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RELEASE

Publication News from The Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies and Culture

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Newly-published work of poetry in Ladino by Turkish-born poet Haim Vitali Sadacca, with English translations, reflects elements of Sephardic culture within universal themes, and conveys the beauty and expressiveness of the Ladino language.

New York City, May 1, 2009 – The Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies and Culture (FASSAC) proudly announces the publication of *UN RAMO DE POEMAS – A BOUQUET OF POEMS*, a new book of original poems in Ladino by Turkish-born poet Haim Vitali Sadacca, with English translations by David Fintz Altabe, and edited by Robert Bedford.

Haim Vitali Sadacca, who wrote and published poetry in Turkish in his younger years, now composes poetry only in Ladino, his beloved ancestral language. The poems in the book, chosen by the author himself, express the universal aspirations of the human soul for love, affection, compassion, generosity, peace and harmony. Flowing in rhyme and rhythm, these reveal Sadacca's skill as a poet and his mastery of Ladino. The unique collection is further distinguished with English translations, prepared especially for this book, by the late David F. Altabe, himself an accomplished poet in Ladino and English.

Author Haim Vitali Sadacca was born in 1919, in Chanakkale, a seaport town in Turkey on the southern coast of the Dardanelles. At the time, the city had a small, but prominent community of about 3,000 Ladino-speaking Sephardic Jews, descendants of the Jews expelled from Spain and Portugal.

Ladino, also known as Judeo-Spanish, is the language of the Sephardim based on the Castilian that the Jewish refugees from Spain brought with them to the Ottoman Empire in the fifteenth century. Over the centuries the language evolved, enriching itself with Hebrew and Aramaic elements, as well as from co-territorial languages: Turkish, Greek, Italian, French, etc.

Sadacca's poems have appeared in Sephardic publications worldwide, including *Shalom* (Istanbul), *El Amanaser* (Istanbul), *Los Muestrros* (Brussels), *La Lettre Sepharade* (Paris and Washington), and *Sefaraires* (Buenos Aires). A greater number of these, however, were posted on *Ladinokomunita*, the Ladino-language Internet discussion group with over 1,000 members, where these poems received great praise. Sadacca's poems have also been read on the air, in Sephardic programs on *Radio Exterior de España* and *Kol Israel Radio*. One of Sadacca's poems, *Primer Amor*, set to music by Reneta Sibel Yolak of Istanbul, recently received first prize at the prestigious *Festiladino* competition of new Ladino songs in Israel.

UN RAMO DE POEMAS will be welcomed by those interested in poetry in general and in the Sephardic heritage and the Ladino language in particular. While the elements of Sephardic culture and history add a special color and uniqueness to Sadacca's poetry,

BOOK INFORMATION

*UN RAMO DE POEMAS –
A BOUQUET OF POEMS.*
by Haim Vitali Sadacca
Translations by David Fintz Altabe
Edited by Robert Bedford
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the themes, messages and sentiments are universal. The book joins the FASSAC's growing list of publications exploring the Judeo-Spanish language, and the regional history, heritage and culture of the Sephardic experience.

UN RAMO DE POEMAS can be purchased directly from the publisher at www.sephardicstudies.org (direct link: www.sephardicstudies.org/unramodepoemas.html), and will be soon available at bookstores and on-line retailers.

About the Poet

Haim Vitali Sadacca was born in 1919 in Chanakkale, Turkey, where he had his elementary schooling. As there was no secondary school in this city, in 1933 his parents sent him to Istanbul. There he studied at the *Haydarpasha Lycée*, and two years at the *Ecole Saint Benoît* for French language classes. Haim Vitali Sadacca wrote poems in Turkish as a young man in Istanbul, where his poetry appeared in local publications. Now, his passion is to paint landscapes and to write poetry, expressing his thoughts and emotions in Ladino, his beloved ancestral language. An accountant who started his own business in 1947, Sadacca retired in 1990 to be near his children, one of whom lives in New York and the other in Canada. Since then, he and his wife, Janet, reside six months of the year in Montreal, and the remainder in Florida and Istanbul.

About the Translator

David Fintz Altabe, Professor Emeritus of Spanish, City University of New York was born in New York to Sephardic parents from Turkey. Altabe was an internationally known specialist in Judeo-Spanish literature, having written numerous articles on the subject, as well as original poems and folktales in Ladino included in his books *Chapter and Verse: Poems; Temas y Dialogos*; and *Una Kozecha de Rimas i Konsejas: A Harvest of Rhymes and Folk-Tales*. David Altabe passed away suddenly in November, 2008, shortly after completing the English translations for this book.

About the Editor

Robert Bedford is Executive Director of the *Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies and Culture*, NY, and author and editor of several articles and books, including AN INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE ON THE HOLOCAUST IN GREECE; PORTRAITS OF OUR PAST, THE SEPHARDIC COMMUNITIES OF GREECE AND THE HOLOCAUST; TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS OF THE SEPHARDIC JEWS OF SALONICA, and the documentary film OTTOMAN SALONIKA, 1430-1912. Bedford resides and works in the New York City area.

About the Publisher

The *Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies and Culture* (FASSAC) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion and preservation of the culture, language and experience of the Sephardim – descendants of the Jews who fled the religious persecution in Spain more than five centuries ago. The Sephardic culture in general, and the number of Ladino speakers in particular, has diminished greatly and is in danger of vanishing completely. The Foundation's goals and interests are reflected in a wide variety of activities, including historical exhibits, visual presentations, documentaries and book publications. It continues to conduct research and publish works in an effort to document and promote the culture and history of Sephardic Jewry. More information on the Foundation's projects and publications is available at www.sephardicstudies.org.

About *Ladinokomunita*

Ladinokomunita is a Ladino-language Internet discussion group, founded in 2000 by Rachel Amado Bortnick, dedicated to promoting the use of Ladino as a living language. Every day members share information, only in Ladino, regarding the language, culture, history, and traditions of the Sephardim. *Ladinokomunita*, which currently has over 1,000 members from more than 30 countries, is run by the *Ladino Preservation Council* of the *Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies and Culture* (FASSAC). It can be found at: <http://www.sephardicstudies.org/komunita.html> and also at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Ladinokomunita/>