

A Salonican Sefardi Admires the Virtues of his Contemporary
Ottoman Sultans and describes the grandeur of Costantina
(Istanbul): Mosheh Almosnino's *Crónica de los Reyes
Otomanos* (1566-1567)

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R. Mosheh Almosnino, a well known Sefardi sage, was born in Salonica (Thessloniki; Selânik), in the year 1518. He belonged to a rich and renowned Jewish family originating in the Iberian kingdom of Aragon. During the years 1566-1567, R. Almosnino spent a year and a half in Istanbul, as a member of a Jewish delegation pleading the cancellation of several decrees, made by the highest Ottoman authorities, regarding the economic situation of the Jewish community of Salonica. Being a member of the second generation after the 1492 expulsion, R. Almosnino –like his Jewish contemporaries– was grateful to the Ottoman sultans for their hospitality towards the Jews expelled from the Iberian Peninsula. A man of the Renaissance, living in a century of powerful kings, he appreciated the position of mighty and resourceful rulers. While in Istanbul, R. Almosnino wrote several literary works in which he expressed his admiration of the then ruling Ottoman Sultans Suleiman I (1520-1566) and his son and heir Selim II (1566-1574) and described the magnificence of the Ottoman capital.

The edict of the Expulsion of the Jews was signed by Isabel, queen of Castile and her husband, Fernando, king of Aragon –later to be known as the ‘Catholic Kings’¹– in their newly acquired kingdom of Granada, on March 31 1492. It was made public throughout their respective lands, a month later, on April 30 1492. The Jews who refused to forsake their ancestral Jewish faith and convert to Christianity were to leave the lands of the ‘Catholic Kings’ no later than 31 July 1492. Those who would convert to Christianity were allowed to stay in their homes. We have no certified information regarding the number of Jews who were living in the lands of the ‘Catholic Kings’ prior to the promulgation of the said edict; neither do we know how

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¹ This title was bestowed upon them by the Pope Alexander VI Borgia in the year 1496, in praise of their efforts to free their lands from the presence of the enemies of Christianity.

many Jews went into exile and how many chose to convert and stay in their homes. Generally speaking, historians estimate that about half the Jewish population refused to convert to Christianity and went into exile. Most of the expelled Jews took the land roads to the neighboring Iberian Kingdom of Portugal, into where they were admitted upon paying a *per capita* ransom.² Others took the perilous sea ways leading to North Africa, to Italy and to the Ottoman Empire. It was in the lands of the Ottoman Empire where the Jews, expelled from the Iberians Peninsula, hence to be known as *Sefardim* –people of *Sefarad*³–, found a safe haven for more than four hundred years. A Jewish tradition claims that the Ottoman Sultan Bayazid II (Beyazid-i Veli; Beyazit II) (1481-1512) mockingly told his courtiers that the mistake of one king –referring to Fernando of Aragon– was the luck of another king: himself. According to the said tradition, the sultan meant that the expulsion of the Jews benefited his realm, while it brought a severe damage upon the kingdom of his Christian rival. Indeed the Ottoman rulers were interested in admitting the exiled Iberian Jews into their lands. The *Sefardim* who were skilled in the arts of printing, glassmaking, textiles and the fabrication of arms, settled down first in the coastal cities of Salonica and Istanbul, from where they moved to other cities in the Balkans, Anatolia and the Middle East following the conquests made the Ottoman Turks in the sixteenth century. It is noteworthy that in 1453, when Constantinople was conquered by the Fathi Sultan Mehmet, the remaining Jews of Salonica (already conquered in 1430) –Romaniotes and *Ashkenazim*– were expelled to the newly conquered capital, in order to populate the then devastated city. Those Jews were to stay there as *sürgün*, who were not allowed to leave their hometown.⁴ This treatment of the Jewish-Greek speaking Romaniotes was clearly in juxtaposition to the official welcoming extended to the Romance, later to be known as Jewish-Spanish speaking *Sefardim*. Generally, the Jews were indeed loyal and obedient subjects of the Ottomans. Even as late as the nineteenth century, when most of the Balkan peoples were kindling nationalistic aspirations, the Jews remained loyal to the Ottoman Regime.

² Baer 1978: 424-443; Beinart 1999: 99-122.

³ Obadiah 1:20.

⁴ Bnaya 1996: 55; 158.

The admiring attitude expressed by the sixteenth century *Sefardim* towards their Ottoman rulers is clearly manifest in R. Mosheh Almosnino's work: *Crónica de los Reyes Otomanos*.⁵ R. Mosheh (1518-1580) belonged to a second generation family of exiled Jews who had settled down in Salonica. Prior to the 1492 Expulsion, the Almosnino family was living in the Aragonese towns of Jaca and Huesca. Among the family members of R. Mosheh's mother, were some *conversos* who had been tried and condemned by the Spanish Inquisition as *judaizers* and burnt at the stake. Indeed, R. Mosheh felt compassion towards the *conversos* and would do his best to welcome them in his hometown Salonica.⁶ Sixteenth century Salonica was a city of immigrants: throughout that century, more Jews and *conversos* came to live there.⁷ The newly arrivals formed new *kehalim* or congregations. Each *kahal* was autonomous; yet there was an overhead institution: *Va'ad Metaknei ha-Haskamot* (committee of common conventions regulators). As a *marbits Torah*⁸ (Teacher, literally "Propagator of the Torah"), R. Mosheh Almosnino became *ex officio* member of the said committee. R. Mosheh studied in Salonica⁹ and was nominated *marbits Torah* first (1552) in the *kahal* of *Gerush Catalan*, then (1553) *Neveh Shalom* and finally (1560) *Liviat Hen*, a *kahal* formed by newly arrived immigrants originating in the Iberian Peninsula and so named in honor of doña Gracia (Hannah) Mendes Nassí. In the years 1566-1568, R. Mosheh Almosnino was nominated by six *procuradores* of the Salonican Jewish community –for which Almosnino used the term: *republica*¹⁰– together with two other colleagues: R. Mosheh Barukh and R. Ya'aqov Nahmias. They were to act as its

⁵ Romeu Ferré 1998: 13-15. I read the edition of Pilar Romeu Ferré: *Moisés Almosnino, Crónica de los Reyes Otomanos*. Edición crítica de Pilar Romeu Ferré, Tirocinio, Barcelona, 1998. This edition is based on the only manuscript of the *Crónica* kept at the Biblioteca Ambrosiana of Milan. See: Romeu Ferré, 1998: 13-15. This work was considered identical with the *Extremos y Grandezas de Constantinopla*, first published in Madrid, "en la imprenta de Francisco Martínez", in the year 1638, by Jacob Cansino of Orán, "vassallo de su Magestad Catolica, Interprete suyo, y Lengua en las Plaças de Oran" - the official translator of the Spanish royal authorities in Orán, who dedicated this work to the Conde Duque de Olivares, high ranking minister in the court of Philip (Felipe) IV (1605-1665). Romeu Ferré claims that those were two different works. See: Romeu Ferré 1998: 15-28. See also: Bnaya 1996: 165-168.

⁶ Bnaya 1996: 22-23.

⁷ Meir Zvi Bnaya provides his readers with relevant statistics: in the years 1520-1535, 2,645 households out of 4,863 were Jews; 1,229 Muslims and 989 Christians. See: Ibid: 14, note 8.

⁸ The *Marbitz Tora* acted as *dayan* (judge) and spiritual leader of the *kahal*. An important duty of the *Marbitz Tora* was to preach the weekly sermons (*drasha*) in the synagogue of his *kahal*. The *Marbitz Tora* was paid by his *kahal*. See: Bnaya, 1996: 26-31.

⁹ Bnaya claims that we have no information as to who were the teachers of R. Mosheh Almosnino. According to R. Shemuel de Medina (RaShDam), a well known sixteen century Salonican rabbinical authority, as well as R. David Conforte, author of the authoritative list of rabbinical dignitaries –*Koré ha-Dorot* – R. Mosheh Almosnino was famous for his erudition: "*Hakham kollel be-hokhmot*". See: Bnaya 1996: 24.

¹⁰ Romeu Ferré 1998: 116; Bnaya 1996: 66.

emissaries and negotiate with the highest authorities possible in the Ottoman Sublime Porte of Istanbul the annulment of a few decrees regarding the Salonican Jews of the said *republica*. First among those decrees was the annulment of the privilege bestowed upon the Jews in 1537, by the Sultan Suleiman I, to act as providers of garments to the imperial Janissaries: the Jews were allowed to buy wool at a reduced price in the southern regions of the Balkans, work out the textiles –the Salonican Jews were famous for their expertise in this trade– and provide the Ottoman sultans with the cloth needed for the military garments of their Janissaries, at a fixed price.¹¹ In parentheses it should be noted that Almosnino wrote in Ladino for people who were not familiar with Hebrew: he used the Ladino term: *paños del rey*¹² instead of the Hebrew: *bigdei ha-melekh*. As providers of *bigdei ha-melekh*, the Salonican Jews became a preferred group: *Mua'f Ve Müsellem Re'aya* and gained a partial exemption from taxes – *Müsellemlik*. A similar privilege was bestowed on the Christians inhabitants of Salonica on account of their position as guardians of the city walls. In his *Crónica*, R. Mosheh mentioned a Christian delegation, headed by *el nazir* (the monk; actually an emissary of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople) – arriving at about the same time as Almosnino's own Jewish delegation– to negotiate the position of the Christian dwellers of Salonica.¹³ As far as the Jews were concerned, it would be the role of the *kaheya*¹⁴ to present the grievances of the *kahal* before the Ottoman authorities.¹⁵ But, since the original document was burnt down in a great fire devastating Salonica in the year 1545;¹⁶ and because of the importance of the case at hand: the Jewish community of Salonica was virtually living on those *bigdei ha-melekh*, as well as the fact that the decree in question was issued by the highest imperial authorities in Istanbul (Constantinople), the community decided to put the matter in the hands of a special delegation.

R. Mosheh Almosnino recalled in his *Crónica*, how he actually saw the Sultan Suleiman, back in September 1537, when the latter passed through Salonica, on his way from Albania, after having conquered the isle of Corfu and defeated the

¹¹ See: Ben Naeh 1996: 119-123; Ben Naeh 2008, I: 369-413.

¹² See, for example, Romeu Ferré 1998: 256 relating the fifth negotiation.

¹³ Idem: 248; Bnaya 1996: 70-76.

¹⁴ *Kaheya* – an official elected by the members of the *kahal* and approved by the *kadi*, who would note the nomination in the rolls of the *Shari'a* (or: *şeriat*) court.

¹⁵ Ben Naeh 1996: 155-157; also: Ben Naeh 2008: 390.

¹⁶ Indeed, the *kadi* was supposed to copy the document in his *defter sigilat*; See: Bnaya 1996: 61. Yet it took great pains to procure this copy and present it to the Sublime Porte.

Venetians, formerly lords of the isle (May-November 1537). This was the seventh war waged by Suleiman I, according to the history of R. Mosheh Almosnino:

En este viaje pasó por nuestra noble ciudad de Saloniqui, que por el último así es llamada y antiquísimamente era llamada Tesalónica, como también tengo notado en mi cosmografía en dicho tratado...Y como entró en la ciudad hizo gracias y mercedes a todos los habitantes en ella y dio privilejos y libertades; los cuales por haberse quemado en un muy encendido fuego que en ella hubo en el año de cinco mil y trescientos y cinco [1545] a la criación del mundo, no fueron observados dichas libertades por sus ministros, y no contentándose con la privación de las libertades pasadas, percuraron de poner fueros estráneos que en ningún tiempo antes ni después fueron cometidos. Lo cual fue causa de mi venida en esta famosísima ciudad de Costantina en compañía de otros mis señores que fuimos elegidos por la nuestra república para negociar en esta corte que sea proveído el fuero nuevo insufrible que nos obligaban a traer aquí cada año cierta cantidad de carneros, y que nos sea restituida nuestra libertad antigua y confirmada deste nuestro señor que el Dio prospere.¹⁷

In this paragraph of his *Crónica*, R. Mosheh referred also to another decree, proclaimed at the same time as the former one and obliging the Jewish community of Salonica to provide some 7,800 heads of cattle for the capital: *celep* or *celepkeşan*. It was the duty of an Ottoman ruler to provide meat for the population of his capital.¹⁸ The Salonican Jews contended that having lost the privilege of *bigdei ha-melekh*, they were not able to fulfill that new compulsion.

A short time after the delegation was on its way to the capital, the imperial authorities decreed that seven rich Jews of Salonica were to become guarantors (*sarafos*, *sarafes Şarrāf*) responsible for financing and operating the mines industry in

¹⁷ Romeu Ferré 1998: 116. Cf. Bnaya 1996: 66: “Y ésta es la causa de mi venida por elección de la República”. The orthography used by Bnaya is slightly different than the one used by Romeu Ferré.

¹⁸ Sometimes this duty was replaced by a special tax: *celekeşan bedeli*. See Bnaya 1996: 62.

neighbouring Sidrocaspe (Sidre Kapasi).¹⁹ The Salonican delegation was instructed to deal with this decree as well.

It was not R. Mosheh Almosnino's first travel to Istanbul (Constantinople). He visited the city back in 1539: "yo me hallé en esta noble ciudad sobre negocios míos particulares...".²⁰ Moreover: R. Mosheh Almosnino knew the Turkish language and thought highly of it.²¹

For all his knowledge of the country and its language, R. Mosheh took great care to personally inquire and verify the information he gathered: for example when he wrote about Ayas Pačhá, he commented that: "según yo fui informado de persona muy calificada que supo bien la intrisiquedad de la cosa...".²² Referring to the *yedeques*, participating in the solemn imperial procession, R. Mosheh looked for an advise and learned opinion of others: "procuré de hacerlo intrepertar de un mi señor y amigo, buen letor y práctico en la letra y escritura turquesca de la crónica que ellos tiene que llaman *Tavarij'Otmán*".²³ Again, while speaking of the mosques built by Suleiman I, Almosnino wrote that he learned from a most qualified person:

[S]egún soy certificado de persona muy calificada que lo ha visto por escrito muy por estenso, haberse dicho en el tiempo que reinó este gran señor de quien hablamos, en todo su reino, por conocer del serle aplacible, seis mil y cuatro mezquitas grandes que se dicen en ellas oraciones el día de viernes, que ellos llaman *ŷuma*, y sube el *hatip* dellos en un púlpito a declarar una parte del *Corán* como es su costumbre. Y las más dellas son *marata*, que sacan dellas comidas para pobres y para cuantos caminantes posan en ellas; que se juzga con razón no haberse hecho otras tantas en tiempo de todos los reis pasados sus antecesores, y así se tiene entre ellos por cosa admirable.²⁴

¹⁹ See: Romeu Ferré 1998: 35-36; Bnaya Ibid: 63. Regarding the mines in Sidrocaspe see: Rozen 1996: 13-37.

²⁰ Romeu Ferré Ibid: 155.

²¹ Ibid: 36; Bnaya 1996: 21.

²² Ibid: 135.

²³ Romeu Ferré 1998: 87. Almosnino corrected the counting of the Ottoman rulers made by "un moderno que se llama Yosef Hacoheń". Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid: 203.

When R. Mosheh mentioned the aqueduct bringing water to the capital, he wrote: “supe yo de cierto de persona que lo sabía muy bien de boca del escribano mayor del rey...”²⁵ Referring to the costs of constructing the great bridge west of Constantinople (Istanbul), R. Mosheh wrote: “Oí decir a personas muy calificadas que habían praticado con los escribanos del rey que tenian y tienen el cargo de escribir lo que en dicha fragua se gastó y se gasta...”²⁶

For almost a year and a half –from the summer of 1566 until the spring of 1567– the Salonican delegation stayed in Constantinople (Istanbul), then in Bursa and back to Constantinople (Istanbul), trying to gain audience with the Sublime Porte. During that period, R. Mosheh Almosnino wrote in Ladino –the written language of the *Sefardim*– his *Crónica de los Reyes Otomanos*: four books (*libros*) who came down to posterity in one manuscript.²⁷ Almosnino declared that he wrote his book for the “recreamiento de algunos de mis íntimos amigos”.²⁸

The first book is dedicated to the death of Sultan Suleiman I *Kanuni* (the Legislator) (1520-1566), known in Europe as ‘the Magnificent’, in December 1566, during the siege of the Hungarian city of Szigeth (Szigetvár; Siguetvar). Then comes the description of the dead sultan’s funeral held on 22 November 1566 followed by the coronation of Sultan Selim II, son of the dead Suleiman I, an event that took place on December 5 of the same year in Constantinople (Istanbul). R. Mosheh Almosnino marveled and dealt at length with the magnificent imperial procession that was held on that occasion. Indeed he wrote that:

para contar por estenso su entrada [the new sultan’s] y lo que en ella sucedió era menester otra más facunda lengua que la mía y de hombre más práctico y visto en las cosas de esta corte que yo para que supiese relater las cosas como pasan y nombrar las personas que con él venían por su regla y orden.

²⁵ Ibid: 193.

²⁶ Ibid: 201.

²⁷ Ibid: 3-48; Bnaya 1996: 150-168.

²⁸ Romeu Ferré Ibid: 107; Bnaya Ibid: 163.

As a rule, royal processions were part and parcel of public life in the Ottoman capital and were held to celebrate military victories or religious festivities. R. Mosheh Almosnino admired the pomp and grandeur of the procession and described at length all the Ottoman dignitaries who took part in the event; their magnificent attires: “muy riquísimamente vestidos”;²⁹ their respective positions and roles in the imperial court and the glittering jewelry of “oro fino” and the “muy ricas joyas”³⁰ of the fine horses: “collar de oro en la garganta junto con la cabeza, de muy ricas piezas de rubinos y diamantes, que se estima valer la que cada caballo llevaba sobre sí una gran suma de dinero, que cierto era cosa maravillosa de ver”.³¹

It is worthwhile to compare Almosnino’s eye-witness description of the royal procession, to the one written some two hundred years later by another Sefardi sage, R. Haim David Yosef Azulay (known as (H"ida) (1724-1806), emissary of the Jewish congregation of Hebron, who spent the years 1753-1758 in Istanbul, trying to raise funds for the said community. It so happened that during the stay of the H"ida in Istanbul, in the year 1757, the Sultan Osman III passed away and Mustafa III came into power. Like the Salonican sage, two hundred years before him, the emissary from Hebron was an eye-witness to the royal procession. He was deeply impressed by the grandeur of the imperial procession that took place on that occasion and left a detailed vivid description of the event in his book: *Ma'agal Tov* (44-45) dedicated to his mission and travels.

The second book in the *Crónica* of R. Mosheh Almosnino is dedicated to the reign of Suleiman I the Magnificent. Almosnino listed one by one the wars and victories won by that sultan or his generals both on land and on sea and praised the sultan’s courage and resources even at an advanced age. The Salonican Sefardi sage was thoroughly impressed with the wisdom, the presence of mind, the grandeur and the generous nature of the late ruler. In his introduction to the second book of his *Crónica*, R. Mosheh Almosnino wrote:

²⁹ Romeu Ferré Ibid: 93.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

Compendio universal de la crónica del rey pasado, que esté en gloria y de la vitoria en las gueras que hizo cavada por su intercession: y de su noble condición en sustentar su pueblo con razón y justicia; y de su estremada cobdicia de ennoblecer su reino con edificios muy preciados; y de todos sus privados que en su tiempo en su corte residieron y del beneficio que hicieron, digno de ser notado todo.³²

Indeed Suleiman the Magnificent built public edifices all over his realm. Almosnino chose to mention three of the most famous among those: The *marata* “donde está sepultado”³³ – that is the Süleymaniya; the aqueduct to Constantinople (Istanbul); and the great bridge west of Constantinople (Istanbul).³⁴

R. Mosheh Almosnino thought that the sultan had two reasons for undertaking those magnificent projects:

La primera y principal, como virtuoso y mañánimo que siempre fue, por beneficiar a los que de ellas tienen utilidad [...] y más propriamente fue su principal intención socorer los pobres y necesitados, y así al respecto en otros tales. Y fue la segunda intención, según estos certifican, en ser tan amigo y curioso de hacerse semejantes fraguas por la fama que por ellas permanence en la memoria siendo representadas a la vista como es sólito hacer los más de los reis y los príncipes y grandes señores. Y como antiguamente hacían edificios apropiados los tales en sus nombres, para que permancesiese por ellos su nombre y fama.³⁵

Here we have a very fine testimony of the thinking indulged by a Renaissance man of letters: Almosnino compared the Ottoman sultan to the kings, the princes and lords of antiquity. Of a very special importance is the use of the adjective: “mañánimo” –of *magna anima*, traditionally attributed to the classical heroes of Antiquity. Even the

³² Ibid: 105.

³³ Ibid: 180.

³⁴ Referring to the death of the sultan Suleiman I, Almosnino mentioned the bridge constructed on the river Drava, near the city of Belgrade. This was an exemplary project since “nunca se pudo hacer en el puente perpetua”: the local people used to cross the water on boat. See: Ibid: 66.

³⁵ Ibid: 202.

harsh and cruel treatment of Suleiman I toward his son Mustafa and his innocent young children, executed by order of the sultan who acted as a “cruelísimo carnicero”,³⁶ was explained by R. Mosheh Almosnino by the sincere intention of that ruler to do the best for his realm: “donde mostró su sincera intención por pacificar y quieter el reino para que quedase sin recelo de lo que se temía con razón.”³⁷ R. Mosheh Almosnino summed up his second book stating that the work of Sultan Suleiman I was “digna de perptua memoria y felice fama y eternal Gloria”.³⁸

The third book of the *Crónica* is dedicated to the extremes characteristic of the city Constantinople (Istanbul) regarding its climate: either very warm or very cold; public health; prices of food and wines either very expensive or very cheap; the houses, the markets; the women; the children and the Jewish population. On the other hand, R. Mosheh admiringly described the grandeur of the city: its monuments, bridges and aqueduct.

The fourth book describes the negotiations held by the Jewish delegation from Salonica in the courts of Suleiman I and Selim II (Selim-i mest: the Drunkard), since August 1566 until September 1567, when their mission was successfully accomplished. R. Mosheh Almosnino finished writing his *Crónica* on September 26, 1567. Throughout his work, R. Mosheh did not evade, but fully exposed the different opinions held by the three emissaries regarding the proposal of don Yosef Nassi to negotiate with the then heir to the throne Selim –later to become Sultan Selim II– and gain his solemn promise to support the Salonican cause, once he comes to the throne, in return for a large sum of money to be paid to that prince, through the mediation of don Yosef. R. Mosheh was of the opinion that the said proposal should have been accepted: yet his two colleagues refused and declined it; same as happened to R. Mosheh’s wish to come into terms with the *nazir*, representing the Christian community. This intention was declined by R. Mosheh Barukh.³⁹

R. Mosheh Almosnino was fully aware of the difficulties to be met while negotiating with the Ottoman authorities: the long endless hours of waiting –for five months the Jewish emissaries tried in vain to be accepted in the imperial court; the bribe to be paid in order to pave one’s way among the Ottoman dignitaries; the need

³⁶ Ibid: 205. *Colofón* of the Second Book.

³⁷ Ibid: 205.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid: 239-243: the second negotiation; Bnaya 1996: 70-72..

for the help of people who were close to the Sublime Porte like don Yosef Nassi or the sultan's physician, Yehudah de Segura;⁴⁰ the harsh and despising attitude manifest by the Ottoman dignitaries towards the inferior supplicating Jews: when R. Mosheh wished to kiss the knee of one of those pačhás in his diván, the pačhá became angry and kicked the supplicant with his knee, so that the latter's toca fell off his head. Yet those were the ways of the Ottoman court in the sixteenth century. It was the heyday of powerful authoritative, often awe inspiring powerful rulers such as Ivan IV, the Terrible, of Russia, or –to a lesser degree of tyranny– Henry VIII of England, François I of France, or Carlos V of the Holy Roman Empire. For all the embarrassments, impediments and obstacles, R. Mosheh Almosnino admired the Ottoman rulers. He was impressed with their courage and military victories and conquests; the grand enterprises taken by the Ottoman rulers to beautify their capital: the costly magnificent buildings. Almosnino often made inquiries regarding “lo que costó esta obra” and found out “supe de cierto de persona muy calificada que cuando el rey acabó la fabrica toda de esta marata, mandó hacer cuenta de lo que se había distribuido de dinero contado sacado de su hazná”: in the end the author calculated “que pasan de siete mil aspros el día ordinariamente”.⁴¹ R. Mosheh also calculated the price of constructing the aqueduct “para traer las aguas para Costanti[na]”⁴² and found out, “que era una gran suma dellos; por donde se puede comprender que fue una de las más macníficas fábricas que se vieron y se hicieron en el mundo”. R. Mosheh Almosnino even took the trouble to walk on the new bridge that was being constructed west of the capital, when the rest of his party preferred to proceed on horseback, “por veer y comprender bien todo el modo de la fábrica particularmente; que cierto era cosa digna de venir de muy largo camino a sólo ver cosa tan grande y tan estupenda”.⁴³ Finally Almosnino summed up: “y yo quedé espantado y atónito de veer la grandeza de aquella fabrica y la multitude de la gente que alli trabajaban y andaban”.⁴⁴

It seems to me that the key word employed by R. Mosheh Almosnino is: “grandeza”: it was the affluent grandeur of the city, its buildings, bridges, aqueduct

⁴⁰ Bnaya 1996: 76.

⁴¹ Romeu Ferré 1998: 188.

⁴² Ibid:193.

⁴³ Ibid: 199.

⁴⁴ Ibid: 200.

that impressed the Salonican R. Mosheh and made him admire the Ottoman rulers who were the authors of all this greatness and immensity.

The emissaries of the Salonican community had to make their way and travel to the Ottoman capital by both sea and land and the road was tedious and exhausting. Only one member of the delegation –R. Mosheh Almosnino– returned from Constantinople (Istanbul) to Salonica: his two colleagues passed away during their stay either in Constantinople (Istanbul) or in Bursa. Back home in Salonica, after his mission had been accomplished, R. Mosheh Almosnino expressed his wish to retire from public affairs. In 1569 he retired and passed away in 1581.

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