YIDDISH–GERMAN, SLAVIC, OR "ORIENTAL"?[1]

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Özet

Yidce, hâlâ çoğunlukla Almancanın Yahudi versiyonu olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Farat Yidce ve Almanca arasındaki iç yapı farklılıkları o kadar büyüktür ki, bilim adamları çeşitli teoriler ve varsayımlar kullanarak bu farklılıkları açıklamaya çalışmaktadır. Bununla birlikte dilsel sistem olarak Yidcenin belirgin bir özelliği gözden kaçırılmıştır. Arapça dışında tıpkı Türkçe, Farsça ve diğer İslâm medeniyet-lerine ait dillerde olduğu gibi Yidce de iki farklı sözdizimsel ve morfolojik özelliklere sahip parallel alt sistemler kullanmaktadır. İlki yerel unsurları, diğeri ise yüksek sınıflara ait dilin daha prestijli unsurlarını işlemektedir. Bu anlamda reform sonrası Polonyasında doğan ve zirvesine Osmanlı İmparatorluğuna yakın çevrelerde ulaşan Yidce, *Oriental* bir dil olarak değerlendirilebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yidce, Almanca, Slavca, Türkçe

Abstract

Yiddish is still seen frequently as a Jewish variety of German; however, the differences in inner structure between Yiddish and German are so huge that scholars tried to explain these differences by using varying theories and presuppositions. One particular trait of Yiddish as a linguistic system was, nevertheless, overlooked: Yiddish, just like Persian, Ottoman Turkish and other languages of the Islamic civilization (except Arabic), uses two parallel linguistic sub-systems with different syntactic and morphological features, one of the native elements, the other of the more prestigious elements of the language[s] of higher status. In this sense, Yiddish, born in post-Reformation Poland and in close vicinity of the Ottoman Empire at its ze-nith, behaves like an "Oriental" language.

Key-word: Yiddish, German, Slavic, Turkish

According to highly imprecise statistical data, some 20,000 Jews were living in Germany prior to the First Crusade. Many of these Jewish communities were relatively young having been established only a century or so before the First Crusade, by Jews who had come mostly from France, but also from

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Spain and Italy. At least ten percent of Jews of that part of Germany that was for the Jews *Lotar* (Lorraine) perished at the hands of the Crusaders in what is called "the First Holocaust" in 1095/6, among them quite a large number of proselytes to Judaism.[2]

Nine centuries later, there where about 13,000,000 Yiddish-speaking Jews and their descendants in Europe, America and worldwide, with less than quarter a million of Jews living in ethnic Germany. It <was traditionally taken as a fact that the Yiddish-speaking Jews of Eastern Europe are not only cultural and linguistic, but simply physical descendants of the Jews of Ashkenaz who had begun migrating eastwards after the pogroms of 1096.

However, demographers of the *fin de siécle* were unable to explain this enormous growth adequately. Many political, cultural and even racial and religious motives led some scholars to look for the antecedents of the speakers of Yiddish elsewhere except Germany, the tendency intensified during the *Sho'ah* / Holocaust and afterwards, the tendency still waiting for a thorough research.

Nevertheless, as early as by the end of the 19th century and in the first half of the 20th century much progress has been made in Jewish studies in unearthing different layers of the pre-Ashkenazic Jewry of Central and Eastern Europe, among them the Jewries of the so-called *Kenaan*, it is, the Slavic-speaking Jews of Bohemia, Poland and Rus' prior to the great Ashkenazi migration in the early 16th century.[3]

In addition, Jews elsewhere, especially in Europe, frequently felt pressed to emphasize the antiquity of their stay in a particular country and their special bond with it or with its language.[4] The latter became especially

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[2] One of these proselytes was Ashmedai, king of the demons, himself, and his green blood mixed with the red blood of the human victims; see G. Scholem, "Pereqim hadashim me'inyaney Ashmedai weLilith", *Tarbiz* 19 (1948), pp. 160-175, p. 161. ג' שלום, "פרקים חדשים מענייני אשמדאי ולילית", *תרביץ* (תש"ח), עמ' 160-175 . I owe this reference to my friend, Prof. James R. Russell of Harvard University.

[3] The word *Kena'an*, taken from the Bible, was applied in Early Medieval period to the Slavic peoples, possibly, as a calque of *Sclavus* (Slav / "slave"). Other Biblical names were applied by the Jews to non-Biblical countries, so Spain was called Sefarad (whence the Sephardic Jews came), France was called *Tsarfat*, Turky was called *Togarmah*, and Germany - *Ashkenaz*. For detailes on the Jewish-Slavic Kena'an, see Max Weinreich, "Yiddish, Knaanic, Slavic: The Basic Relationships", *For Roman Jakobson*, The Hague: Mouton, 1956, pp. 622- 632. For the history of Yiddish and related subjects, see Max Weinreich, *History of the Yiddish language* (trans. Shlomo Noble, with the assistance of Joshua A. Fishman), Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1980; *idem*, *Geschichte der jiddischen Sprachforschung*, ed. by Jerold C. Frakes, Atlanta 1993; Dovid Katz [ed.], *Origins of the Yiddish Language. Winter Studies in Yiddish, volume I , Papers from the First Annual Oxford Winter Symposium in Yiddish Language and Literature, 15-17 December 1985*, Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1987.

[4] Compare D.D.Y. Shapira, "The Mejelis 'Document' and Tapani Harvianen: On Scholarship, Firkowicz and Forgeries", *Omeljan Pritsak Armağanı / A Tribute to Omeljan Pritsak*, ed. by Mehmet Alpargu & Yücel Öztürk, Sakarya 2007, pp. 303-393; an abridged version: *idem*, "Re-

acute in Austria of Josef II, who criminalized usage of the "Judeo-German *jargon*", *i.e.*, Yiddish, or in Russia of Nikolai I, when good-intended - but ill-executed - attempts were made to force Russian or German modern education on the Jews.[5] But Jews of Russia were to such degree not eager to study in the language of the state that in 1828 a *maskil* had first made an assessment, in order to make Russian *kosher*, that this language was, in fact, not a Gentile tongue, but the ancestral language of Jews in Podolia, driven away by the *jargon* only a couple of generation ago.[6] It was in this context that the search for the pre-Ashkenazic Slavic Jewry has begun. As already said, much progress has been made in this direction. There is no doubt by now that there was a pre-Ashkenazic Slavic-speaking Jewry existing, or rather there were Slavic-speaking Jewries. But the defensive Yiddishist particularism, the quest for non-German forefathers and the un-imaginable Jewish-German relationship of the mid-20th century led scholars and intellectuals sometimes astray: Avraham Poliak argued - in 1943 - that Yiddish is not German at all, but basically Eastern Gothic; Chaim Rosen avoided quoting German lexical examples alongside with Greek, Latin, Lithuanian and Sanskrit and quoted the Yiddish ones instead; Arthur Koestler wrote a book arguing that the Ashkenazim are not Semites at all, and *this* is why the Anti-Semitism is absurd.[7]

WHAT IS A JEWISH LANGUAGE?

There are two basic paradigms of the languages of the Jews: 1), adopting the language of the hosting population, and 2), building a distinctive Jewish language, on the basis, in many cases, of the language of the former hosting population. The most striking example of the second paradigm is that of Yiddish of the 19th-20th centuries.

German scholars usually had taken Yiddish as "Judeo-German"; it was only after the Holocaust that Yiddish became gradually regarded in Germany as a full-pledged language. On the inter-Jewish linguistic front, Yiddish fought hard to gain recognition, with the champions of the language, the Yiddishists, emphasizing this language's uniqueness and distinctiveness from German. In Israel, with her troubled inter-Jewish ethno-linguistic situation, and because of the numerical and cultural strength of the East-European Ashkenazic Jewry, it gradually became an axiom that *every* non-Ashkenazi Jewish group has its own "Yiddish", so recently there emerged

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marks on Avraham Firkowicz and the Hebrew *Mejelis 'Document'*", *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 59:2 (2006), pp. 131-180.

[5] J.D. Klier, *Russia Gathers Her Jews: The Origins of the 'Jewish Question' in Russia, 1772-1825*, Dekalb, Northern Illinois University Press, 1986.

[6] I.B. Levensohn, *Te'udah be-Yisrael*, Vilna 1828, p. 35.

[7] Abraham N. Poliak, *Kazariyah: Toldot mamlaxa yehudit be'europa*, Tel Aviv 1943/44; Arthur Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe. The Khazar Empire and its Heritage*, London 1976.

awkward notions of "Judeo-Georgian", "Judeo-Malayalam", etc. The Yiddish weakness and vulnerability vis-à-vis the German language (being the background to the frequent over-emphasizing of the presumed basic difference between Yiddish and German) was translated in Israel into the terms of power and secondary of the non-Yiddish Jewries.

GERMAN AND YIDDISH

Linguistically, the German dialects are divided into two large groups – the High German in the South, and the Low German in the North, known as *Plattdeutsch*. What is called now "Dutch", or *Nederlands*, was historically just one of the Low German dialects. The literary German language is based on the High German as pronounced in the North, by former speakers of Low German. Linguistically, the German[ic] elements of Yiddish belong exclusively to the High German type.[8] In fact, Yiddish, without its Slavic and Semitic elements, can be called "an alternative *Deutsch*", recalling one of the names by which speakers of Yiddish used once to call their German speech, "*Iwry-Taitsch*". It means they were aware of the fact that they were speaking a Jewish version of *Deutsch*.

The Low German once used to be a language of great importance; based, in its literary form, on the language of Lübeck, it was used throughout the Baltic, including in the Order States of the *Ostsee*, and influenced significantly Danish and Swedish. It was also the language of large groups of German merchants, artisans and colonists who came into the linguistic Western Slavic, Baltic and Fennic realms in the framework of the *Ostsiedlung* (what became known - anachronistically - , as lately as the 19th century, as *Drang nach Osten*, or the "push eastwards"). Only smaller groups of Germans spoke High German in the East, like, significantly enough, in the "Polish" part of Eastern Prussia. It was only by the late 16th / early 17th century that Low German gave up its positions in the North of Germany and in the colonized Eastern countries to the language of the High German type. It should be stressed that the Jews came *en masse* to the Czech lands and Poland as a part of the aforementioned movement of the Christian-German migrants. Still, there is virtually nothing in Yiddish what can be connected to Low German.[9]

The German glosses found in the commentaries of Rashi (1040-1105) set apart, the oldest surviving literary document in what is claimed to be Yiddish can be seen in a blessing found in a prayer book from Worms com-

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[8] As to the almost extinct Western Yiddish, it is just another Jewish ethnolect, of the same High German type.
[9] However, there *are* points common to Yiddish and to the local literary variant of High German as it was pronounced in the German *Ostsiedlung* zone, including the *Ostsee* provinces, like the realization of both *ei* and *eu* as *ey*. Why we say in Modern Hebrew *Eyrópa*, not *Evrópa*? Because it is how "Europa" was pronounced in the literary German of the *Ostsiedlung* zone.

posed in 1272/3 (גוט טק אים בטגא ש ויק דיש מחזור אין בית הכנסת טרגא).[10] Its lin-
guistic character indicates that the "Yiddish" of that day was merely a Jew-
ish form of a more or less regular Middle High German. The language of the
Cambridge Codex T.-S.10.K.22 is Middle High German, written in Hebrew
characters.[11] Popular macaronic pieces in Hebrew and German were col-
lected in the late 15th century by Menahem ben Naphtali Oldendorf. Epic
poems were adopted by Jews from their Christian-German compatriots,
with the earliest Judeo-German epic poem of this sort to be *Dukus Horant*.[12]
Although found in the 16th century manuscripts, *Vidvilt* (or, "Widuwilt"),
also known as *Kinig Artus Hof*, an adaptation of the Middle High German
romance *Wigalois* by Wirnt von Gravenberg, presumably also dates from
the 15th century.[13] It is impossible to tell the linguistic difference of this
15th-century written Judeo-German from non-Jewish written German.[14]
There was no "Old Yiddish", only Judeo-German.[15] Therefore, we have no
material for Yiddish before the late 16th century.

Yiddish can be discerned from German, practically, only from the be-
ginning of the German Reformation, when the first Yiddish books have been
printed.[16] Not surprisingly, this is also the period when the early modern

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[10] Jean Baumgarten, *Introduction to Old Yiddish Literature*, edited and translated by Jerold C.
Frakes, Oxford 2005; *Early Yiddish Texts 1100 – 1750*, ed. by Jerold Frakes, Oxford 2004; see
also Sol Liptzin, *A History of Yiddish Literature*, Jonathan David Publishers, Middle Village, NY
1972.

[11] L. Fuks, *The Oldest Known Literary Documents of Yiddish Literature (c. 1382), Part I*, Leiden
1957, p. xxvi.

[12] L. Fuks, *The Oldest Known Literary Documents of Yiddish Literature* (c. 1382), Leiden 1957;
P.F.Ganz, F. Norman and W. Schwarz (ed.), *Dukus Horant* (Altdeutsche Textbibliothek,
Ergänzungsreihe 2), Tübingen 1964.

[13] A Hebrew version was copied in 1279.

[14] For the texts, see Max Grünbaum, *Jüdischdeutsche Chrestomatie. Zugleich ein Beitrag zur
Kunde der hebräischen Literatu*r. Leipzig, F.A. Brockhaus, 1882; *Early Yiddish Texts 1100–1750
with Introduction and Commentary*, edited by Jerold C. Frakes, Oxford University Press, 2004.

[15] We do know about differences in local pronunciation between German Jews of the 14th
century, with Jews in the Eastern Mark called בני חית, while those in the Rhineland were called
בני הי"ת, see אליה לויטה, שמות דברים, Venice 1544. It also seems that the shift *ā* > *o* occurred in
Judeo-German by the 13th century while still on the German soil and can thus be seen as a
specific Jewish trace of the German dialect of the Jews; however, by the 14th century the older
ī and *ū* were still preserved, as in the surrounding Alemannic German dialects, and did not
become diphthongs.

[16] The first book printed in the German language was *Eyn Manung der Christenheit widder die
Durken*, Mainz 1454. The first German Bible was printed in Strasbourg by Johann Mentelin
about 1466. The first Yiddish printed book was produced in Cracow in 1534; the translation
of the Psalms, by Elia Levita, Venice 1545. Among the first printed Judeo-German works was
the *Bovo-Bukh*, composed in 1507/8 by Elia Levita (or, Elia Bokher) and printed in at least
forty editions beginning in 1541, it was based on the chivalric romance of Bevis of Hampton,
chanelled though its Italian version, Buova d'Antona. See now *Elia Levita Bachur's Bovo-Buch:
A Translation of the Old Yiddish Edition of 1541 with Introduction and Notes* by Elia Levita
Bachur, translated and notes by Jerry C. Smith, Fenestra Books, 2003. Avroham ben Schemuel
Pikartei published a paraphrase on the Book of Job in 1557 in Cracow, and the *Mayse-bukh*

Neuhochdeutsch, the New High German, was taking shape. It is obvious that Yiddish was born in Poland during the Reformation period, with Jews unable to catch up with the rapid linguistic developments in Germany projected also into Poland.

WHAT GERMAN IN YIDDISH?

Tthe Germanic elements of Yiddish clearly belong to the Western group of the Middle group of the High German, northwards from what is known as Germersheim line. Inside this Middle High German territory are placed towns like Speyer, Worms, Mainz (קהלות שו"ם), Köln, Trier, Bonn, Aachen, Fulda, Halle, the Valley of Saale, Marsburg, Grälitz. It means that the majority of the Jewish communities existing by the end of the eleventh century lied inside what is known Middle High German. Outside this linguistic territory lied the probably biggest, but geographically and culturally isolated community of the Imperial capital, Regensburg, and somehow a bit younger community of Augsburg, in the zone of Southern High German, with the newer communities of Xanten (זנטא), Hammlin, Hildesheim and, significantly, the new town of Magdeburg, being inside the Low German linguistic zone.

I should emphasize the fact that all of Saxony, subject to German Imperial colonization, lies inside the Middle High German linguistic realm. There the eastward movement of speakers of High German replaced the local Low German type of speech (preserved in Niedersachsen). In the Eastern part of Saxony the previously Slavic (Sorbo-Lusitian) population was subject to Germanization and these people became speakers of what is now Middle High German, exactly of the same type as Yiddish. Inside this Saxonian territory there were existing the Jewish communities of Halle, the Valley of Saale, Marsburg, and even the most eastern Jewish community by the late eleventh century, that of Grälitz, though, as it seems, Jews crossed Elba *en masse* only by the 13th century.

The eastward expansion of German settlement beyond the Elbe-Saale line (*Ostsiedlung*) started in the 11th century, when Germans were invited by local Polish rulers and the Crown to settle in Poland. With the Magdeburg and Halle law granted to these Germans, they were able to establish many towns and villages; the urban life in Poland graduately became German-dominanted and even many Poles in the Polish towns underwent Germanization; all the East Central German dialects are a result of this expansion. Jewish migration to Poland from Germany was certainly a part (or, a by-product) of the general German *Ostsiedlung*. Albeit Jews and Germans in many cases shared the same urban room and were sometimes competi-

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("Story Book") was composed in western Germany during the last third of the 16th century and was first published in 1602.

tors in those cities, they lived, nevertheless, under different legal codes, with the Jews living under royal privileges. It was only understandable that, living alongside with the socially priveleged Christian Germans in Poland, Jews preferred to stress those of their social and linguistic characteristics that connected them with the prestigeous things German. Linguistically, the period of the active eastward movement of German Christians and Jews corresponds, in the history of the German language, to the gradual growth of Old High German into Early New High German (1050-1350, or 1050-1500);[17] in the history of Yiddish, this period corresponds to the traditionally-accepted shift of Old Yiddish to the Early Modern Yiddish (up to 1500; Primitive Yiddish until 1250; Old Yiddish, from 1250-1500). In both cases, we see that the emergence of the modern forms of both languages occurred about the same time, by the early 16th century.

Jews first begun to come to Poland in the aftermath of the First Crusade, under Boleslaus III (1102–1139); Duke Boleslaus the Pious of Kalisz granted the first written privilege to the Jews of Greater Poland on 16 August 1264). Casimir III the Great (1303–1370) expanded the Kalisz Charter; being especially friendly to the Jews, he was known by his nickname "King of the serfs and Jews". After the union of Poland and Lithuania in 1385, the Jewish rights were extended to Lithuania in 1388. After the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, as well as from German lands and Bohemia, Poland became "heaven for the Jews"; the new influx of Jews during the reigns of Sigismund I (1506–1548) and his son Sigismund II August (1548–1572) signified the beginning of the period when up to eighty percent of the world's Jews lived in Poland, enjoying communal autonomy. It was the formative period of the Polish Jewry. Generations of Jews knew exactly what Yiddish was: it was a colonial German as spoken by Jews in what used to be פּאָלין.

YIDDISH AS A SLAVIC LANGUAGE

It was also observed that modern Yiddish has parallels with some German dialects of Saxony rather with those of the Rheinland, as it should, if the nuclei of the first Ashkenazic Jews in Poland were originated from Speyer, Worms, Mainz, as the tradition has it; later, it was noted that it is Sorbo-Lusitian rather than Czech that is a better candidate for being the source of Western Slavicisms in Yiddish. In our own days these facts made a prominent linguist to develop a theory according to which Yiddish is a result of

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[17] Hermann Paul, *Mittelhochdeutsche Grammatik*, 23rd edn, edited by Peter Wiehl and Sigfried Grosse, Niemeyer 1989; M.O'C. Walshe, *A Middle High German Reader: With Grammar, Notes and Glossary*, Oxford UP 1974.

German relexification of the Sorbian language of the imagined converts to Judaism;[18] recently, he reworked this theory taking it further.[19]

I should state immediately that I cannot believe in a total relexification of a group living in the context where books are present and prominent. Relexification theories, as applied to the Ashkenazic situation throughout ages, can explain sufficiently *several* aspects of the Ashkenazic linguistic history, but certainly not *all* of them. The relexification works well when applied to the Yiddishicized Hassidic Hebrew texts of the 19th century; re-lexification can explain, as well, the influx of Hebraisms (Aramicism included) and Slavicism into Eastern Yiddish. I believe the partial Slavic relex-ification of Eastern Yiddish is a simple case of languages in contact, not dif-ferent from the known examples of partial Russian relexification of Tatar, Chuvash, Kazakhstani German (Wolgadeutsch) and so on.[20] The last exam-ple is especially telling in the context of the suggested Slavic origins of Yid-dish: the Wolgadeutsch shares with Yiddish absolutely all Slavic traits in phonology, syntax and not a few in semantics, but could we imagine the Fennic and Slavic groupings of the Middle Volga having relexified their lan-guages into German, with the result being the Wolgadeutsch? In addition, there is a serious methodological mistake to consider what is "German" in Yiddish and what is not by comparing to the German, and, especially, to the literary German, of the last five centuries, for it is German itself, that can be seen as a relexified Romance language.[21] We find Hebrew words in Yiddish

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[18] Paul Wexler, *The Ashkenazic Jews: A Slavo-Turkic People in Search of a Jewish Identity*, Co-lumbus 1993; *idem.*, "Yiddish - The Fifteenth Slavic Language", *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 91; *idem.*, *The Schizoid Nature of Modern Hebrew: A Slavic Language in Search of a Semitic Past*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz 1991; *idem.*, *The Balkan Substratum of Yiddish: A Reassessment of the Unique Romance and Greek Components*, Wiesbaden: Otto Har-rassowitz 1992; compare also by the same author: *The Non-Jewish Origins of the Sephardic Jews*, Albany: State University of New York 1996.

[19] Paul Wexler, *Two-Tiered Relexification in Yiddish: Jews, Sorbs, Khazars, and the Kiev-Polessian Dialect*, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter 2002. Compare also Gil'ad Zuckermann, *Mosaic or mosaic? The Genesis of the Israeli Language* 2006; *idem.*, העברית כמיתוס [*Hebrew as Myth*]. Tel Aviv: Am Oved 2005. Compare Tsuguya Sasaki, "La moderna hebrea, la moderna jida kaj Es-peranto: tri neslavaj lingvoj, kiuj naskiĝis en la slavlinga tereno" [Modern Hebrew, Modern Yiddish and Esperanto: Three Non-Slavic Languages Which Were Born in the Slavic Terrain], *Heroldo de Esperanto* 1918:3, 1919-1920:4-5, 192:6 (1996); *idem.*, דאָס מאָדערנע העברעיש, דאָס מאָדערנע ייִדיש און עספּעראַנטאָ: דרײַ ניט-סלאַוװישע שפּאַכן, וואָס זענען געבוירן געוואָרן אין דער סלאַוװישער סבֿיבֿה [Modern Hebrew, Modern Yiddish and Esperanto: Three Non-Slavic Languages Which Were Born in the Slavic Terrain]. אויפֿן שועל 309 (1998):14-18.

[20] P. Wexler, "Yiddish Evidence for the Khazar Component in the Ashkenazic Ethnogenesis", *The World of the Khazars: New Perspectives. Selected Papers from the Jerusalem 1999 Interna-tional Khazar Colloquium*, ed. H. Ben-Shammai, P.B. Golden, A. Roná-Tas, Brill, Leiden 2007, pp. 387-398 (p. 396) denies, unjustifiably, in my view, the Slavization of the Colonial German dialects, of the Romani (Gipsy) and of the Turkic Karaim language.

[21] A. Meillet, *Caractères généraux des langues germaniques*, Paris 1917 (7th. ed. 1949), part III, chapter 3, noted that "as a language of civilization, German basically remains a Romance lan-guage transferred into the Germanic linguistic system"; such words as *Eindruck, Ausdruck*,

in the same positions in which we find Romance borrowings or calques ("relexified words") in the Standard German.

MORE ON RELEXIFICATION

Moreover, relexification works well for Israeli Hebrew, as was observed, correctly, by Wexler, Zuckerman and Sasaki. This basically correct observation goes, however, back to the period when almost all representing speakers of Israeli Hebrew have been of Ashkenazi background and many of them being residual, sometimes passive, speakers of Yiddish. Nevertheless, this observation still *is* true. Yes, Israeli Hebrew *is* to some degree a Slavic language, exactly as Eastern Yiddish is, and it is so even now, when the majority of the speakers of Israeli Hebrew are Mizraḥi Jews and Arabs from the State of Israel and from Judea and Samaria. And this alone, with numerous other examples easily added, demonstrates that acquiring a dominant language by a socially inferior group and relexification are not tantamount.

From the other corner, the German dialects of Eastern Saxony are spoken by people whose forefathers had spoken Sorbian; other colonial dialects of German, especially in Pomerania and, to a lesser degree in Silesia,[22] had Western Slavic substratum as well. Why do they not represent the relexification model suggested for Yiddish? Why the Turkic Karaim language of Poland and Lithuania is so similar, for a linguist, to Yiddish, with its both Slavic and Semitic sub-systems? Still, it was never suggested that the Karaim language is a relexificized Slavic.[23]

The notion of the "dominant language" is of importance here. People switch to a language of prestige and power. After 1492 Romaniot Jews living in a Greek-speaking linguistic surrounding and Arabic-speaking *Mustaᶜrab* Jews of the Levant living in an Arabic-speaking surrounding gave in to the language of the *Sephardim*; in our own generation, Arabic and Hebrew speakers in some quarters of Jerusalem and in Yemen succumbed to Yiddish of Lithuanian *Yeshivoth* and of the Satmar Hassidim.

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says Meillet, are the same as French *impression* and *expression*, which, in turn, are Latin *impressiō* and *expressiō*. There is no need to stress to what degree the normative German syntax copies Latin models.

[22] There is noticeworthy that a form of Nederlands (Flemish) used to be spoken in Eastern Silesia, too.

[23] Compare P. Wexler, "Is Karaite a Jewish Language?", *Mediterranean Language Review*, 1 (1983), pp. 27-54; *idem.*, "Why the 'Belarusian Tatars' are not likely to be of Turkic origin but the 'Belarusian Jews' are. (Notes on the creation of minority ethnolects)", *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* (*special issue on Belarus'*, 2003).

YIDDISH AS AN "ORIENTAL" LANGUAGE

The partial Hebrew relexification of Eastern Yiddish became possible only in Eastern Europe, and more specifically, only in the early 16th century Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth; in fact, the degree to which Eastern Yiddish is a Jewish language with relexificied Hebrew elements is unparalleled among Jewish languages. But Yiddish as we know it is not just a Germanic language with Slavic syntax and lots of Hebrew words; it is the only Jewish language in which the Semitic elements are more than loan words and expressions; it is in Yiddish that the Hebrew-Aramaic component behaves as an independent language system of its own, and it is in the Oriental language, in the old and good Orientalistic sense, where we find such independent language systems formed of Arabic and Persian elements.[24] I mean New Persian, Ottoman Turkish, Urdu, Çağatay, etc. In all these languages, there are two (in the case of Persian) or three sub-systems (in the cases of all other languages, where the sub-systems include Arabic *and* Persian**)**, that behave according to the norms of the language from which they are taken. Nothing similar is known in any other European language, where the Latin and other Romance elements (in the case of, say, English) behave quite differently and there is no an additional syb-system.

In this respect, Yiddish belongs to the realm of the Muslim languages other than Arabic.

It was only in the post-union Rzeczpospolita (the Polish Lithuanian State; 1501; 1569), with its Catholics, Armenians, Muslims,[25] Greek-Orthodox, Protestants and Jews of different sorts that Yiddish could have gotten the chance to develop into a fully Oriental language, with its due two linguistic sub-systems (the Hebrew in the case of Yiddish, the Arabic in the case of Persian and the Arabo-Persian in Urdu, in Ottoman Turkish - and other Muslim Turkic languages). I had stated above: "Generations of Jews knew exactly what Yiddish was: it was a colonial German as spoken by Jews in what used to be פּאָלין". Similarly, generations of so many Jewish scholars of Persian, Urdu, Ottoman Turkish who had some Yiddish background felt and even expressed one of the reason for their love for these languages: "Urdu / Persian / Turkish is just like Yiddish!".

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[24] P. Wexler, "Yiddish Evidence for the Khazar Component in the Ashkenazic Ethnogenesis", *The World of the Khazars: New Perspectives. Selected Papers from the Jerusalem 1999 International Khazar Colloquium*, ed. H. Ben-Shammai, P.B. Golden, A. Roná-Tas, Brill, Leiden 2007, pp. 387-398 (p. 288) rightly calls attention to the "so-called 'periphrastic' conjugation" (*bojdek zajn*, "to examine", etc.), so typical of Yiddish, as reflecting an Oriental feature, which he considers - wrongly - as of possibly Khazar Turkic provenance. Of course, a broader linguistic context should be looked for.

[25] For this specific "Oriental" connection, compare D.D.Y. Shapira, "Polish *Sarmatism*, *Turkism*, and 'Jewish *szlachta*': Some Reflections on a Cultural Context of the Polish-Lithuanian Karaites", *Kara Deniz Araştırmaları*, 20 (2009), pp. 29-43.

APPENDIX

In order to demonstrate how almost identically the two sub-systems work, I chose, rather randomly, the first five beginning verses of the text of Matthew 3 in Yiddish, Persian, Urdu, Ottoman Turkish and Azeri. A Christian text was chosen for the reason that it is almost equally non-loaded with own religious semantics either for Jews or for Muslims, so the specifically Jewish or Muslim emphasises are not expected.

קאַפּיטל דריי

3

1   אין יענע טעג קומט יוחנן המטביל, און רופט אויס

2   אין דער מדבר פון יהודה, אזוי צו זאָגן: טוט
תשובה; וואָרום דאָס מלכות השמים האָט זיך

3   דערנענטערט. וואָרום דאָס איז ער, פון וועמען
עס איז גערעדט געוואָרן דורך ישעיה הנביא, אזוי
צו זאָגן:
אַ קול פון איינעם, וואָס רופט אויס אין דער
מדבר:
מאַכט גרייט דעם וועג פון דעם האַר (ג~ט),
מאַכט גלייך זייגע שטעגן! (ישעיהו מ׳ ג׳)

4   און יוחנן אליין האָט געהאַט אַ מלבוש פון קעמלהאָר,
און אַ לעדערנעם גאַרטל ארום זיינע לענדן; און זיין
שפּייז איז געוועזן היישעריקן און ווילדער האָניק.

5   דעמלט איז צו אים אַרויסגעגאַנגען ירושלים, און

Yiddish

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ظهور یحیای پیغمبر

۳ وقتی ایشان هنوز در ناصره زندگی می‌کردند، یحیی که به «تعمید دهنده» معروف بود، در بیابان یهودیه رسالت خود را آغاز کرد. او مردم را موعظه کرده، می‌گفت: ۲ «از گناهان خود توبه کنید، زیرا ملکوت خدا بزودی فراخواهد رسید.» ۳ اشعیای نبی صدها سال پیش از آن، در بارهٔ خدمت یحیی، پیشگویی کرده و گفته بود: «صدای فریادی در بیابان می‌شنوم که می‌گوید: برای خداوند راهی آماده کنید و جاده را برای آمدن او هموار نمایید.»

۴ یحیی لباسی از پشم شتر بر تن می‌کرد و کمربندی چرمی به کمر می‌بست. خوراکش نیز ملخ و عسل صحرایی بود. ۵ مردم از اورشلیم و از سراسر کرانهٔ رود اردن، و در واقع از تمامی سرزمین یهودیه به بیابان می‌آمدند تا به موعظهٔ او گوش فرادهند. ۶ ایشان به گناهان خود اعتراف کرده، بدست یحیی در رود اردن غسل تعمید می‌یافتند.

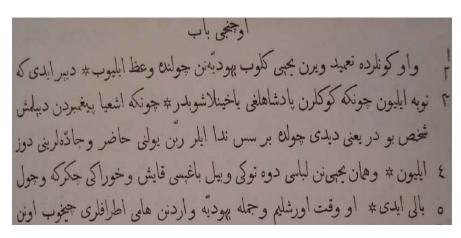۷ اما وقتی یحیی دید که عدهٔ زیادی از روحانیون متظاهر و رهبران قوم نزد او می‌آیند تا تعمید گیرند، به ایشان گفت:

Persian

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۲ اُن دنوں میں بپتسمہ دینے والا یوحنا یہودیہ کے بیابان میں مناوی دینا شروع کر دیا۔ ۲ یوحنا نے پکار کرکہا آسمانی بادشاہت قریب آگئی ہے ''تم اپنے گناہوں سے توبہ کرکے خدا کی طرف متوجہ ہوجاؤ'' اس طرح وہ مناوی دینے لگا۔

۳ ''خداوند کے لئے راہ ہموار کرو اس کی راہوں کو سیدھے بناؤ، اس طرح صحرا میں پکارنے والا پکار رہا ہے''

یسعیاہ ۴۰ : ۳

یوں بپتسمہ دینے والے یوحنا کو مخاطب ہو کر یسعیاہ نبی نے کہا۔ ۴ یوحنا کا لباس اونٹ کے بالوں سے تیار ہوا تھا۔ اور اس کی کمر میں چمڑے کا ایک تسمہ لگا ہوا تھا۔ اور وہ ٹڈیاں اور جنگلی شہد کو بطور غذا استعمال کرتا تھا۔ ۵ لوگ یوحنا کی مناوی کو سننے کے

Urdu

اوچنجي فصل

مگر اول کونلرده کلدی یوحنّا معمّد انی یهودا بریّه

فصلنده وعظ ایدوب ، و یوقوبه ایلکنک زیرا کوکلرک ملکوتي

یقین کلدي ، زیرا اشبو اولن رکیم اشعیّا پیغمبردن سویلنمشدر

و یوخدا ایلدیمنک فریّده ده اوازي حیرزریّک طریقني آماده ایدوب

اذوک ایزلرینی راست ایلمک ، و کندو یوحنّانك لباسي دُوه

یوشکندن اولدي و بیلنك چوزه سنده آدیم زنّاري وانوك

طعامي چکرکه لرو یبان بالي ایش ، اول وقت یروشلیمو بتون

یهودیت

Ottoman Turkish

اوچنجي باب

واو کونلرده تعمید ویرن یحیی کلوب یهودیّه نن چولنده وعظ ایلیوب ٭ دیر ایدي که

توبه ایلیون چونکه کوکلرن پادشاهلغي یاخینلاشوبدر ٭ چونکه اشعیا پیغمبردن دیلمش

شخص بو در یعني دیدي چولده بر سس ندا ایلر ربّ یولني حاضر و جادّه لرینی دوز

ایلیون ٭ وهمان یحیی نن لباسي دوه توکي ویبل باغسي قایش و خوراکي چکرکه و چول

بالي ایدي ٭ او وقت اورشلیم و جمله یهودیّه و اردنن هامي اطرافلری چیخوب اون

Azeri