.[92]

The trousseau displays ceased to take place for purposes of appraisal around the 1940s as far as we know. In Izmir as in other Jewish communities in Turkey they are revived in a symbolic form as part of a nostalgic revival of traditional ceremonies. These revived ceremonies preserve symbolic aspects of the display but they are free of the anxiety that surrounded them previously. The occasion is a joyful party in which the traditional sweets and refreshments are served. The display takes place in the bedroom. It is an opulent display of delicate silk and satin lingerie, and large quantities of bed linen, bed covers, tablecloths and napkins all still wrapped in the transparent plastic bags in which they were bought.[93] This form of display underscores the fading of personal attachment to these textiles. But the choice of items for display maintains symbolically the association with the bride's modesty and propriety. Another emerging aspect of these displays is their role as revivers of the Sephardi heritage and as sustainers and consolidators of the ethnic identity. Thus, though in another way, the collective impact on personal privacy prevails.

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90 This is how M. Matzas of Ioannina described (in an interview with A. Fromm in 1983) the informal gossip about the bride's trousseau, as people watched the trousseau procession being transferred to the groom's home from their home windows: "It was very pretty, they walked past all the houses. They [the neighbors] saw it pass and afterwards they talked, they said, "She didn't get, that stuff isn't good. Ah, she and she got three mattresses or got two mattresses… They talked, they gossiped, it was something nice, tradition…," Fromm, *We Are Few*, 63.

91 See Avishur, *The Baghdad Jewish Wedding*, 1: 131–133.

92 Sandıkçı/İlhan, "Dowry: A Cherished Possession or an Old-Fashioned Tradition," 158.

93 Amado Bortnick, "The Jewish Women of Turkey," 99.

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