Marriage Contract Sample

**Title:** Marriage Contract  
**Date:**   
**Artist:** Unknown  
**Dimensions:**   
**Culture:**   
**Inscriptions:**

 [FOR FULL TRANSCRIPTION / TRANSLATION CLICK ON SMALL BAR BENEATH OBJECT IMAGE THAT SAYS "9 MEDIA ON FILE," THEN CLICK ON THE DOCUMENT JPEGS, OR THE ROUND DISC IMAGE TO ACCESS WORD DOCUMENT] Translation: With good fortune and the Thus, the entire marriage contract-the standard bride-price, the groom's addition and gift, All is in accord with the custom that was practiced, the agreement that was reached, and the institutions that were put into effect among the holy [Jewish] communities expelled from Castile; may the Lord take vengeance on their behalf, and may He show mercy, pity, compassion, and grace toward the remnant of the expulsion. Let Him guard over them in their cities, watch them, keep them, and rescue them, He who is the true eternal protector for now and for all eternity. Thus the groom, of pure Sephardi descent, gains possession over the dowry, according to the full and stipulated conditions. The sum of 18,000 oka of pure silver stated above is equivalent in every generation to 20 oka of Spanish coinage of pure silver. The groom, of pure Sephardi descent, therefore explicitly assumes responsibility for the said marriage contract, deed of acquisition, and promissory note. Everything is valid, clear, and established. [Signed witnesses] Yizhak Navon Avraham Gabizon, of pure Sephardi descent [Signature of groom] 82.9 Moroccan, Marriage Contract Notes: (a) Abbreviated words and acronyms are spelled out in brackets in the transcription after their first appearance only. Brackets are also used for some of the faded and illegible signatures or text at the bottom of the contract. (b) We would expect two signatures of witnesses and at least the groom's signature (if not the father of the groom as well, or even the bride); I was able to transcribe the names of the witnesses but am not sure of the words preceding their names. I am also not sure if the faded letters and decorative signature below the name of the first witness was made by the groom or by the witness. I am assuming it must be the groom's signature, for the document would seemingly require it. (c) The only other reading in question is the title for the bride's father in line 12; I have included a question mark in brackets in the transcription and an underline in the translation. I would expect a letter ? in place of the initial ?, giving ???"? for ?????? ???, "our teacher, the rabbi." But I simply cannot justify reading that first letter as a ?, and have given my best estimate for what ???"? may mean, namely "the esteemed rabbi." (d) The script is a Sephardi cursive script everywhere but in a few key words or phrases given in the traditional block script; I've put the latter in bold in both the transcription and translation. The script employs about a dozen ligatures, which are relatively rare in Hebrew scripts. Once I was able to read the script, the translation went smoothly and presented few problems. Its language is the typical mix of Aramaic and Hebrew very prevalent on Jewish marriage contracts. (e) The date given for the document is equivalent to September 21, 1870. A Wednesday evening wedding would have allowed for the customary blessings of the groom during the Torah reading on Thursday morning. The wedding must have been no small affair given that two rabbinical families were involved, the Chetrit and Pariente families. I used online genealogies of Moroccan Jewry to ascertain the English spellings of these surnames, as well as those of the witnesses. I haven't performed any more research on the history of the families, as intriguing as such a project may be. (f) Since this document includes rather lengthy genealogies for both bride and groom, as well as long, flowery modifier chains preceding the name of each individual mentioned, it opens with an extremely long first sentence. That sentence utilizes the standard ketubbah formula: "On such and such a date....the groom of such and such family....said to his bride of such and such family... 'Be my wife...'." The use of repetition for rhetorical effect, as in the modifier chains, continues throughout the document. I have consistently provided one-for-one equivalents in these instances, even if they produce overly pleonastic sentences in the English. (g) The phrases "of pure Sephardi descent," "may he rest in peace," "of blessed memory" and "may the Lord watch over it," among others, appear as acronyms, but in the English they must be spelled out. The abbreviation for "of pure Sephardi descent" appears after nearly every mention of the word "groom" and I debated over whether I should include a translation of it in every instance. In the meantime I've left them all in, as cumbersome as they may be in English, particularly because they reflect the cultural values of this community and fit well with the mournful recollection of the Spanish Inquisition, which appears toward the end of the document. (h) This contract mentions units of measure (zuz, oka, amah) that were apparently of nostalgic value only, hence the need, for example, to convert the oka to Spanish coinage at the end of the document.   
**Classification:** Paper  
**Department:** [Judaic](http://ncartmuseum.org/art/search?search:cf_works-of-art_rights=%3DJudaic)