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# THE UNKNOWN SLAVIC GLOSSES
# IN "SEFER HASIDIM"

## INTRODUCTION

In the 12th and 13th century, Hasidei Ashkenaz, a religious and ideological movement of Ashkenazic Pietists developed in German towns located in the Rhine valley. The main works created by religious leaders of this movement date back to the first half of the 13th century. The central personage of Hasidei Ashkenaz was Judah b. Samuel he-Hasid, a descendant of an old Italian family by the name of Kalonymus, the members of which had been dealing with Jewish mysticism and esoterica for generations. In the 13th century this movement spread from the Rhine valley to the majority of Jewish communities in Germany and further to France and Slavic countries[1].

Despite apparent isolation from the influences of the outside world and very much focused within in its own esoteric circle, the doctrine of Hasidei Ashkenaz had much in common not only with the works of Jewish philosophers and the learned from mediaeval Spain, but also with Christian Pietist movements. Contacts with the latter were particularly fruitful, and so was the bilateral influence, which, although not directly documented, is unquestionable.

The series of repeated crusades, outbreaks of pestilence and other disasters, which befell the Jews in mediaeval Germany, meant that death, occultism, ghosts and demons became an intrinsic part of Jewish philosophical and social doctrine in turn creating the impression that the

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1 Hasidei Ashkenaz, in: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, CD-ROM Edition, Jerusalem 1997.

border between the worlds of the living and the dead was not finite and impassable, but one that was mutually accessible. Kiddush ha-Shem, the martyred death for the faith is one of the most important factors which shaped the ideology of Hasidei Ashkenaz.

With regard to theology, apart from the rich symbolism and disputes on the mutual relationship between man and God, particular attention should be paid to the interest of Ashkenazic Pietists in the mutual relationship of God with the world:

> "Ashkenazic Hasidim sought God's presence in reality, despite the transcendentalism of God. They did it by seeking out the exceptional, extraordinary and unparalleled; not simply bound by the laws of nature but beyond belief and unsurpassed in reality".

The deliberate recording of exceptionable and out of the ordinary things allows us to see the entire spectrum of normally banned folk beliefs and superstitions concerning the dead, ghosts and other creatures, who in otherwise had no access to rabbinical literature. The same situation was prevalent in Christian communities where their folk beliefs were often resisted by the Church, or replaced with Christian meanings.

The editing of Sefer Hasidim, the main work of Hasidei Ashkenaz, was completed in the second half of the 13th century. By coincidence, the first sentence written in Polish is recorded in Księga Henrykowska from 1270[2], and the first sentence written in Yiddish appeared in a Machzor from 1272[3]. In this paper I will focus on the first stage of development of both languages, especially on their written version. It is particularly interesting with regard to the lively contacts, interactions and exchanges between these languages, which began with the mass migration of Jews to Eastern Europe in the 14th century. Even prior to this it was divided into eastern and western group of dialects, Yiddish interacted with the group of Western Slavic languages, which at the time was at the creation stage – with Polish amongst them. This interaction was very fruitful for both parties[4], and its final result was

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[2] The so-called "sentences from Legnica" from the 13th century, preserved in the "Annales" by Dlugosz, may be older, but their date is not definite.

[3] Shmeruk, Ch. (1992), *Historia literatury jidysz. Zarys.* Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków, p. 9.

[4] Literature of the topic see Brzezina, M. (1986), *Polszczyzna Żydów,* Warszawa-Kraków, p.28 ff.

the definitive separation made between Yiddish and German, and the enrichment of Slavic languages with specialised vocabulary.

## 2. LINGUISTIC SITUATION OF JEWS IN 13th CENTURY

During the period under discussion, the Jewish community was often bilingual. This is nothing new since the use of Hebrew had early on been limited to the religious sphere, and different languages were in colloquial use. The rule which had accompanied Jews since the times of Babylonian slavery was adapting the language of the country where they lived. According to this rule they created their own religious sociolects, based on local languages. However, Hebrew remained an important part of everyday life. Apart from the sphere of the synagogal cult it was a language of commentary, religious and scientific treatises, responses which regulated the life of the community, instructions (*takkanot*) and legal acts, as well as belles - lettres. Yet the characteristic feature of sociolects based on local languages, and subsequently also of Jewish languages, is the use of the Hebrew alphabet for notation. It served mainly as a mean of transmission of the set of Hebrew words necessary for use in everyday language. Religious vocabulary constituted a kind of nerve tissue of a given Jewish language, which incorporated religious values and ensured communication between different branches of science. Hebrew loan-words in Jewish languages and dialects are therefore a reflection of religious life - there was neither need nor sense in translating Hebrew expressions into local languages. On the other hand, the explanation of difficult Hebrew or Aramaic expressions in local colloquial language was a common practice; it is the origin of various types of glosses comprised in Hebrew rabbinical literature. The situations and events of daily life were sometimes easier to express in the language of everyday use. This was one of the ways glosses originating from various languages made their way to Hebrew texts.

With regard to the above, *Sefer Hasidim* is a very particular work, since the concept of God and the world depicted in it compelled its authors to explain phenomena which had no proper name in Hebrew, or translate rare words when the Hebrew equivalent seemed inadequate.

Not all Jewish sociolects deserve the name of "language"; some of them were just Hebraized forms of a language used by the Jewish communities dwelling in a certain area. In the case of Hebrew substrate, all Jewish sociolects and languages are, however, very conser-

vative. Examples of Hebrew notation of various Jewish languages provide evidence that the Hebrew alphabet can be used without major problems if it is customised to the needs of different languages – Semitic and Indo-European included. Phonemes non-existent in Hebrew spelling are marked either with an agglomeration of Hebrew letters (as is the case with Yiddish, where the set of Hebrew phonemes was supplemented with Slavic alveolar consonants ż and cz), or by adding diacritic signs as in contemporary Hebrew. Yet the spelling of Hebrew loan – words was conservative in all Jewish dialects and languages and in most cases based on traditional Hebrew spelling. It was definitely one of the ways to emphasize the cultural and religious separateness of Jews. The use of the Hebrew alphabet in notation is therefore an important though not the only factor which stimulated the creation of Jewish languages. The second one is undoubtedly the Jewish system of education[5], where the compulsory learning of Hebrew, considered a condition for participation in community life, was notwithstanding held in the local or already existing Jewish language. Often it would lead to situations where the Hebrew alphabet was the only one known to Jews, all the more so because the notation of local languages in the Middle Ages was distinct from that used in Jewish communities – the domain of small circles connected with the Catholic Church, and was made with the use of a different alphabet, in the case of Latin called *galches* (originating from priests)[6]. Religious sociolects, which were created this way, in some cases were developing further and became languages according to the criteria of contemporary linguistics, as happened with Yiddish, Ladino and Judeopersian[7]. The reform of Yiddish spelling enforced in the USSR during the Stalinist terror of the 20s, aimed at separating Yiddish from any Hebrew influences through the abolition of traditional notation of Hebrew words, and in so doing customising Yiddish to the needs of an anti-religious totalitarian country, testifies to the importance of religious vocabulary as a part of the language. A similar example is the reform of Turkish spelling, enforced at the same time. It changed the alphabet from Arabic into Latin, and was connected with the separation of religion and the state.

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[5] More on Jewish education system in the Middle Ages see Guedemann, M. (1880), *Geschichte des Erziehungswesens und der Cultur der Juden in Frankreich und Deutschland*, Wien.

[6] Shmeruk, (1992), p. 8 p.

[7] Jewish languages, in: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, CD-ROM Edition, Jerusalem 1997.

An important stage in the development of Jewish sociolects into languages was their transmission from one country to another by migrating Jews. In such cases the imported sociolect was still used in daily life and was simultaneously absorbing local vocabulary and even grammatical and syntactical structures. It is not absolutely clear though, to what extent the transposition of structures and vocabulary, enriched with Hebrew elements, were necessary to create a Jewish language; but the Jews had multiplied this pattern several times during their history, taking their language with them to their new settlements. Surely one of the causes of such behaviour was the close contact between prominent people from both secular and religious circles (although such distinctions were not always possible), which were a result of the migration of new communities with their religious "mother – centres", which in the case of Yiddish were the Jewish communities from the so – called SHUM territory of Germany (Speyer – Worms – Mainz). How lively those contacts were can be seen in explanations given to Torah (*perushei Tora*), gathered by the son of Rabbi Judah, where he mentions rabbis from Poland, Czechoslovakia and Russia together with people from his environment[8].

## 2.1 THE BIRTH OF YIDDISH

According to the generally accepted division into periods[9] introduced by M. Weinreich[10], Yiddish went through the following stages of development:

– Pre-Yiddish (ca. 1000-1250). The beginnings of Yiddish have their roots in Middle High German dialects. At that time Yiddish was still an integral part of Middle High German dialects, yet it must be considered a religious sociolect[11], since it had absorbed rich Hebrew and Aramaic vocabulary and preserved the remnants of an earlier Roman substrate. At the same time it is the beginning of the mass migration of Jews to Eastern Europe, mainly to Poland. Partially as a result of linguistic interaction with local Christian populations. Yiddish started

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[8] Lange, I. S. (ed.) (1978), פרושי תורה לדי יהודה החסיד, Jerusalem (5)738, p. 214 ff.

[9] Brzezina (1986), p. 16, Geller, E., (1994), *Jidysz - język Żydów polskich*, Warszawa, p. 57.

[10] Weinreich, M (1973), געשיכטע פון דער יידישער שפראך, באַנד I. N.Y., p. 11 and others of the same author.

[11] Geller, (1994), p. 59.

absorbing Slavic elements. The influence of "linguistically assimilated" Jews, who had already lived in Poland at that time and might have spoken some kind of Jewish Slavic language[12], is also possible.

    - Old Yiddish (1250-1500). Due to numerous persecutions Jewish immigration in Poland increases. It results in a break-down of territorial boundaries between the mother tongue (Middle High German)and Yiddish. At the same time Yiddish splits into two dialectal groups: East-Yiddish and West-Yiddish[13].

    - Middle Yiddish - (1500-1700). The religious and cultural centre of the Ashkenazic community finally moves to the area of Poland, and Eastern Yiddish dialects become the only representatives of Yiddish. Western dialects, despite their survival to the 19th century, were unable to withstand the competition of German.

    - Neo-Yiddish (1700-). Yiddish earns the rank of literary language and becomes the most important Jewish language up until World War II.

## 2.2. POLISH

During the period under discussion we deal with an almost undocumented stage in the development of the Polish language. The first larger Polish texts appear as late as the 15-16th century, and researchers of earlier phases of Polish have at their disposal only glosses comprised of Latin texts and toponymics[14]. Glosses are widespread both in Jewish and Christian literature; the introduction of these was intended to prevent any misunderstanding of the given term. Glosses tell us a lot about the language of their author and constitute a rich source of information about the contacts and interactions between given communities. During this period Polish vocabulary concerning many aspects of life was only at the creation stage. The colonisation of Polish territories by the German population, which began in the 13th century and continued until the 16th brought numerous German loan-words, mainly concerning trade, crafts, law, obligations, fees, but also medicine, herbs and minerals[15]. Some of those loan - words were converted into Polish, partially through the Czech language and partially

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[12] Weinreich, (1973), p. 85.

[13] Geller, (1994), p. 60.

[14] Klemensiewicz, Z. (1974), *Historia języka polskiego*, Warszawa, p. 31.

[15] Ibid., p. 136 pp.

directly. It is interesting that the role of Jewish sociolects in the transposition of such vocabulary into Polish has not yet been researched in a scientific manner. However, the role of Jews must have been important, particularly in the field of vocabulary connected with trade, measures, weights and financial operations; that is to say all aspects of life in which the Jewish immigrants took part. But this vocabulary was taken over by Yiddish from the German, and the language itself was at a very early stage of development, and so trying to prove from which language they originate does not make a great deal of sense.

An interesting category of loan – words is the vocabulary concerning widely understood medicine and healing methods. The relatively poor medical knowledge of people in those times often made them helpless in the face of disease. They would reach for the beliefs of folk medicine and magical practices, as other medicines were unavailable. An illness was often considered a living, although not necessarily visible creature, allied with evil forces. The knowledge of various methods of casting spells on ghosts, demons and other creatures, which in the understanding of folk medicine were responsible for many diseases, was therefore highly desirable, as it guaranteed successful treatment of the patient[16]. It was a very important point of contact between the Jewish and Christian population. Both parties would borrow from one another's belief resources in a practically limitless fashion, and take beliefs about the dead very seriously. Many of those beliefs date from very old times, but survived in Polish folklore[17].

The Jewish community was very often suspected by its Christian neighbours of having connections with evil forces and thought to possess the skills required to both bring on and heal diseases. The best example is the widely known accusation of poisoning of wells blamed for causing the epidemics of Black Death[18] which continued right through the 14th century. Those suspicions were the result of the misunderstanding of some religious rites and of Jewish culture, and of the general tendency to attribute magical skills to persons living in out-of-the-way places or using an incomprehensible language, like Jews or Gypsies[19].

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[16] See: *Z liptovsekej lekarskej knihy*, p. 216, in: Siatkowska, E. (ed.) (1991), *Wybór tekstów zachodniosłowiańskich w ujęciu porównawczym,* Warszawa, p. 200.

[17] Bystroń, J. S. (1947), *Etnografia polska*, Warszawa, p. 108.

[18] Balaban, M. (1925), *Historia i literatura żydowska*, Lwów–Warszawa–Kraków, vol. 2, p. 284 pp.

[19] Bystroń (1947), p. 132.

The language itself played on the imagination of those times and performed an extremely important role in magical practices. A word was united with a subject and its use under improper conditions or with an evil will could be very dangerous, hence the widespread custom of not speaking certain words, names and personal names which could be of harmful influence to the environment. This custom was present among both Jewish and Christian communities[20].

## 2.3. THE AUTHOR OF „SEFER HASIDIM" AND HIS LANGUAGE

*Sefer Hasidim* is a document dating from the period when what we nowadays call Ashkenazic culture with Yiddish as the language in everyday use – as opposed to Sephardic culture – was at a very early stage. The most interesting linguistic phenomenon of Sefer Hasidim is undoubtedly reported speech, where the colloquial language can be "seen" from beneath the Hebrew layer. Unfortunately the everyday language of the Jews was not regarded worthy of esteem in those times. This is a great pity, since documents from that period give us "live coverage", linguistic and ethnographic testimonies of the time when both languages discussed in this paper – Polish and Yiddish – were at the creation stage. Sefer Hasidim is so far one of numerous examples of the author's bilingualism. The prevailing number of Ashkenazic glosses allows us to suppose that Hasidei Ashkenaz used one of the forms of Yiddish in daily life. Unfortunately this language had to wait for almost 600 years to become worth recording, and even this happened thanks only to Hasidic movements. Nachman from Bracław was the first to decide to publish a bilingual edition of Sipurej Maasijot, a part of his works. Unfortunately the discussions about Hebrew as the original language of those works yielded no satisfying results. Up until the 18th century Yiddish was regarded only as jargon, an un-respected language of Jewish communities. It is therefore not surprising that the first translation of *Sefer Hasidim* into ivri tajtsh (German written with Hebrew alphabet) was published as late as at the end of 19th century[21].

Writers whose works have their background in the daily life of the community are consciously subject to the linguistic motifs of jargon (=Yiddish), either by the use of certain word categories with their specific flavour absorbed from Yiddish, or by submission to its influence in

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[20] Ganzfried, S. (ed.) (1978), ‏תל. אביב. קיצור שולחן ערוך. רז. ג.‎

[21] Judah ben Samuel. Sefer Hasidim: oyf Yudish Daytsh... Varsha: [s. n.], (5)644, 1883.

the syntactic construction of sentences, which adds some particular charm to the style. Works of excellent writers like S. J. Abramowicz and J. L. Perec[22] show that this influence is neither harmful nor regarded as strange. Even in Hebrew texts authors give a faithful reflection of the colloquial language, including its vulgar version. Vulgar expressions used in *Sefer Hasidim*[23] have survived in Yiddish despite, or maybe thanks to, the taboo of the Holy Language. Considering the number and origins of Hebraisms in Yiddish the emotional charge carried by such expressions was much bigger than pejorative words absorbed from Slavic languages, since their offensive character was in a sense appeased by the foreign flavour. As we can see from the linguistic material gathered by Brzezina[24] these meanings as well were absorbed by Yiddish almost limitlessly.

A second and even more interesting group of swear words were curses connected with death and the afterlife. Respect for the dead, deeply rooted in Jewish culture, gave curses regarding death a heavier weight, and so they were willingly used either in direct verbal fights or addressed to unreachable enemies. It was only the imagination of the cursing party[25] which limited the visions of further life and quality of death of the addressee of the curse and/or his family.

"One man offended and put a pious one to shame.His face did not become long when he was cursing the pious man's life and money, but when he started cursing: ‹May you be severely punished, may you not have your part in the future world›, he felt ashamed and his face became long"[26].

## 3. PLANTICA

"Everyone who deals with the conjuring of angels, or conjuring of ghosts, or whispering of incantations, will not end well, and this will be known from his body and from his sons till the end of his days. Therefore let everybody keep

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[22] Schorr, M. (1915), *Język hebrajski w Polsce,* in: *Encyklopedia polska,* vol. I, Chapter III, Part II, Kraków, pp. 425–438, here: 436.

[23] Sefer Hasidim, 1348.

[24] Brzezina (1986), p. 43 p.

[25] Zelkowicz, Joseph (1938), מאמענטן אין דער ײדישער עטנאגראפיע און פֿאלקלאר, in: וויסענשאפֿטלע שריפֿטן לאדזשער. טריט זיינע באנגלייט - p. 149–215, here p. 155; Brzezina (1986), p. 434 p.

[26] Sefer Hasidim 957.

their distance from all these activities. It concerns also the explaining of dreams, and he must not make others do this for him. And not בבוקייצא [bbvkiica] called] פלנטיצא [plntic'][27], for incantations which conjure it are forbidden"[28].

Glosses preserved in this fragment have already been examined by scientists, but with highly unsatisfying results. Güdemann[29], who made use of the Bologna manuscript with a different version of the text, did not know that both texts differ on this point, and instead of *plantica* he had at his disposal only *bigrwiich*, which he considered a mistake of the copyist (should be *bichrwiich*[30]) and a conglomerate of two words which were to mean "Becherweihe" (a kind of spell). He did not manage to explain the second gloss, and according to the trend present in Jewish historiography in his times considers both as superstitions of minor relevance. It can also be seen in works of Bałaban, who remained heavily under the influence of Güdemann and undoubtedly based on his works[31]. Apparently Bałaban had not read the manuscript from Parma, which was already available in his times, and so he did not know about the gloss *plantica*, which otherwise would not have been omitted by that great historian. Therefore, the gloss *bigrwiich* cannot be construed in only one way.The Slavic root *plątać* is very productive in Yiddish: it is the base of verbs *plonten* and *plontern* (which are actually synonymous), substantives *plonte, plontenine, plontenish, plonter*[32]. Yiddish has also taken over the entire semantic field of this loan – word, so there are other expressions like *plonten mit di fis, plonten mit der cung, or farplonteter weg*. All of them are created according to different patterns, which may be evidence of an early loaning of this word from Western Slavic languages. This may have occurred as early as the first stage of development of the language, which was the time when Sefer Hasidim was being edited. Plantica might be therefore, the name of some female, (as indicated by the Slavic female ending "-ca") demon, of which no detailed records have survived to the present day. Yiddish

[27] Sefer Hasidim 211, there an incorrect reading "*plntiin'* ", but in the manuscript tsade is distinct – see *Sefer Chassidim*, manuscript Parma H3280, Jerusalem 1985.

[28] Sefer Hasidim, 211.

[29] Guedemann, p. 208-209.

[30] I am unable to verify the correctness of reading of both glosses, since I have no access to the manuscript he worked with.

[31] Bałaban (1925), vol. 2, p. 176 pp.

[32] Harkavy, A. (1928), *Yiddish-English-hebrew dictionary,* repr. exp. ed., p. 371.

words related to the root "plątać" suggest that this gloss could result from an association with a dark force which impeded the way (farplonteter weg), or tangled the hair into a tuft. Jewish beliefs paid particular attention to hair and nails as integral parts of the human body.

In the above context the universal faith in the harmfulness of bats should be mentioned. They were believed to be able to twist into the hair, drink blood and even suck out the brain[33].

Phonetic analysis of a preserved gloss allows a more exact determination of the language from which it is derived. Since there are no vowels in the Hebrew alphabet, the nasal in the text is recorded with the closest available nasal consonant "n", analogically with the records in German documents from those times[34]. Because of the atrophy of nasality, which started between the 10th and 11th century within Western Slavic languages, this word can be considered a loan – word from Polish, and not from Czechoslovakian or one of the Lusatian languages[35]. Therefore in this case we have to deal with one of the oldest Polish glosses so far un-noticed by researchers. Its meaning is not precisely known, but undoubtedly relates to forbidden magical practices, which were familiar to Jews and their environment.

It is interesting that "Encyklopedia staropolska" (Encyclopaedia of Ancient Poland) mentions the word *plica* as an equivalent of *kołtun,* (tuft of twisted hair), and "the phenomenon called kołtun had been known for generations among Germans, on the Rhine, in Bavaria etc., and spread from the West towards the East, and not in the opposite direction"[36]. So if we assume that the notation *plantica* is proper, it can therefore be derived from *plica* (Latin *plicare* – to fold, to tangle), which has a similar meaning and source. The first usages of plica appeared in Polish literature in 1325[37]. This word could have been transferred to the Polish language from Middle High German through Pre-Yiddish, all the more so because *plica* was in German called *Weiselzopf, Wichtelzopf, Mahrzopf or Mahrlocken*, so it had nothing in common with the root *plątać* or *plicare*.

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[33] Bystroń (1947), p. 154.

[34] Stieber, Z. (1965), *Zarys dialektologii języków zachodnio-słowiańskich*, Warszawa, p. 44f, Klemensiewicz (1974), p. 18 p.

[35] Stieber (1965), p. 45.

[36] Gloger, Z. (1985), *Encyklopedia Staropolska*, vol. III, p. 63.

[37] Ibid.

In the Middle Ages tangled hair was treated very seriously by both Jews[38] and Christians, and the formation of *plica* was ascribed to dark forces. According to folk legends this illness was caused by an evil ghost, hostile to humans. People believed that the formation of *plica* had its source in spells, so it could be "cast" on someone just as other spells were. Therefore numerous attempts were made cast spells designed to induce or pass *plica* on to hated lords, neighbours or other enemies with the use of magical practices. According to those definitions the illness was something demonic, and an evil ghost – the demon of the disease enchanted in the twisted hair, ruled over the human body, attacked it and did harm to it. Such a demon was imagined either as an invisible, impersonal force, which caused various kinds of pain, or in shape of a human, animal, or even object[39]. The intermediaries between people and ghosts or demons were witches, mainly old women, whose practices were aimed at breaking or casting spells and chasing demons of disease from the afflicted person's body. How close the relation between *plica* with demons and souls of the dead was in Jewish folk beliefs is testified to by the fact that even in the 20th century, touching such tangled hair with the hand of a dead person was considered an effective cure[40]. The medical treatise "Compendium medicum auctum", although published relatively late, contains records of Polish beliefs dating back to much earlier times, e.g. the following fragment:

> "Plica is born of various causes, firstly from spells, as all other unusual diseases are do and of which we know many examples. There are also hereditary plicas, which are means transferred from parents to children, and also contagious ones [...] witches say almost every disease comes from a plica, and it often happens that they convince people of it, and prescribe various herbs to undo it by constant rinsing of the twisted hair, pasting it with waxes and other strange practices [...]. A plica is different depending on its cause, one is harmful and brings pain in the bones, headache, obfuscation in the eyes and to repulsion to food [...]. There are also examples of plicas which need no cure at all [...]"[41]

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[38] Ganzfried, (1978), ‫כ. קסא‬, "named (...) in the language of Poland and Russia *koltonis*, and shaving them off is dangerous".

[39] They could be hidden in the form of a feather or a straw, see Kononienko (1993), p. 191.

[40] Zelkowicz (1938), p. 173.

[41] Compendium medicum auctum, Częstochowa 1789, p. 368, 374, quoted after: Śliwińska, K. *„Medycyna w Polsce - problemy zdrowotne naszych przodków w lliteraturze epoki baroku"* www.pfm.pl/u235/navi/182728/back/182718.

An additional clue which confirms the relationship between the above fragment with beliefs concerning plica being caused by evil forces or spells can be found in the following sentence: "*and this will be known from his body and from his sons till the end of his days*", which can be construed in the above quoted context just as a warning against similar practices: signs on the body of the conjuring one and his family can therefore be plicas, and conjuring of demons – an attempt to cast a spell and infect others with plica.

Medicines applied by inhabitants of Poland in those times are not known, but old sources provide information about the curing of diseases with "medicines" and about medical aid given by wizards, witches, often called *babka*. The latter deserve special attention, since the word *babka* could be the basis of the second gloss in the quoted text. Its meaning is not clear, just as it is not clear whether it is correctly spelled. But if the author of Sefer Hasidim mentioned the word *bbkica* as synonymous to *plantica*, it can be assumed that it is derived from the Polish word *baba*, babka, meaning herbalist, witch, healer, conjurer of evil spirits and demons who is able to both cure or induce disease. Yiddish had also absorbed this interpretation of the word *babka*, and Harkavy even mentions as one of its meanings *babske refoje* – household remedy, domestic medicine[42]. Brückner among numerous other meanings also lists several plants related to this root, to mention only "*babka, plantago*, for it heals wounds"[43], but also *baba jędza* and *baba jaga* – witch, sorceress. In folk mythology they often possessed unnatural powers: could fly or turn into animals[44], so they were similar to *strzyga, mara* or *werewolf* described above.

The second possible explanation of the above gloss might be *bobo, bobak* or *babok*[45], noted by Bystroń - a small, hairy ghost which can enter a house through a door or a stove, and which served mainly to frighten children, although it originates from older times. *Chawa*, undoubtedly a word of Jewish origin, is also mentioned among creatures of this type.

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[42] Harkavy (1928), p. 100.

[43] Brückner, A. (1927), *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego,* p. 9, repr. ed., Kraków.

[44] Kononienko (1993), p. 14.

[45] Bystroń (1947), p. 144.

## 4. KANAAN

The Slavic glosses discussed above were noted without any information as to language they originate from. But the very name of Kanaan is mentioned several times, and r. Judah knew about the Slavic lands and their names. An interesting example is quoted in a paragraph next to a tale, which comprises a Polish gloss:

> "If you see someone who gives prophecies about the Messiah, know that he deals with spells or casts spells on the holy Name in order to force the angels, or ghosts, to tell him about the Messiah, so that he can be seen by the entire world. At the end he will be shamed and a laughing-stock to the world, for he wanted to influence the angels, or ghosts. No catastrophe will occur in this place because of the person who casts spells, but demons will come and will teach him arithmetics and secrets to his disgrace, and to the disgrace of all who trust his words. And there were women in the land of Kanaan, who recited all the consolations from Isaiah, according to the original, and the simple folk knew all the consolations by heart according to the original, and they will be judged if no one from them knows about the Messiah coming."

The original version of this story is quoted by Dan in a chapter describing eschatological transmissions from the circle of Ashkenazic Pietists:

> "There was a man who said: The Messiah will come. And this is the sign: the entire town, the folk and the women will from tomorrow on recite all the consolations from Isaiah according to the original. From tomorrow on even those who do not know the alphabet and the women will recite all the consolations from Isaiah according to the original"[46]

The passages which contain records of Slavonic demons and miracles on these grounds is most probably not accidental but may indicate that they all originate from the same source. The hypothesis which attributes their authorship to r. Petachja from Regensburg, who in the 70s of the 12th century travelled to Prague, the Polish lands and from Kiev to Palestine, seems very probable. In his memoirs, edited also by r. Judah, Petachja describes a man who dealt with predictions.

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[46] Dan, J. (1995), ירושלים. תורת הסוד של חסידות אשכז, p. 242.

"And among them a man named reb Shlomo, and there was no one among them and in the whole Assyrian land, who would be as proficient in the stars as he was. And r. Petachja asked him: 'When will the Messiah come?' He answered: 'I have seen it in the stars very clearly many times'. But r. Judah did not want to write about this, in order to avoid suspicion that he believed in Shlomo's words."[47]

It is not ultimately clear which language was used by the Jews who lived in the territory of Poland. Slavic glosses appear alongside German and Romance ones by the explanations of Talmudic terms already in the Bible and Talmud commentaries of Rashi[48] and other writings. They call Slavic languages "Canaan languages". The term *Kanaan* appeared in the Talmudic treatise "Or zarua"[49] by a student of r. Judah, Isaac of Vienna, born in Czechoslovakian. The greatest medieval Jewish traveller, Benjamin of Tudela, derived the Latin name slavi from sclavi, and wrote that:

"Jews call this Slavic country Canaan, for its inhabitants similarly to the inhabitants of Russia sell their sons and daughters into slavery"[50]

An interesting complement to this information is the record in Perushei Tora, which quotes the statements by Judah the Pious and Izaak of Russia:

"It seems to me that my father used to say that the sons of Canaan land were subjects of Pharao and paid him a tax, but I cannot remember the evidence, he oppressed the sons of Canaan land to force them to provide slaves for him, giizl in the Ashkenaz language"[51].

No writings in the Canaan language have survived to the present day. Many scientists suspect this name derives from some variation of the Czech language[52], but there is no definitive evidence for this is.

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[47] Grünhut, E. (ed.) (1903), Die Rundreise des R. Petachjah aus Regensburg, Jerusalem, hebrew text p. 2.

[48] See for example Raszi Devarim 3.9, Shabbat 20b, Avoda zara 38b and others.

[49] Bałaban (1925), p. 177.

[50] Quoted after Balaban (1925), p. 118.

[51] Lange, (1978), p. 70 p.

[52] Weinreich, (1973) p. 92.

Weinreich in his four-volume history of Yiddish believes that two versions of it, which derived from Eastern and Western Slavic languages[53] did exist.

The hypothesis about the existence of the Canaan language is particularly common among Polish scientists dealing with languages or the history of the Jews[54]. Slavic glosses, which often appeared in medieval literature can be considered as basic evidence for the above hypothesis – there was no point in translating difficult expressions into a language other than the Jewish one. Another important piece of evidence are Slavonic inscriptions in the Hebrew alphabet on coins, (so – called brakteat), minted by Jewish minters for the Polish kings Mieszko III and Leszek Biały[55].

## 5. STRZYGA

"There are women called שטרייש [shitriish] (...) One woman was a שטרייא [shtrii'] and was very ill. And in the night there were two women with her, one of them was sleeping and the other one was awake, and the sick one stood up in front of her, loosened her hair and wanted to fly and to suck blood from the sleeping one, but the woman who was awake began to scream, woke the sleeping one up and they caught the illness שטרייא [shtrii'], who then fell asleep again. If the שטרייא [shtrii'] had managed to kill the other woman, she would have remained alive herself, but she had been unable to do any harm to her, and so she died, because the shtriia needs what comes from blood and needs to swallow the blood from flesh. And also וורוולף [vrvolf] as well as מרא [mar'] and שטרייא [shtrii'] must loosen their hair before they begin to fly"[56].

The above fragment was frequently quoted in historical literature as evidence of the backwardness and superstition of Sefer Hasidim, and consequently of its low value[57]. It is notwithstanding an interesting example of preserved folk beliefs and images, the more so because we have herewith to deal with beliefs which originate from the shared beliefs of Slavic nations and Jews; they testify therefore to the contacts and interactions which existed between these communities.

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[53] Ibid.

[54] Geller, (1994) p. 27, other literature there.

[55] Balaban (1925), p. 328 p.

[56] Sefer Hasidim 1465.

[57] Balaban (1925), vol. 2, p. 181.

The Polish word *strzyga* originates from Latin striga, and this from Greek *stri(n)ks*[58]. Primarily this word meant "an owl" and was only used only among Western Slavic nations. According to Brückner it was loaned to the Polish language in the early Middle Ages. It is not known whether Sefer Hasidim had played some role in this process, but it can in all probability be said that the language of those Jews immigrating to the area of Poland in those times could have been one medium through which *strzyga* was introduced into the contemporary Polish language.

The Slavic description of *strzyga* is wampir (a vampire). The Slavic faith in vampires dates back to the 4th century, when Slavic nations were still a cultural and linguistic commonwealth. There are similar tales of vampires and various ways to fight them, which are known both to Southern Slavonics (from Serbia, Croatia, Bulgaria) and Western Slavonics (from Poland, Czech and Slovakia). Therefore, the vampire as a malefactor has a very long history and is a conglomerate of beliefs, folk superstition and partially authentic events explained by medicine or ethnography.

It is hard to judge univocally how those beliefs found their way into *Sefer Hasidim*, but the faith in vampires was present among the Jews as well. The very word vampire comes from Pre – Slavic (Bulgarian *vampir*, Polish *wąpierz*, Little Russian *upir*)[59]. Primarily this word depicted a night bird with a long sharp beak, with which it sucked blood from its victims. In the 17th century it spread from Slavonic languages all around Europe. There were also other words used in Poland: *upiór, martwiec, wypiór, wąpierz, wampierz, strzyga* mentioned earlier and its male form *strzygoń*, being a later Polish creation. They remained in numerous geographical names, e.g. Wąpiersk, Wampierzów, Strzygi.

The folk understanding of justice required an eternal punishment for the malefactor, so the dregs of society were meant to remain such in the afterlife as well. The sudden and unexpected death of a sinner could be a sign of this[60]. It was therefore very likely that people who had led an illicit life, or those who were burdened with a curse at the moment of their death, would become vampires, evil spirits or other harmful creatures. The same could happen to false witnesses, persons buried in contradiction with the rules of religion, or not buried at all for historical

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[58] Brückner, (1927), p. 522.

[59] Brückner, (1927), p. 594.

[60] Zelkowicz (1938), p. 159.

reasons, e.g. massacres, pestilence etc. *Strzyga's*, vampires or werewol-
ves could also be dead illegitimate children, children born from a mar-
riage with a demon, (most often female), or young girls and boys who
had not managed to enjoy life before they died, something which had
caused them to envy the living. Murdered persons, the drowned and
suicides would become vampires. All the above mentioned were as a ru-
le buried on the outskirts of cemeteries, often without the necessary
rituals. Difficulties with carrying out a normal burial, most often caused
by the small number of cemeteries, frequently meant that corpses had to
be transported long distances. The best evidence for the importance of
proper and uninterrupted burial is the fact that inviolability of Jewish
places of burial and funeral processions was guaranteed as early as in
the Statute of Kalisz (Statut Kaliski) of 1264 – the first privilege,
patterned after the German one[61], granted to Jewish settlers by Prince
Bolesław Pobożny and subsequently spread over the entire territory of
Poland[62].

> "One was burdened with a curse that no one would take care of his funeral; he
> died and a Christian was hired to bury him far from the graves"[63]

According to folk beliefs vampires or *strzyga's* could be reco-
gnised even when they were still alive, as they had some characteristic
signs on their bodies (e.g. a tail), or were born with their teeth, or had
two rows of teeth[64].

> "One was born with teeth and a tail", the women said he would eventually be
> eating people and he should be killed (...)"[65]

A characteristic feature here is the distinction between those who
died as martyrs, (kidush hashem), which is also usually sudden, and
sinners who had died suddenly[66]. Although proper burial was very diffi-
cult or often unfeasible in the case of martyrs, they occupied a very

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[61] Balaban (1925), vol. 2, p. 329.

[62] Fijałkowski, Paweł (ed), (1993), *Dzieje Żydów w Polsce. Wybór tekstów
źródłowych XI-XIII wiek*, Warszawa, p. 17, p. 13, 14.

[63] Sefer Hasidim 1540.

[64] Bystroń (1947), p. 143.

[65] Sefer Hasidim 171.

[66] Sefer Hasidim 261.

high rank in the hierarchy of the dead. Even in later times they enjoyed special status in folk mythology, e.g. they could celebrate the Sabbath and appeared in folk tales always as positive characters who did not disturb the living. Traces of such information are therefore preserved in Jewish legends until much later times, and most likely originate from the medieval "Majse Buch"[67].

One of the important features of persons considered to have become vampires was the lack of decomposition of their corpses, even long after death. Frequent cases of untimely burial of persons remaining in cataleptic trances, traumatic collapse or lethargy could have been a source of inspiration for vampire tales. The Jewish tradition of immediate burial of the dead makes such events very likely, and in the case of sudden death of many people, the precise adherence to Halachic rules for determining the cause of death was practically impossible. An interesting example here are two slightly different versions of a tale of a dead Christian princess, who came back to life during her funeral[68].

It is difficult to state exactly from where this belief originates, but for both Slavic nations[69] and the Jews in the 13th century, the corpse which remained in an unchanged condition was construed as punishment for sins committed during earthly life. According to folk beliefs it was only vampires whose bodies were not subject to decomposition in the grave[70]. If there was any suspicion that the deceased could do any harm to the living, the body was exhumed to look for signs of the above. If a corpse was found, which appeared in some way unusual to the people, they would cut off the head with a sharp tool place it between the legs of the corpse which was then re-buried. Another method of rendering ghosts harmless was puncturing the chest with an aspen peg, pinning down the body with stones, or burying it face down[71]. Traces of such practices can be found in another work by the same author, the so-called "Testament of r. Judah":

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[67] Mietlis, J. (1933), *Das Ma'asebuch,* Hildesheim-Zurich-New York 1987, reprint ed. Berlin.

[68] Sefer Hasidim 272.

[69] Uspienski, B. (2001), *Teologia staroruska*, in: ders. *Religia i semiotyka*, Gdańsk, p. 19-31, here p. 30.

[70] Kononienko, A. (1993), p. 191.

[71] Gloger, (1985), *Encyklopedia Staropolska*, vol. 4, p. 408.

"During the funeral of a woman, who had killed children שטרייז [sztriiz], when we  see that her mouth is open, it is clear that she will repeat her crimes within a year after her death. Let them fill her mouth with earth, and she will not do any harm"[72].

Most probably that is why in *Sefer Hasidim* we can find traces of legends about corpses untouched despite the passage of time:

"The tale of a man who had swallowed an afarsemon and died. After some years he came to his sons in a dream to have them dig him up and find out how difficult it was for him. They thought he might have taken his clothes off and be naked now. They dug him up and found him intact, just as on the day he had been buried, and they touched his clothes in which he had been buried and in which he was wrapped to see what his body looked like. When they touched this clothes they fell apart and there was nothing left of them, since he had died several years before and everything had turned to dust"[73].

Probably an additional factor which fanned the faith of Christian folk in vampires were empty graves, often discovered in Jewish cemeteries. This could have been construed as evidence for "rising from the grave" and the existence of the dead among the living. In every Jewish community there were graves which did not contain human remains, but for example used Torah scrolls. Also in this case the burial ceremony[74] was of great importance. The author of *Sefer Hasidim* definitely forbids the presence of Christians at such funerals.

"It is forbidden for Christians to see the dead in the grave. One Christian prince had once asked the Jews to open a coffin in which there were there were Torah scrolls, and an old man told them then: do not open it and do not show him, since it would be a great sin to show the coffin to the prince of the Babylonian king, and the one who shows Torah scrolls to Christians in a coffin deserves to have his deeds thoroughly examined after his death[75], and death is fated to the one who sees Torah scrolls in a coffin in a dream. It is forbidden to transfer the dead from one coffin to another and Christians should not be permitted to see the deceased in his grave".

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[72] (27) אזהרות וצוואות מרהיה. כז

[73] Sefer Hasidim 208.

[74] Sefer Hasidim equals the funeral of a corpse with a funeral of used scrolls (the one who transports a dead one or books...).

[75] May his agony be hard.

The sharp tone of the author is understandable, since a funeral ceremony of Torah scrolls could easily be observed by Christians, who did not recognise this custom as being a magical practice and could place the whole community in great danger.

Apart from the practice of opening graves in order to check the condition of the dead, other events, more or less intentional, were also possible. It is though not known how frequent cases of grave robbing were, but as this kind of occupation has rather a long tradition it can be assumed that such cases also happened in the Middle Ages. Opening of graves was possible even by accident, For example during building work. Objects found in graves should not be used again[76]. The ancient, and in the 13th century still strong faith in vampires could then find further confirmation in the graves which were occaisionally discovered, containing gnarled corpses in unnatural positions or containing nothing at all, only strange objects, which could easily be identified as connected with some incomprehensible and mysterious rites.

## 6. MARA

It is worthwhile paying attention to the time concurrence of reports about vampires appearing and about pestilence. Epidemics were considered a result of God's wrath, the configuration of stars, air pollution caused by decomposition of corpses and marsh miasma. Ghosts were also thought to be able to cause pestilence. *Sefer Hasidim* was edited almost at the same time as the great epidemics, which were occurred cyclically, in Poland also, every couple of years. The illness and sudden death of several people within the same family terrified the surviving members. For a long time the cause of such unexpected tragedies remained unknown, so they were explained as the intervention of dark forces, and the pestilence itself portrayed as an amorphous, "dense fog, a mustiness, a poisonous vapour" although still recognisably human in certain features[77]. Such a fog, called in Polish mara, would enter the human blood-stream through the air, make its way to the heart and kill the affected person. Mara, in the Małopolska region called *gnieciuch*, would press down onto the sleeping person, cause difficult in breathing and plait horses' manes. This pestilence was per-

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[76] Sefer Hasidim 1532, but there the knife is found in a martyrs' grave.

[77] Gloger, (1985), *Encyklopedia Staropolska*, p. 234 pp.

ceived as a living creature, often born as an illegitimate child, which tormented people at night[78].

The vocalization *mare* used in the text indicates the German origin of this word; similarly Brückner derives from the Polish *mora*[79], zmora from the German *Mahr, Nachtmahr*[80] and says there is no etymological relationship between *mara* and *mora*. Faith in mares was rather widespread among both Poles and Jews. Sleep, similar to death, lack of control over your surroundings, and a state of separation of body and soul, as sleep was understood in Judaism, was the source of many superstitions and beliefs. *Mare's* were one of many dangers which threatened the sleeping. It was imagined that mares in the form of cats would throttle people at night. Beliefs regarding sleep are numerous in Sefer Hasidim:

> "A woman was suspected of being שטרייא [sztriia], she did harm and appeared to a Jew in the shape of a cat"[81].
> "When a man sleeps, his enemies can do harm to him, when he is asleep and his soul is not asleep"[82].
> "Let no one close their doors and windows tightly, but let them leave a small slit, so that he is not harmed by demons, who want to get out"[83].

An interesting description of similar belief among Polish folk was left by doctor Zieleniewski in his work: "O przesądach lekarskich ludu naszego." ("On medical superstitions in our people")

> "A mare... This invisible creature comes in through a hole by the window, but most often through a hole made by a knot fallen out of the door. Every day or every second day about midnight it molests only the young, more often men, and the unmarried ones more often than married ones. As it sneaks into the chamber, transformed into any shape, but most often into a cat, it clambers up onto the sleeping one, who lies on his back, and slowly creeps from his legs towards his heart, and there it remains, and clutches on to this place so tightly that traces of claws can be seen on the their side near the heart. The sleeping

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[78] Bystroń (1947), p. 142.

[79] Kononienko (1993), p. 118.

[80] Brueckner, (1927), p. 655.

[81] Sefer Hasidim 1466.

[82] Sefer Hasidim 1553.

[83] וצוואות אזהרות (40). מ. הימריה.

one feels a terrible burden on his chest, incomparable with anything else; he has difficulty in breathing, he sweats, but remains inert and can neither move nor scream. It is left to the mercy of the mare as to how long it can throttle the unfortunate man. When the tormented one wakes up he is exhausted and unable to work, and if the mare especially favours him with constant throttling, he becomes miserable and pale"[84].

*Sefer Chasidim* records[85] also a story about Christians stealing stones from Jewish graves, probably in order to use them later for some magical practices. It was without a doubt a common practice, since folk magic would often use objects which were possessed with a force by casting a spell on them. The very origin of a given thing predestined it to possess magical power, e.g. practices with the use of objects taken away from churches[86] were widespread.

## 7. WINIC KWITNI

"And Rabbi Judah, may the memory of the righteous be blessed, said that he had known a Jew from Worms, who had been called reb Binam, and who had been an old man and a grave-digger. And I heard for sure and truly, that once upon a time a Jew got up early and went to the synagogue. And at the entrance to the synagogue he saw a man sitting, and on his head he had a crown made of plants, which in the Ashkenaz language is called cfilv, and in the Canaan language vinic kvitni: And he was scared, for he thought it was a demon, and the man called him and said, come here and do not be afraid. And reb Binam approached him and said: "are you not the so-and-so who had died and been buried", and the man answered him "Yes I am" (...) And he asked him "what is that on your head", and he answered "herbs from the Garden of Eden, which I have put on my head to drive away the bad smell of this world"[87].

The fragment quoted above was not written by the author of *Sefer Hasidim*, but is a so-called tosafa, a later addition, written on the margin of a chapter. Reading it is very difficult, since the manuscript is blurred, and the letters, especially those of the gloss itself, are small and faint[88].

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[84] Zieleniewski, M., *O przesądach lekarskich ludu naszego,* Kraków 1845. Quoted after: Śliwińska, K. www.pfm.pl/u235/navi/182728/back/182718

[85] Sefer Hasidim, 322.

[86] Bystroń (1947), p. 134.

[87] Sefer Hasidim 131.

[88] Sefer Chassidim, manuscript Parma H3280, Jerusalem 1985.

Most probably its author was Izaak ben Moshe from Vienna. He was born and brought up in Moravia, lived in Lorraine and Paris, and finally settled in Vienna[89]. Therefore he was without doubt using some Slavic language and Old Yiddish. The above text is in any case slightly more recent than the chapter, which is testified to not only by some expressions of which it is comprised. – Rabbi Judah is already mentioned as the deceased one – but also by the very fact of translating words into the Canaan and Ashkenaz languages, with the omission of Romance languages.

The preserved agglomeration of consonants kv indicates that the Canaan language is some form of Slavic language, which was in those times common to all Western Slavic languages: Czech, Old Polish or Canaan[90], if we assume this language had really existed. In the Eastern Slavic languages those consonants are preserved in their pre-Slavic form cv (Polish *kwiat*, Czech *kvet,* Russian *cviet*)[91]. It is unfortunately the only thing that can be deduced about any properties of the Canaan language, based on the above gloss. In the case of *vinic kvitni* we can see the strong will of using Rabbi Judah's authority as an argument in the discussion of a completely different topic, and the actual words in the Canaan language are of minor concern. The profession of reb Bunim mentioned in the text is indeed striking, but the context does not allow any conclusions concerning the connection of that gloss with beliefs about the dead. Yet it is certain that the person who recorded the gloss was aware of the language from which it originated.

## 8. CONCLUSION

The above examples are just a part of a more complex belief system of the Jews and their Christian neighbours in the Middle Ages. How productive a neighbourhood it was is testified to by the fact that some of the beliefs recorded in *Sefer Hasidim* persisted for such a long time in folklore, superstitions and medicine, despite the systematic fight against them fought by the Enlightenment movements of Judaism and the Catholic Church[92]. In both cases the historical value of those beliefs

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[89] Bałaban, p. 177.

[90] Klemensiewicz (1974), p. 31f.

[91] Stieber, (1965), p. 12.

[92] Practices connected with casting spell on twisted hair are described among others by "Polityka", No. 40 (2370), p. 78.

was duly noted and researched by ethnology rather late. But materials gathered in this way have provided good evidence for the vivacity of this kind of belief[93] and the scale of interaction between Jewish and Christian communities.

It shows that Jews and Christians living in Slavic territories in the Middle Ages were not completely isolated. It is a very interesting phenomenon. On one hand there was an inaccessible, or even forbidden sphere for both parties connected with religious life, which was strictly protected from outside influences. On the other hand Jewish folk, who were already taking over the role of an intermediary between the town and the village, were very susceptible to the influences of local communities, particularly the rural ones. The linguistic contacts, indispensable in the field of trade, led ultimately to the breaking down of the barriers between German and Yiddish, but also influenced folk beliefs and magical practices. This process was undoubtedly bilateral, but it is often very difficult or impossible to ascertain exactly the source of a given belief. It constitutes, though, an excellent starting point for further research of Jewish-and Christian relations in the Middle Ages. It may turn out that the influence of Hasidei Ashkenaz on their descendant generation was greater than currently regarded.

Here I should mention the great role of Jewish women in this process. In the traditional model of Jewish community they were burdened with the duty of maintaining the family, which meant frequent contact with local folk. They were not allowed to study sciences reserved for men, and even though they were often literate, the only accessible literature for them were various collections of Halachic rules, legends, tales and *majses*[94] In contrast with rabbinical literature those books were not that strict about folk beliefs, which could be communicated and explained in this manner. Yet the material comprised in literature for women has not been researched with regard to the above.

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[93] See Zelkowicz, Bystroń.

[94] Shmeruk, (1992) p. 16p, 22 p. ll.

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## NIEZNANE GLOSY SŁOWIAŃSKIE W "SEFER CHASIDIM"

### Streszczenie

W XII i XIII wieku w niemieckich miastach na terenie doliny Renu rozwinął się religijny i ideologiczny ruch pietystów aszkenazyjskich, Chassidei Aszkenaz. Centralną postacią pietystów był Jehuda Pobożny (Jehuda b. Samuel he-Chassid). Dzieła stworzone przez przywódców tego ruchu datowane są na pierwszą połowę XIII wieku, ostateczna redakcja głównego dzieła, *Sefer Chasidim*, na drugą połowę XIII wieku. Z doliny Renu na skutek rozpoczynającej się fali migracji ludności żydowskiej na wschód ruch ten rozprzestrzenił się w XIII wieku na większą część gmin żydowskich na terenie Niemiec, a także na ziemie słowiańskie. Był to okres brzemienny w skutki nie tylko dla kultury i tradycji żydowskiej, lecz również dla tworzących się wtedy języków, zarówno żydowskich jak i chrześcijańskich. Jidysz, jeszcze przed podziałem na wschodnią i zachodnią grupę dialektów, wszedł w interakcję z tworzącą się właśnie grupą języków zachodniosłowiańskich. Był to kontakt bardzo owocny dla obu stron. Jego efektem końcowym było ostateczne oderwanie się jidysz od niemieckiego, języki słowiańskie zaś wzbogaciły się o słownictwo specjalistyczne.

Cyklicznie powtarzające się wyprawy krzyżowe, zarazy, oraz inne nieszczęścia spadające na Żydów w średniowiecznych Niemczech sprawiły, że śmierć, elementy okultystyczne, duchy i demony były nieodłączną częścią filozoficznej i społecznej doktryny Chassidei Aszkenaz. Jest to również przyczyna odnotowania w *Sefer Chassidim* średniowiecznej polskiej glosy, traktowanej przez autora jako forma zaklęcia. Jej forma פלנטיצא [*plntica*] wskazuje na pochodzenie z języka polskiego, jedynego posiadającego w omawianym okresie samogłoski nosowe. Zapisana jest ona w nieposiadającym samogłosek alfabecie hebrajskim za pomocą najbliższej dostępnej spółgłoski nosowej „n".

Inną zapisaną w *Sefer Chasidim* glosą jest וויניץ קווישני [vinic kvitni], którą określono jako pochodzącą z „języka kanaan". W tym przypadku określenie dokładnego jej pochodzenie nie jest możliwe, gdyż nazwa Kanaan używana była przez uczonych żydowskich w tamtych czasach na określenie ziem i języków słowiańskich. Zachowana zbitka spółgłosek kv wskazuje, że był to język z grupy zachodniosłowiańskiej, czeski, polski lub łużycki.

Oprócz oddziaływania językowego kultura i religia żydowska i chrześcijańska w średniowieczu wpływały na siebie również pod względem wierzeń, przesądów i zabo-

bonów. O ile w sferze religijnej istniała bardzo wyraźna granica, w przypadku pobożności ludowej obie religie przenikały się w zasadzie bez większych ograniczeń, a wiele wierzeń związanych z wampirami, strzygami, czy zmorami było wspólne zarówno dla żydów jak i dla chrześcijan. Wierzenia takie normalnie nie miały wstępu do literatury rabinicznej. Analogiczna sytuacja miała też miejsce wśród ludności chrześcijańskiej. Ludowe wierzenia w siły nadprzyrodzone były często zwalczane, względnie zastępowane przez inną treść religijną.

Celowe zapisywanie w *Sefer Chasidim* właśnie rzeczy wyjątkowych, niecodziennych, pozwala na poznanie całego spektrum wierzeń i przesądów ludowych dotyczących zmarłych, i innych istot demonicznych. Jest to materiał niezmiernie cenny, zarówno pod względem językowym, jak i etnograficznym, tym bardziej że dzieła chrześcijańskie zajmujące się tą tematyką datowane są na kilkaset lat później.